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An investigation of the relationship between certain parental characteristics and musical interest of students in high school bands

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CERTAIN PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND MUSICAL INTEREST OF STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL BANDS

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PREFACE

The father of George Frederick Handel went to great lengths to discourage his son's interest in music. That the young Handel refused to be discouraged, and grew to become one of the greatest of composers is an accepted historical fact.

Handel's case is not unique. There are many others. That home influence did not deter them from fulfilling their inner urge to produce music is proof only of the fact that true genius will find its way alone.

Unfortunately for workers in the field of instrumental music in the public schools, knowledge of the home life of a genius has little value as a principle of guidance. Not only are the qualities of true genius rarely encountered, but even students of a fairly high talent rating belong to the small minority class. The great mass of students served by the music educator are those of very ordinary, modest ability.

This poses some critical problems for the teacher of instrumental music. Although a wealth of published advice is available, knowledge is still inadequate. Most authorities make some mention of the importance of home background as a contributing factor in the success or failure of the school instrumentalist, but practically everything is a

matter of opinion, conjecture, or logical assumption. Little has been done by way of actual investigation.

We accept, by common consent, the importance of home life in the development of the child; but is there anything that can be learned about its relationship with musical interest that would be helpful in the selection and guidance of instrumental music students? That is the point of departure for this study.

Special acknowledgement is due, and gratefully accorded, to Mr. L. V. Simons, band director in the Myrtle Point, Oregon high school, for his assistance and cooperation in carrying the study into that community; and to Miss Ferol Sunderland, a former student, for her generous contribution to the task of addressing and mailing the questionnaires and follow-up letters, and assisting with initial tabulation of results.

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THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

The teacher of instrumental music in public schools is regularly called upon, in the normal course of his work, to advise young students in regard to the study of an instrument for use in school band or orchestra. Many published aids are available to measure aptitude, but these are only partially adequate in the solution of problems of selection.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to learn more about specific features of home environment of high school band members and former band members in two neighboring communities in southwestern Oregon: Coquille, and Myrtle Point. It was hoped that the effort might provide a specific contribution to more efficient selection of students in those communities, aid in improvement of parent-teacher relationships, and be of general interest to others in similar situations.

Importance of the study. Every teacher is indebted to the community he serves, to the extent of making every reasonable effort to solve the problems peculiar to his

work. All possible sources of aid must be considered.

> If democracy is to be a living faith in human personality, then the practices and relationships in . . . the family must be critically scrutinized by those who are aware of these implications. . . . No area of human activity or relationship may claim exemption from such scrutiny. . . .[1]

Delimitation of study. This investigation was limited to families of high school band members in the two Oregon communities previously named: Coquille, and Myrtle Point. They are typical of many communities in southwest Oregon and northwest California.

The study was further limited by inclusion of only those families whose children had been in the respective high school bands for at least two years, and those whose children were formerly in band, but had dropped out and were still in school.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Band students. As used in this report, band students are those who are or were members of a high school band, as opposed to elementary or junior high bands.

Success. For purposes of the study, success was

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[1] Family Living and Our Schools, A Report Prepared by the Joint Committee on Curriculum Aspects of Education for Home and Family Living (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1941), p. 5.

interpreted as the ability of the student to reach a point of musical advancement which would indicate that the total effort, on the part of pupil, parent, and teacher, had been worthwhile. It does not attempt to define a level of achievement, but rather an attitude of self-satisfaction.

Interest. This was interpreted as the principal sign, through its several manifestations, of real success. It will be discussed in more detail at a later point.

Drop-outs. This term, as used here, refers to students who had dropped out of band after having been members until a date within two years prior to initiation of the study, and who were still attending high school.

III. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The first part of the next chapter sets forth a more comprehensive detailing of the background of the problem, and the responsibilities of the teacher to parent and child. This is followed by comments on some of the pertinent literature.

Chapter III shows how the questionnaire was devised, why certain questions were asked, and other technics of the study. It also contains a demonstration of the similarity of the communities studied, showing how they may be realistically considered as one area.

The succeeding two chapters contain reports of the findings; first, as they pertain to all families in the survey, and second, as they pertain to families of students within certain "interest rating" groups.

The final chapter is devoted to summarizing the findings, presenting the conclusions drawn, and suggesting topics for further study.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Every year thousands of parents spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy instruments so that their sons and daughters may play in school bands and orchestras. Many of the children never attain a degree of success in keeping with the time, effort, and money expended. All practicable means of reducing this waste should be explored and utilized.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

A teacher's responsibility to parents. Every teacher of instrumental music should realize that he assumes a definite responsibility to the parents when he recommends purchase of a musical instrument. Parents may make the initial move, and suggest an instrument, but the teacher is the "specialist" to whom parents look for advice.

No accurate statistics are available regarding the number who drop out of instrumental training too soon to have realized any lasting benefit. Similarly, no figures are available for comparison of the number who drop out because of external, unforeseeable factors, and whose

experience up to that time has been happy, with those whose effort is doomed almost from the start because of a low degree of interest, or talent.

Whatever the number, every student who drops out because of insufficient talent or interest represents either a mistake in judgment, a weakness in training, or both. The mistaken judgment may be on the part of the teacher; it may be on the part of the parents, or it may be a combination of the two. Likewise, the weakness in training may stem from factors in home life, school life, or both.

A teacher's responsibility to students. The most important single factor in providing a worthwhile experience for the student is the teacher himself. Examination of the qualities of a good teacher is not, however, within the province of this study. Besides, failures occur in the classes of the best of teachers. When they do, the teacher, consciously or unconsciously, generally takes refuge in the fact that education can go only so far as to provide an equal opportunity for all to learn. It cannot guarantee success. As one authority has said,[1] "The only proper

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[1]Max Schoen, The Understanding of Music (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 179.

function of education is to bring forth what nature has implanted . . ."

In fulfilling his responsibility to the student, the teacher must do all in his power and understanding to see that a fair trial is given. In doing so, his job falls into four principal tasks: (1) Make an honest and well-founded recommendation as to whether the child should attempt to play a band instrument; (2) guide the selection of a suitable instrument through consideration of individual factors; (3) provide the most effective teaching of which he is capable, and (4) become a point of contact between the child and the world of music.

It is with the first of these tasks that this study is primarily concerned.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research workers and others in the field of music education have written countless books and devised many kinds of tests in an effort to capture and diagnose the elusive element of human intelligence known as musical talent. Great strides have been made in isolating and measuring its various components. These aids are very valuable and useful; they seem, however, to share one defect in common with intelligence tests. As Webb and Shotwell have pointed out, intelligence tests can measure

what a child is capable of doing, but not what he may want to do.[2]

Peter W. Dykema, in his foreword to Kwalwasser's book on musical measurements, voiced the same idea when he said, "There is another factor which intervenes between the native power and the expression, namely, the desire or the will to do, . . ."[3] Kwalwasser says the same thing in different words,[4] and such other recognized authorities as Seashore, Mursell, and Glenn state similar views.

One book on elementary education lists and describes some thirty-four music tests of different types, but makes no mention of anything that might help in evaluating interest.[5]

The major part of most writers' attention, when dealing with instrumental music, is focused on the student who ranks high in aptitude, showing little concern of a helpful nature for the student of middle ranking. In a

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[2]L. W. Webb and Anna Markt Shotwell, Testing in the Elementary School (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 2nd ed., 1939), p. 38.

[3]Jacob Kwalwasser, Tests and Measurements in Music (Boston: C. C. Birchard and Company, 1927), p. x.

[4]Ibid., p. 33.

[5]Marian B. Brooks and Harry A. Brown, Music Education in the Elementary School (New York: American Book Company, 1946), pp. 260-276.

rather complete description of the problems of junior high school music, Beattie, McConathy, and Morgan devote one small paragraph to the "average student," ending with the statement that "here is an ability entirely worthy of cultivation."[6]

In the face of such a qualified array of authority, it would seem presumptious of this investigator to assume that there is anything regarding detection of interest in the average child that isn't already known! Still, there are other equally qualified authorities who believe that environment plays an important part in the shaping of all interests, and that a definite need exists for more careful studies of home relationships.

Rugg believes that character is not a measurable quantity, regardless of the method used, if attempted by any one person; but that accuracy improves as the number of ratings increases. He further states that he believes it is possible to develop a check list for reporting a child's character development to his parents.[7]

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[6]John W. Beattie, Osbourne McConathy, and Russell V. Morgan, Music in the Junior High School (New York: Silver Burdett Company, 1938), p. 222.

[7]Harold O. Rugg, "Is the Rating of Human Character Practicable?" Journal of Educational Psychology, XIII (February, 1922), pp. 85-86.

In more recent studies, it was held that aptitude tests do not always predict most accurately in the subject usually assumed to be measured by that test.[8] Ralph Berdie reported that "the prediction of which curriculum a student will graduate from can be made better with an interest test than with either aptitude tests or achievement tests." He also stated his belief that profiles can be constructed which will provide a better prediction of success by allowing a comparison of students' interest scores with others who have been successful.[9]

There are many books written for parents which contain many suggestions and much advice for the fostering of musical interest, but in nearly every case the content is based on personal observations or opinions of the author. In one of the best works of this type, the author reminds parents that school instrumental music study must be accompanied by a continuing family interest or the enthusiasm of the child may fade.[10]

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[8]William D. Wolking, "Predicting Academic Achievement with the Differential Aptitude and the Primary Mental Abilities Tests," Journal of Applied Psychology, 39:2 (April, 1955), pp. 115-118.

[9]Ralph F. Berdie, "Aptitude, Achievement, Interest, and Personality Tests: A Longitudinal Comparison," Journal of Applied Psychology, 39:2 (April, 1955), pp. 103-114.

[10]Beatrice Landeck, Children and Music (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1952), p. 106.

To summarize, there is a wealth of published material available for measurement of musical aptitude and achievement, and even for attempting to measure musical appreciation. Studies in fields other than music have shown a positive correlation of interest with success. Much has been written about the importance of home environment. At least one study includes a comparison of parents' occupations and marital status with students who drop out of school.[11] Another study tests the effect of home mobility on scholastic achievement.[12] Numerous books and articles furnish advice to parents on how to encourage and promote the musical growth of their children.

In spite of all this, the possibility of aiding in the prediction of success in music by use of a profile against which parents could be checked, or could check themselves, has apparently not been investigated.

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[11] Emmit Rowland Wheat, "A Study of Corcoran Joint Union High School Drop-Outs For the School Year of 1949-1950" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of the Pacific, Stockton, California, 1951), pp. 21-25.

[12] James Percy Catterall, "The Effect of Mobility On the Scholastic Achievement of Students at Sacramento Senior High School" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of the Pacific, Stockton, California, 1954).

CHAPTER III

GROUPS STUDIED AND PROCEDURES USED

Schoen has said that, when a "possible explanation has finally dawned upon the thinking mind, the next step is the arduous task of examining the hypothesis to see whether its plausibility is also a certainty."[1] In this instance the first step was to determine the areas and groups to be studied. Though already established to a general degree by the investigator's desire to assemble information concerning his own community, these questions had to be defined more explicitly. A preliminary survey of literature indicated a lack of prior work in this field, so the methods had to be developed through consideration of groups to be studied and the nature of the information desired.

I. THE GROUPS STUDIED

Selection of communities. Inclusion of the worker's home city, Coquille, was pre-determined. To provide a broader base of information, it was decided to include one other community of similar general characteristics. The town of Myrtle Point, only eight miles away, and showing

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[1] Max Schoen, The Understanding of Music (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 141.

strong evidence of identical community habits and customs, seemed a logical choice. It was believed that the two areas could be combined into one for purposes of the study. That this supposition had a factual basis will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

The band director in the Myrtle Point schools, Mr. Lester Simons, was consulted about the project, and gave his assurance of full cooperation. Having just completed a personal study of the drop-outs in his own school, he had some of the needed information already at hand, and recognized the need for additional attention.

Delimitation of the study group. An important phase of the study was to be a comparison of certain characteristics of families with children of high musical interest with those having children who indicated an interest of lesser degree. This necessitated a certain limitation. The factor of greatest concern was that of sustained interest, and the reasons therefor. It was believed that this could not be appraised with any accuracy until the student had played an instrument for some time.

It is impossible to say of a child, at any point in his school career, that his interest is now "sustained," whereas yesterday it was not! It is well established, however, that the greatest number of drop-outs occurs at the time students enter high school. In both the schools here

concerned, high school begins at the ninth grade. This, then, was arbitrarily established as the dividing line of limitation. The initial number of 164 students included all those in band, as well as those who had dropped out of band after receiving normal grade school and, in some cases, one or more years of high school training.

Further limitations were imposed by the desire for an appraisal of interest. It was felt that a student who had moved into the community recently, and was not in at least his second year of band work, could not be judged adequately, and two were thus eliminated. Drop-outs were investigated individually, in both schools, and where it was definitely established that the direct cause was one not related to musical interest, the student was eliminated. Among these were four who had dropped for reasons of health,[2] and two who had withdrawn from band in order to take chorus (showing a change of preference rather than a loss of interest). Five had encountered a schedule conflict because of special needs; four were no longer in band because of inability to adjust to the requirements of group discipline. One had dropped out for religious reasons.[3]

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[2]One student was partially disabled following polio; two had all their teeth extracted; one was attending school only part time after a serious illness.

[3]The family joined a church whose belief forbade non-religious activity on Friday night or Saturday.

Further investigation showed that in thirteen instances there were two children from the same family within the study groups. This resulted in a final total of 133 families.

II. PROCEDURES USED

The nature of the problem indicated only two possible avenues and methods of approach. Information would have to be obtained from either the students or their parents; by means of a questionnaire or personal interview.

Since most of the intended questions dealt with experiences, habits, and opinions of parents, it was decided to request all information from them. The fact that the investigator knew many of them quite well seemed to offer a certain disadvantage to a personal interview approach. The person-to-person contact might result in a wider variation of response because of the tendency of some people to "color" the picture when in the presence of their child's teacher. Primarily for this reason, it was decided to use the questionnaire method. Though less accurate in individual cases, the over-all results might be expected to approach the true situation, with a smaller likelihood of distortion. With all its weaknesses, the questionnaire was believed to be the most desirable way of securing the necessary information.

Development of the questionnaire. Since this study represented a departure from most previous efforts, the questionnaire was devised primarily from experience of the investigator. By recalling particular instances of pupil-parent relationships that had appeared to have an effect on the student, and coordinating these with samplings of other questionnaire studies, the following outline was developed:

I. General contour of family life.
   A. Family stability versus mobility.
   B. Type of occupation and regularity of working hours.
   C. Economic status and health.
   D. Number of children and age spread.
   E. Activities, including:
      1. Church.
      2. School.
      3. Community concerts.
      4. Lodges and clubs.

II. Principal aspects of association with and feeling about music.
   A. Parental habits as music listeners.
   B. Parental experience as performer of music.
   C. Opinions concerning certain aspects of children's work in instrumental music.

Questions were next devised to inquire into the named topics, and the order of questions was arranged to facilitate tabulation.

Testing the questionnaire. Owing to the need for a certain amount of explanation, and the inclusion of a number of multiple-choice questions, the finished questionnaire appeared quite long. It was decided to test it for time of completion and other considerations before distribution

to the selected group. Samples were therefor sent to certain families, all known to the investigator and all having children either presently or formerly in band, but above or below the age of the test group. A brief letter of explanation was included, but the families were not forewarned in any other way. The letter contained a specific request to note the time consumed in completing the questionnaire.

Completed forms were recovered personally, at which time the following questions were asked:

1. How long did it take for completion?
2. Were any questions not clear?
3. Did any questions arouse resentment?
4. What was your general reaction?

Comments were varied, but essentially all recipients agreed that their reaction was mainly one of curiosity. Average time required for completion was fourteen minutes, with two reporting ten minutes, and one reporting twenty minutes. There were a few questions not clearly understood, and a few were criticized for insufficient answer choices.

One person felt that some people might object to a question calling for approximate income (this was later changed), but no other questions were considered too personal or intimate. No one objected to the questionnaire, and one mother thought it was a good thing: "It took us ten minutes to fill it out, and an hour and a half to get

through talking about it!" She reported that it provoked the first real discussion she and her husband had ever had regarding possible effect of their home life on the musical interest of their child.

With various comments and suggestions in mind, the questionnaire was revised, and prepared for distribution.

Distribution and follow-up. Questionnaires were mailed to 133 families, with a letter explaining the purpose of the study. The Myrtle Point mailings included a short letter from Mr. Simons, explaining his interest in the project and urging cooperation of parents in that community.

After ten days, with about 40 per cent of the returns in, a follow-up letter was mailed, calling attention to the previous request and asking for the return of an enclosed post card if the questionnaire had been lost and another blank was needed. After twenty days, with approximately 70 per cent of the replies received, a second follow-up was made. This one took the nature of a telephone call, or an individual letter to those who could not be so reached. With few exceptions, those who were contacted personally were very apologetic for delaying, and promised to mail the completed questionnaire immediately.

The only one to actually refuse to cooperate was the mother of one of the drop-outs. She said she had lost the original form, but, when offered another one, said very pleasantly that she couldn't see any real reason for it, that her daughter had simply decided she wanted to take something else and that it wasn't because she didn't like music. She failed to comprehend any connection between that fact and the purpose of the study. Both the daughter in question and an older sister were in band in grade school, where they showed moderate talent. They were among the best in their respective classes, but dropped out upon reaching high school, with no reason apparent.

Another mother of a drop-out claimed she had returned the questionnaire, but the investigator did not receive it. A few days later her son said, in answer to a casual question, "Oh the questionnaire? She threw that away!" Evidence like this, collected on a larger scale, might be significant in itself, though it would be difficult to base any kind of a prediction on it.

Within a few days after the second follow-up, the rate of return had passed 75 per cent and it was believed that a third follow-up would be doubtful of results, and that enough replies were already assured to make the study meaningful. This assumption is borne out by the report of H. A. Toops, whose investigation showed that six follow-up

letters were required, in one particular case, before a return rate of 100 per cent was reached, and that the effect on the outcome was doubtful after reaching 50 per cent.[4]

As finally tabulated, 83.6 per cent of the questionnaires were recovered.[5]

Tabulation of results. Before returns started coming in the interest ranking of students had been completed (which procedure is explained later). Initial tabulations were then made according to interest rank, with Myrtle Point and Coquille replies tallied separately and combined later when further evidence was available for justifying consideration as one community.

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[4]H. A. Toops, "Returns from Follow-Up Letters to Questionnaires," Journal of Applied Psychology, X (March, 1926), pp. 92-101.

[5]See appendix for copy of questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV

GENERALIZED REPORT OF FINDINGS

The original intent was to consider Coquille and Myrtle Point as one large community for purposes of the study. Before this step could be reasonably justified, however, it was necessary to consider various aspects in some detail, and to compare some of the basic characteristics as revealed in the questionnaire responses.

I. SIMILARITY OF COMMUNITIES

Comparison by observation. Coquille and Myrtle Point are located near the Oregon coast, in the Douglas fir timber area. They are, respectively, some seventeen and twenty-five miles south of the shipping port of Coos Bay. They are typical of many towns of comparable size throughout the western half of Oregon and northwest California.

Obvious similarities are immediately noticeable. Both communities are economically dependent on timber and related industry, supplemented by dairying and other less numerous enterprises. Both towns have shown rapid growth since World War II, have had difficulty in meeting the educational needs of an expanding school population, but have done so to comparable degrees.

Coquille is slightly larger, with a population of some 5,000 as compared with approximately 3,500 in Myrtle Point. Average daily attendance of the respective high schools bears nearly the same proportion: about 400 to 325.

The cities are separated by eight miles of farm and timber land. Owing to the nature of the terrain, a large segment of the rural population of the two school districts is located in the river valley that extends from one city to the other.

Myrtle Point, being smaller, shows some evidence of having a more tightly knit community life, though this is apparent only in isolated instances. The most notable example is in the comparison of attendance at Parent-Teacher Association meetings, as illustrated in Figure 1, page 24. This wide variance is not, however, typical of other aspects of community character, and may be partially accounted for by differences in organizational structure.

Both towns are relatively isolated from the world of professional entertainment. Radio reception is very poor because of geographic conditions, and programs of the major networks can be heard rarely in the daytime, and even at night reception is not entirely satisfactory. Television has come to the area only in the last two years, by means of commercially owned "booster stations." As a result,

community life is centered around the schools, churches, lodges and clubs.

Opportunities for hearing good music are rare, except by means of recordings. Radio and television inadequacies have been mentioned. A community concert association was organized during the last year, sponsored jointly by Coquille, Myrtle Point, and more distant Bandon. Although it proved successful, it is yet too new to have had any marked effect.

In these and many other ways the communities share each other's habits and customs, fortunes and misfortunes. Differences exist, but they are rather more individual than collective.

Comparison of specific characteristics. To add a measure of scientific validity to the assumption of similar community make-up, results of the questionnaire were tabulated separately, and a comparison made of selected items. Except for the previously mentioned disparity in PTA attendance, it will be seen that various responses were very nearly identical. These are set forth graphically in Figure 1, and constitute the only instance in which findings will be reported separately, by cities. . . .

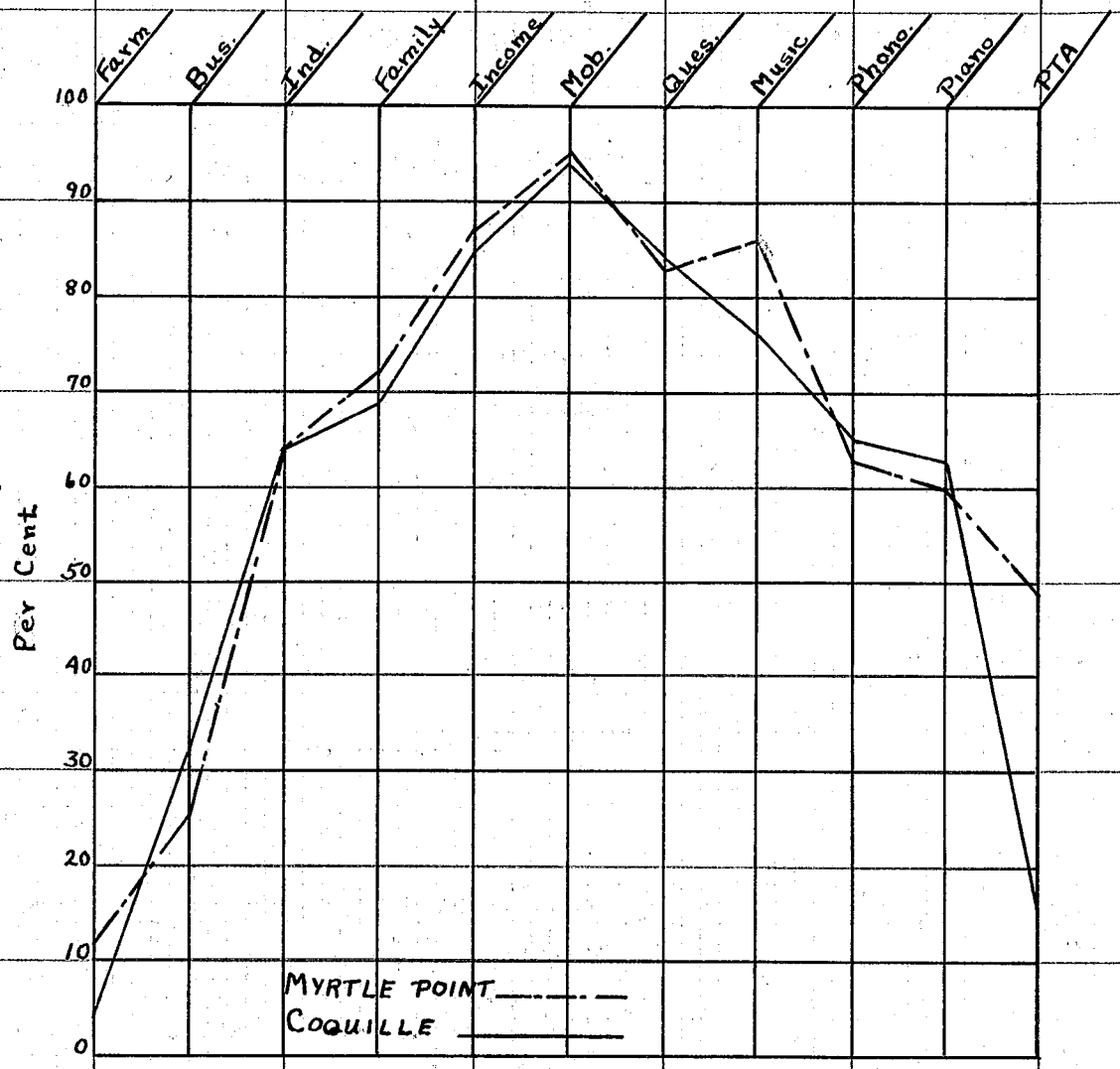

FIGURE 1

COMPARISON OF MYRTLE POINT AND COQUILLE, OREGON BY MEANS OF SELECTED FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

KEY: Farm = occupation, farm and dairy operators.
Bus. = workers in business and professions.
Ind. = workers in industry.
Family = two or three children in family.
Income = enough for most things desired.
Mob. = mobility: Negative (stable families).
Ques. = rate of questionnaire response.
Music = Negative: no parental playing experience during school days.
Phono = families owning 3-speed phonograph.
Piano = families owning a piano.
PTA = regular or frequent attendance.

II. REPORT OF FINDINGS

Socio-economic characteristics. The 111 families who responded to the questionnaire represent a middle-class strata of society that is relatively stable, healthy, and economically secure. The small to medium size family group is predominant, with 79 per cent of the homes containing one, two, or three children.

Slightly more than 90 per cent reported principal occupations in connection with business, industry, or related work; approximately 3 per cent were in professional fields, and 7 per cent were farm or diary operators. Occupational activity was considered to be of general rather than specific interest, and no detailed break-down was tabulated.

Regularity of working hours (normal, as opposed to night work, or irregular hours), condition of health, and degree of home mobility, were initially considered to be relevant, but were later found to be of minor concern.

Table I sets forth limited statistics pertaining to the above items, and also shows the number who failed to respond to specific questions. The largest number of omissions occurred in regard to income, probably because of a degree of uncertainty concerning classification.

TABLE I

SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES

Item	Response omitted	No. of replies	Per cent of replies
OCCUPATION:			
Professional		3	2.7
Business (sales, clerical, proprietor)		30	27.
Labor and industrial		70	63.1
Farm and dairy operators		8	7.2
WORKING HOURS - normal		78	70.1
INCOME - adequate *	7	89	85.5
STABILITY *		104	93.7
GOOD HEALTH (both parents)	3	88	81.5
SIZE OF FAMILY:	2		
Small = 1 child		8	7.4
Med. = 2 or 3 children		78	71.6
Large = 4 or more		23	21.

*Families reporting income as "enough for most things desired."

#Families who lived in no more than two towns in previous eight years.

Activities. In Table II some of the activities of parents are shown, along with their extent or frequency. These factors were presumed to be most likely to produce helpful evidence, and received special attention. Recognizing the frequent disparity between habits of men and women, separate spaces were provided on the questionnaire for fathers and mothers to indicate degrees of participation. The ultimate objective, however, was recognition of the possible influence of an activity: probably a result of combined, rather than individual, characteristics.

Parents were asked to check number 1 for regularly or frequently; 2 for often, and 3 for seldom or never. Individual responses were noted, and combined as follows to provide a composite picture:

1. Combined response of 1+1, or 1+2 = Regularly.
2. Combined response of 1+3, or 2+2 = Often.
3. Combined response of 2+3, or 3+3 = Seldom.
   (In four instances only one parent reported, and the single response was doubled.)

The number and per cent of composite replies indicating a considerable degree of participation in the specified activities are shown in Table II. The remainder of the families (not shown) reported little or no activity in this respect.

Owing to the identical method of tabulation, music listening (TV, radio, or phonograph) is included as an "activity" here, as well as in later parts of the report.

TABLE II

DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION BY PARENTS
IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Activity	NUMBER: Regular	Often	PER CENT: Regular	Often
CHURCH	28	24	25.2	21.6
COMMUNITY concerts *	42	15	38.1	13.5
SCHOOL programs (own children NOT in) **	11	23	9.9	20.7
SCHOOL programs (own children ARE in)	79	22	71.2	19.8
PTA meetings	13	18	11.7	16.2
CLUBS and lodges	31	31	27.	27.
DANCES	10	5	9.	4.5
MUSIC listening #	54	35	48.6	31.5

*Although the rate of attendance shown here is high, the total number of such concerts is small, normally not exceeding five or six in a year's time.

**School programs, other than athletic events, in which the parents' own children were not participating.

#The degree of attentive listening to music on radio, phonograph, or TV.

Music listening. Table III demonstrates the response of parents to questions regarding the types of music chosen for attentive listening. As with activities, space was provided for separate answers by father and mother. Responses could include as many types of music as desired, but it was requested that numbers 1, 2, 3, or 4 be checked to show the order of preference. In tabulation, checks were "weighted" with point values by inverting the numbers and dividing by four (the number of choices). That is, a preference mark of 1 was given a point value of 4 divided by 4; a mark of 2 was given a point value of 3 divided by 4.

For example: four fathers might give ratings of 1, 2, 3, and 4 to sacred music. This would produce point values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Added together, and divided by four, the weight factor would be 2.5: $(1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = \frac{10}{4}$ or 2.5).

If four mothers showed preferences of 1, 1, 2, and 3, for the same music, the weight factor would be $\frac{13}{4}$ (3.25); and the composite factor (average of fathers and mothers) would then be 2.875. The procedure could have been somewhat simplified by instructing respondents to check 4 as the top preference, but "1" is so commonly associated in most peoples' minds with "first" that the accuracy of response might have been impaired.

TABLE III

TYPES OF MUSIC PREFERRED FOR LISTENING, IN ORDER OF RANKING

Type of Music	COMPOSITE Factor	FATHERS: Factor	Rank	MOTHERS: Factor	Rank
Popular	61.7	57.	1	66.5	1
Concert	53.1	46.25	4	60.	2
Sacred	50.5	50.	2	51.	4
Western	46.6	48.	3	45.25	6
Light classics .	45.2	43.	6	47.75	5
Military marches	41.2	38.75	7	43.75	7
Serious jazz*. .	40.7	27.	8	54.5	3
Folk Songs . . .	37.9	44.5	5	31.25	8

*The term "serious jazz" is almost incapable of definition, yet its meaning is generally understood by people who like it; conversely, any who were confused by the term probably would have indicated no preference for the music.

The types of music are shown in order of rank, as determined by the composite rating, and separate ratings of fathers and mothers are shown for the sake of comparison. Only the composite rating will be used in final analysis of the study. It may be noted that "popular music" was rated first by both fathers and mothers, but a wide divergence of opinion existed regarding "serious jazz," a by-product, or stage of development of popular dance music; the mothers ranked it third, while the fathers lowered it to eighth place. Mothers also showed a notably higher preference for concert music than fathers. Military marches, curiously, were placed seventh by both fathers and mothers, but the combined weight factors resulted in a composite ranking of sixth.

Participation in music. Items of information pertaining to experience of parents as participants in music are shown in Table IV, along with miscellaneous data of possible indirect relation to musical interest.

Over 62 per cent of the families own a piano, but only half of these (31.5 per cent) reported that one or both parents played the instrument. About the same number (64 per cent) owned modern type, three-speed phonographs. Although television is relatively new to the area, and somewhat expensive (involving a monthly "cable charge" for

connection with the booster station), over 43 per cent of the families reported owning a TV set.

Those who owned modern phonographs were asked to check the type of music that formed the largest single part of their record library. Five categories were provided on the questionnaire, chosen as a result of information from local record shops regarding leaders in sales volume. Some respondents checked more than one category; therefore, the tabulation is one of "votes" rather than of number of families. These replies could not be weighted, as were the responses to listening preference, because no rank was indicated. Popular music was again the leader; it received the same number of votes as the combined totals of the next three categories.

Not quite 20 per cent of the families had a parent with experience in school band or orchestra, though one or both parents claimed experience as a vocal or instrumental soloist, at some time in their lives, in 46 per cent of the cases. The great majority of those who had <u>not</u> played in school groups as students said they often wished they had; and nearly all of those who had played considered it worthwhile, whether the training was put to direct use after graduation or not. Only 11 per cent had sung in choral groups within the past five years, and 19 per cent had learned some instrument, by ear or note, outside of school.

TABLE IV

EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS IN MUSICAL ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER ITEMS OF POSSIBLE RELATION TO MUSICAL INTEREST

Item	No. of replies	"YES"	Per cent of total
Piano in home?	111	69	62.2
Parent(s) play piano?	111	35	31.5
TV in home?	111	48	43.2
Three-speed phonograph?	111	71	64.
Record libraries: *	84		
Popular music		38	45.2
Concert music		13	15.5
Show music		13	15.5
Western music		12	14.3
Other types		8	9.6
Did one or both parents			
play in school band or orch.?	111	22	19.8
consider it worthwhile, if so?	19	17	89.9
wish they had played? *	106	93	87.7
sing or play public solo?	111	51	45.9
sing in choir in past 5 years?	110	12	10.9
learn an instrument (not piano) out of school?	111	21	18.9

*Figures for record libraries show number of "votes," not number of families (see text, page 32).

*Although 22 families had one or two parents who had played in school, this does not mean that both parents did. Adding 93 cases where parents wished they had played to 22 cases where one or both did play results in an apparent discrepancy (only 111 families in survey!), explained by the fact that in several cases one parent had played; the other one wished he had.

Opinions of parents. Some opinions of parents, as related to musical activity of children, are illustrated in Table V. Parents were practically unanimous in agreeing that children should have an opportunity to play an instrument if interested. This is understandable, in view of the fact that all of these parents did allow their children to start instrumental training. The real purpose of the question, however, was to discover the number of instances where the child's musical activity might be the result of one parent's interest, rather than both. In this respect, then, it must be assumed that the question failed in its purpose, or there would have been a greater distribution of response.

The majority of parents felt that a child should, after starting band, continue to at least the tenth grade before being given a free choice regarding further participation. If a child showed a loss of interest and wanted to drop out earlier than that, nearly 54 per cent of the parents would try to persuade him to continue, and about 40 per cent would insist that he remain for at least another year. Most parents (72 per cent) accepted the principal responsibility for the child's home practice, but a large number (25 per cent) would leave it up to the child; 3 families, out of 110, held the teacher responsible.

TABLE V

SOME OPINIONS OF PARENTS

Opinions	No. of replies	"YES"	Per cent of total
Children should have opportunity to play instrument	110	109	99.1
Children should have free choice regarding continuing band: . . .	105		
after 8th grade		25	23.8
after 10th or higher grade . .		80	76.2
If child loses interest earlier:	108		
try persuasion		58	53.7
insist - at least one year . . .		43	39.8
Who has prime responsibility for child's home practice?	110		
Parents		79	71.8
Child		28	25.6
Teacher		3	2.7
What if child doesn't practice? . Remind, and/or discuss with	106		
teacher.		95	89.6
If child below avg. achievement:	110		
encourage to do best he can. . .		97	88.2
Is home practice disturbing?			
To father.	107	34	31.8
To mother.	110	15	13.6
Is room available at home for practice without disturbing? . .	111	77	69.4

Although parents are often heard to remark that they think a child should practice without being told, it would appear that they do recognize the necessity for reminding them. Asked what they would do if their child did not practice voluntarily, nearly 90 per cent said they would remind them regularly, or discuss it with the teacher, or both. There was also a high level of agreement regarding the problem of a child who likes band, but whose achievement is below average: 88 per cent said they would still encourage such a child to do the best he could.

As might be expected, fathers were reported to be more disturbed by home practice than mothers, by a score of 31.8 to 13.6 per cent. Most families (69.4 per cent) reported having a comfortable room available where the child could practice with little disturbance to others, but that still leaves nearly one-third of the homes without such space. If the fathers who are bothered by practicing happen to reside in those homes, the child has a discouraging situation to face. This investigator has heard many children complain that there were only rare occasions when they were allowed to practice at home, or that they had to practice in the garage, or a woodshed, or a cold, upstairs room.

Summary. This chapter has revealed, in generalized fashion, information obtained from the questionnaires. The facts provide an over-all view of 111 rural and small town

families, whose children are, or have been, members of high school bands. The trends and characteristics are interesting to observe, and would be even more interesting if they could be compared with results of a study of similar nature in a metropolitan area.

The prime purpose of this report, however, was to draw a comparison between various factors as they apply to children of high musical interest and those of lower standing. In the next chapter the most pertinent elements of information will be re-examined in this connection.

CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE REPORT OF FINDINGS

The ultimate objective of this study was to determine if any recognizable pattern of behaviour, experience, or other condition existed among parents of students who exhibited a high degree of interest in school band. This goal necessitated a comparison, the results of which are to be considered here.

I. BASIS FOR COMPARISON

Interest grouping. "Attitudes and feelings are musical achievements, along with taste and judgment," reports Glenn Gildersleeve.[1] Tests of musical achievement are plentiful. Tests purporting to measure taste and judgment have also been developed, although their validity is controversial. Kwalwasser[2] was of the opinion that Schoen's Tests of Musical Feeling and Understanding was one of the few valuable ones, but it has not been widely used, and other authorities dispute its accuracy.

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[1]Glenn Gildersleeve, "Standards and the Evaluation and Measurement of Achievement in Music," Thirty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1936), p. 196.

[2]Jacob Kwalwasser, Tests and Measurements in Music (Boston: C. C. Birchard and Company, 1927), p. 8.

Attitudes and feelings play a vital part in the success of a high school music student, whether in band or another music group. The generally accepted philosophy of public school music education is that achievement is primarily a means to an end, and that the end result to be striven for is the development of sensitive feeling toward music. Until more adequate tests are developed, it is quite probable that interest, as observed by the teacher in day to day school activity, is the most accurate indication of the child's total relationship with music. A considerable study of authoritative source materials only served to strengthen this assumption, and the investigation reported here was developed on that premise.

Procedure for grouping. When a study of published materials failed to produce any reference to a measuring scale for rating musical interest, a simple form was devised. This consisted of a small score sheet, to be filled in by the teacher in reference to each individual student, containing four items of information. The items were selected as being easily observable, and strongly indicative of student interest. Each was awarded a point value, arbitrarily, in order that a numerical score might result. Musical achievement was given second place in the point values, rather than first, because it appears to be more often an effect than a cause. Adjustment to the

efforts of the group is highly significant, but mostly in regard to citizenship. The factors considered, and their respective point values, were:

1. Evidence of personal satisfaction in musical efforts of the group 6
2. Evidence of responsiveness in listening to music produced by others. 6
3. Personal achievement in music. 5
4. Social adjustment and effort 3

Each student received a rating on each item, with points added together to produce a numerical score for comparison with other students.

In the first round of ratings, against a mythical standard, many ties resulted, and there were too many students at the upper end of the scale. This imbalance, if allowed to remain, would defeat the purpose of the study. The intention was to compare the home backgrounds of high ranking students with those of low rank, necessitating a similar number in each group.

The number of drop-outs was already established, as explained in Chapter III. The remaining number of families (108) was divided into three parts, with an upper and lower quartile of twenty-seven each, and a mid-group of fifty-four. Mr. Simons, of Myrtle Point, together with this worker, then reviewed the groupings resulting from the first rating attempt. Each student in the top group was compared with every other student in that group. The questionable ones were dropped one grade lower, into the middle group.

This procedure was repeated over and over until the desired number of students remained in the upper group. The same procedure was again repeated, with reference to the middle group, until the lowest group was brought up to the quartile level.

For future identification, the top group was labelled "A," the middle group "B," and the low group "C." Drop-outs were called "Group D."

This method of rating is definitely open to criticism, but it is believed that it served its purpose in connection with the investigation. No positive indication was needed as to how high any student's interest was, but only how high it was in relation to other students in the same group. The numbers of Coquille and Myrtle Point students to be classified in each group were worked out in proportion to the total number in the respective bands.

Tabulation of results. As each questionnaire was returned, it was checked against the master list to see which classification it belonged to, and was tabulated accordingly. Myrtle Point questionnaires were tallied separately, and information from both communities was subdivided into Groups A, B, C, and D, representing families with students in the corresponding interest groups.

II. REPORT OF FINDINGS

Questionnaire response. One significant feature stands out immediately: the degree of response was closely related to the interest ratings of the children. Response of Group A was highest, followed by Group B; then C and D. The percentage of returns in each class is noted below:

Group A	96.3
Group B	88.9
Group C	81.5
Group D	60.

Response of Group A was actually 100 per cent. The mother of one of the students in that group was very ill when the questionnaires were mailed, and died a few days later. The conscientious father eventually remembered the form, completed it, and sent it in, though it arrived too late to be included in the study.

Groups A, B, and C maintained a more or less steady relationship throughout the comparisons. Group D was quite erratic, and showed a need for further explanation.

Drop-outs are not always students of low ability or interest. It frequently happens that an intelligent, capable student withdraws from high school band after two or three years in order to pursue some special field of learning that has attracted his interest in relation to an occupation or to college plans. That type of withdrawal cannot be truly termed a "schedule conflict" if the student

elects to take some other subject. In this investigation only those students whose reasons for leaving band were positively known to be unrelated to musical interest were excluded. All others were considered as drop-outs, regardless of extenuating circumstances.

A considerable number of the students in Group D had two, or even three years of high school band training before withdrawing. In many cases their interest rating, at the time they were last enrolled in band, would have been greater than that of many students in Group C or B.

It should be borne in mind, in reviewing the various comparisons, that the relationships of Group A and C are the ones of primary significance. Group D is included mostly as a matter of general interest.

Socio-economic relationships. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate some of the relationships demonstrated by type of occupation, regularity of working hours, and adequacy of income. Figure 2 shows the gradual increase of laboring and industrial occupations from 50 per cent in Group A to 80 per cent in Group C, with a corresponding decrease in business and professional workers from 38 per cent to 10 per cent. Since half of the Group A parents are in the labor and industry category, it cannot be claimed that work in these fields is a deterrent to musical instrument study, but it indicates a trend to be considered.

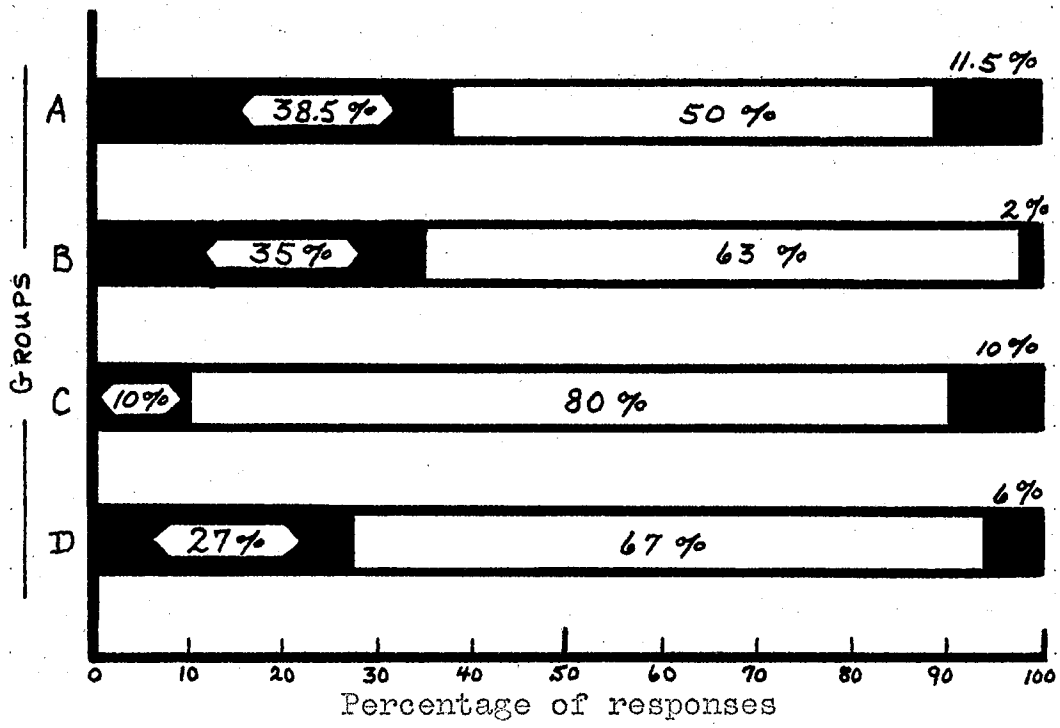
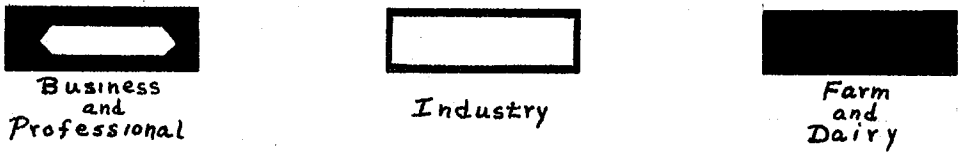


FIGURE 2

COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS
ACCORDING TO INTEREST GROUP
OF STUDENTS



A graphic report of the number of families with normal working hours and adequate income may be seen in Figure 3. The largest spread between any two factors is found between Groups A and C, in the matter of normal working hours. The ratio is four to three (80.8 per cent of Group A, and 59.1 per cent of Group C). In Group B, 70.8 per cent worked regular hours, and in Group D, 66.7 per cent.

The questionnaire did not request information about income in terms of money, but in terms of its ability to meet the needs of the family. Respondents were asked to interpret their income, in light of their own requirements, as: (1) enough for necessities and little more, or (2) enough for most reasonable things desired. "Adequate," as used in Figure 3, refers to the second answer.

It appears that most of the families have been able to strike a reasonable balance between income and needs or desires. In Group A, 92 per cent reported adequate income, as did 83.4 per cent of Group B, 78.9 per cent of Group C, and 84.6 per cent of Group D. It may be observed that Group A again ranked first, and Group C last; but Group D was second! This information applied to only 44 per cent of Group D, however, as against 88.5 per cent of Group A. Only 60 per cent of Group D returned a questionnaire, and some of them omitted the item.

It is a curious fact that nearly all of the questions omitted, by all classes of respondents, were among the first ones on the form. The questions were routine and common; it is unlikely that people objected to them. It is more probable that they started the questionnaire hurriedly, eager to get through; then got more interested as they went along, and finished the last parts more carefully.

Other factors in this direction of inquiry seemed to afford very little information of comparative value. Size of families, health of parents, and the times the family had moved were quite equally distributed. Mobility was not a factor, since almost 94 per cent of all families had no more than two homes in the past eight years. These items are omitted from Figure 3. . . .

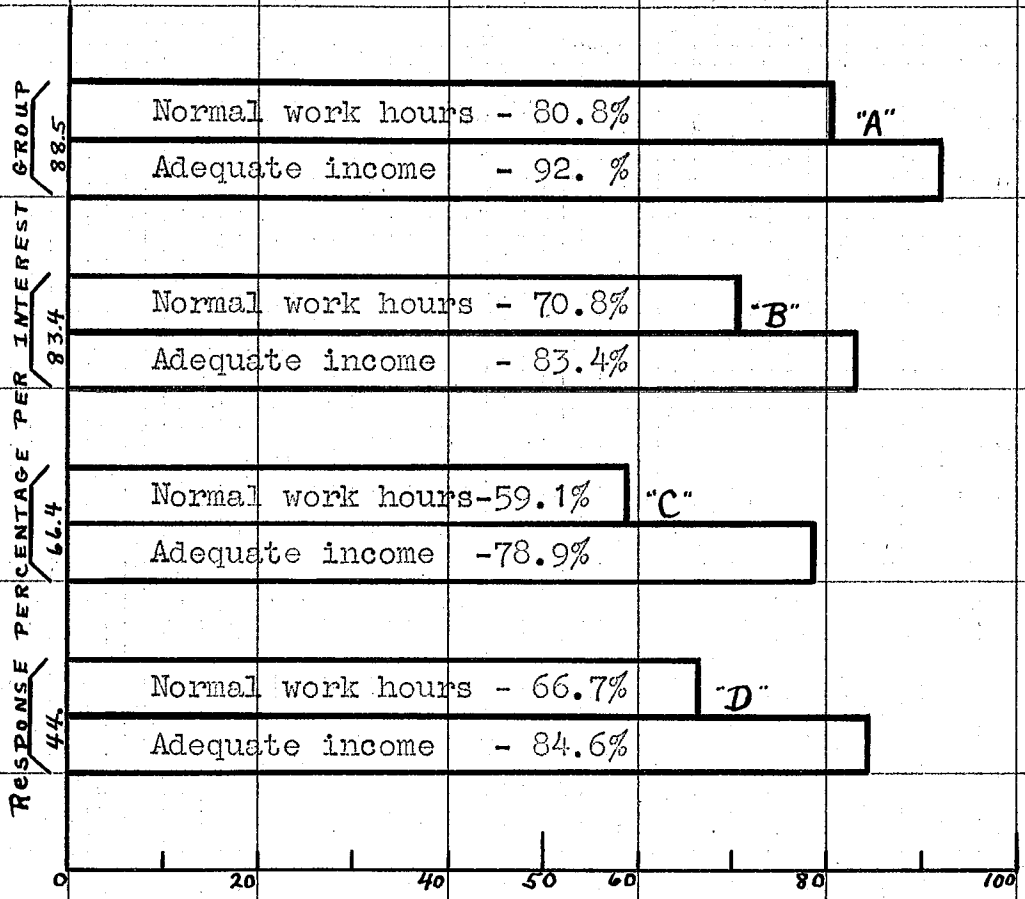


FIGURE 3

COMPARISON OF NUMBERS REPORTING NORMAL WORK HOURS AND INCOME ADEQUATE FOR MOST NEEDS

NOTE: Figures at side show proportion of total groups represented by above percentages. Group D, for example, contained reports of adequate income in 84.6 per cent of responses, but this represents only 44 per cent of the group.

Musical experience. Figure 4 shows the comparative ranking of Groups A, C, and D, as determined by consideration of some musical experiences of parents. The existence of a piano in the home, while not an experience itself, is an essential aspect of playing the instrument. An even 73 per cent of Group A families reported having pianos in their homes. Group D was second, with 53.3 per cent, while Group C ranked lowest.

Slightly over half of the Group A parents who had pianos also played them (73 per cent of the homes had a piano; 34.2 per cent of the homes had at least one parent who played the instrument). Although not quite as many of Group D parents played piano (exactly one-third), they appeared to make better use of the instrument, proportionately, than did Group A. About two-thirds of the parents in Group D who owned pianos also played them. Group C dropped far down, with only 4.5 per cent.

Exactly the same percentage of Group A parents who had piano experience (34.2) had also been in a school band or orchestra, although not all were the same parents. Their collective experience in this department outranked that of Group D by almost four to one (Group D: 9 per cent).

A majority of Group A parents had sung or played a public solo at some time during their lives. The number

reported, 77 per cent, was nearly three times that of Group C (27.3 per cent). When it came to the question of current participation in choral groups (within the last five years), all groups fell off sharply: Group A to 15 per cent, Group C to 4.5 per cent, and Group D to zero. Anyone who has ever struggled with the direction of a church choir would hardly be surprised at this!

Group B is not included in this illustration (Figure 4). Statistics concerning the group were collected and evaluated along with the others, but, in general, served only to strengthen the position of Group A by ranking between it and whichever group was third. It is omitted from any further consideration in this report, in order to afford greater contrast in comparisons of Groups A and C. . . .

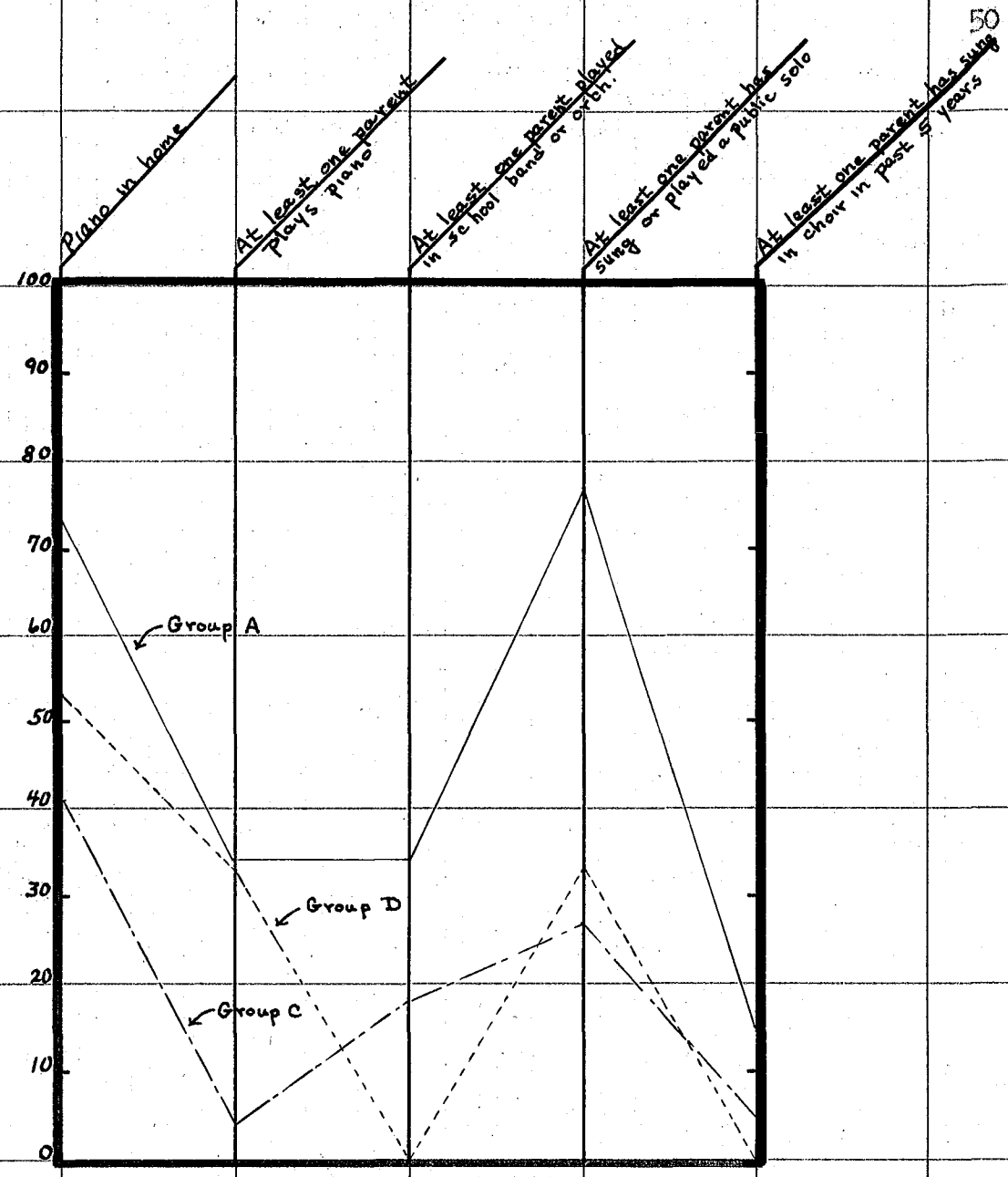


FIGURE 4

FACTORS RELATING TO PARENT'S PARTICIPATION IN MUSIC

Activities. Figure 5 contains what may well be the most significant comparison of the entire investigation: the participation of parents in certain common activities. The differences are not great, but they are consistent. A study of the graph itself affords the most meaningful observation, and figures will not be quoted here, though a certain amount of explanation may be in order.

The procedure used in arriving at these figures was described in Chapter IV (page 30). The strongest characteristics of any person are indicated by regular habits and activities, rather than by occasional ventures. It seems logical that children would be influenced to a greater degree by regular activities of parents than by irregular ones. That is the basis for the manner in which these statistics are presented. For instance, the parents who reported that they attended church "often, or occasionally," are not included here; the figure for each group shows only those who claimed regular or very frequent attendance.

Figure 5 presents a graphic picture of what might be termed strong influences in the home, as demonstrated by parents' concern for church, concerts, school, clubs, and informal listening to music at home. The erratic tendencies of Group D may be easily observed, but Groups A and C present a fairly constant relationship. . . .

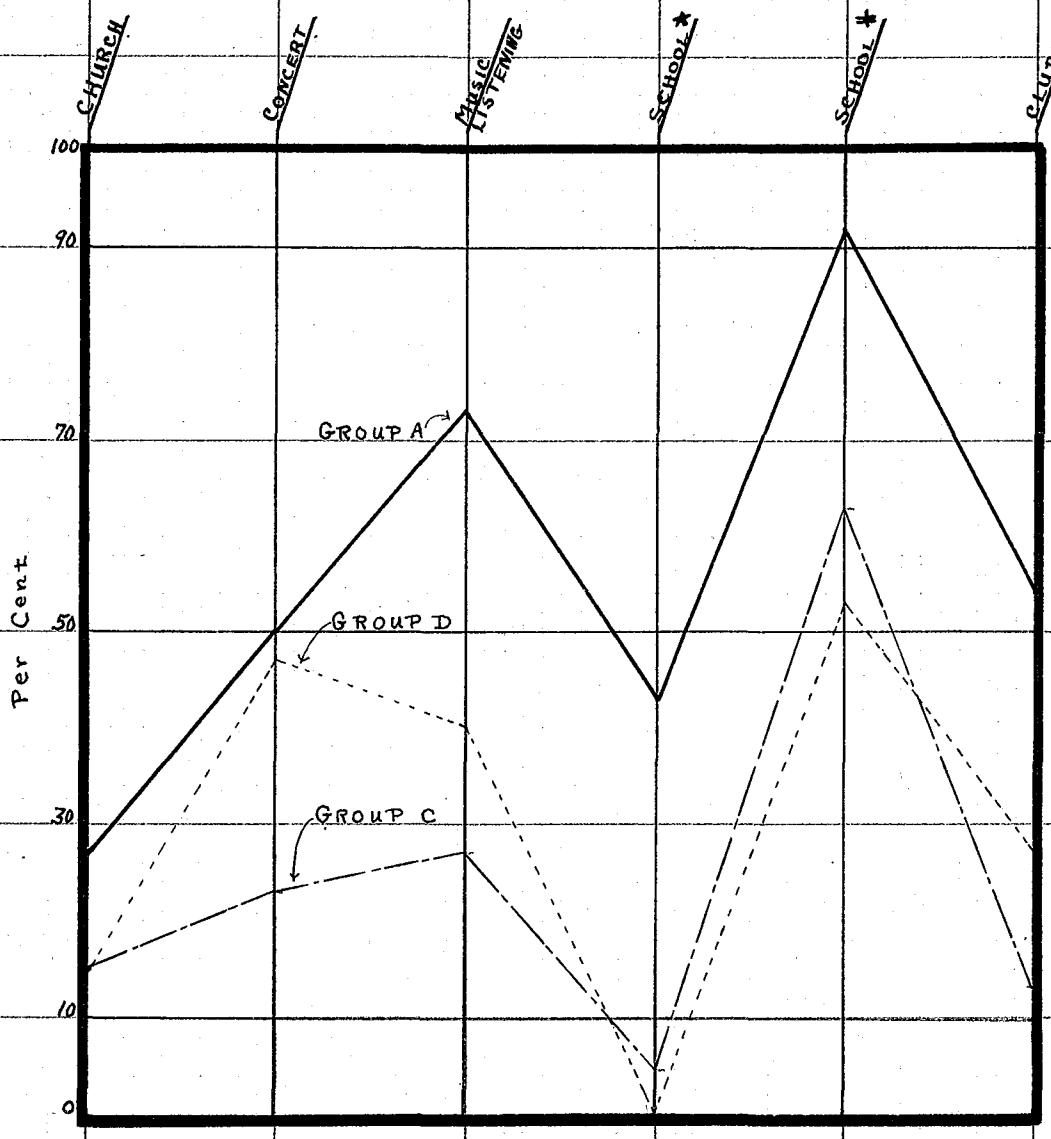


FIGURE 5

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES INDICATING REGULAR OR VERY FREQUENT PARTICIPATION IN CERTAIN ACTIVITIES

*School programs in which parents' own children do NOT participate.

*School programs in which parents' own children DO participate.

Music preferences. The listening habits of parents are of doubtful significance, as they pertain to the kind of music preferred, but they will be briefly examined. The first two choices of each group are shown below:

	First	Second
Group A	Popular	Light classics
Group C	Popular	Western
Group D	Popular	Western

Since this study is related to school bands, it might be pertinent to mention that Group A ranked military marches in fourth place (of eight choices); Group C placed it sixth, and Group D considered it at the bottom of the scale.

Those who owned record players exhibited about the same preferences as mentioned above, with one notable exception. All three groups listed popular music as the principal ingredient of their record libraries. With Group A, however, serious music of concert type ran a close second (44 per cent of the votes), whereas Groups C and D gave it only 9 and 10 per cent, respectively; assigning it to last place among five choices.

Another characteristic, related indirectly to musical preference, is illustrated by a comparison of the families who owned a television set, but no piano; or owned a TV set but no record player. There is little genuine significance in these facts, but they serve to illustrate a point. Television is one of the most inactive forms of

entertainment available. The viewer does not have to exert himself, as in playing a musical instrument; he does not have to leave the house, as in attending a concert or school event; he does not even have to supply any imagination, as in listening to the radio or phonograph. It is about as inactive as an "activity" can be. Consider, then, the following comparison:

	A	C	D
Per cent with TV but no piano. .	7.7	27.3	20.
Have TV but no phonograph. . . .	7.7	22.7	6.6
Have TV and phonograph	30.8	13.6	26.7

Group D shows the lowest proportion with television and no record player, but Group A includes a high per centage who own both. Group C shows a higher regard for TV, at the expense of pianos and phonographs.

Opinions of parents. Table VI contains a comparative summary of opinions considered pertinent to the study. The questionnaire contained several choices of reply for each query; Table VI lists the most common answer, and portions of each group who agreed. There are no right and wrong answers to these questions, except as they do or do not coincide with what most authorities believe to be true. For instance, no one knows just when a child should have the right to choose, without parental interference, whether or not he should continue in a band program. A majority of parents believed this should not occur, in most cases, until

at least the end of the tenth school year. The distribution, by group, is shown in Table VI.

Most parents felt that, if a child wanted to drop out of band before that time, they would try to persuade him to remain, or even insist that he continue for a certain time. The variation in response here is very light: from a low of 90.9 to a high of 92.3 per cent.

Other factors show similarly close-knit relationship, and indicate that parents are pretty largely in agreement as to what should be done in certain circumstances.

It has already been observed that fathers were more disturbed by home practicing than mothers. The widest variation is seen in Group A, where 35.4 per cent of the fathers, and only 7.7 per cent of the mothers objected to having a child practice in the house when they were trying to relax. This variation is less in Groups C and D, giving some indication that mothers might exert the greatest influence toward more intense musical interest. This is a common assumption, and it is interesting to see it borne out in this fashion.

Table VI was developed by a simple tabulation of responses, selection of most common answers, and computation of percentages shown. . . .

TABLE VI

COMPARISON OF SOME OPINIONS OF PARENTS

Opinion	PERCENTAGES: Group A	Group C	Group D
Most children should not have free choice, re/continuing in band, until after 10th grade . .	61.5	54.5	33.3
If child wanted to quit earlier, would attempt to influence . . .	92.3	90.9	93.3
Main responsibility for home practice belongs to:			
Parent	73.1	68.2	73.3
Child	19.2	22.7	26.7
If child doesn't practice voluntarily, parents should remind, and/or discuss with teacher . .	88.5	86.4	80.
If child achieves little, but enjoys work, should be encouraged to continue	84.6	86.4	80.
Home practice is disturbing to:			
Father	35.4	47.6	20.
Mother	7.7	27.3	13.3
Separate, comfortable room is available for home practice. . *	73.1	68.2	80.

*Not an opinion, but included as related to practice.

NOTE: Above figures based on responses from 60 per cent of Group D; 81.5 per cent of Group C; and 96.3 per cent of Group A.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

I. SUMMARY

This investigation attempted to discover a recognizable pattern of parental characteristics common to homes of children exhibiting similar degrees of sustained interest in high school bands.

The problems of maintaining interest in school orchestras are very similar to those in band, with one important distinction: bands march, and orchestras do not. Students sometimes develop such a distaste for marching that it has an effect on their reaction to the band as a medium of musical endeavor, and may even cause them to drop out. If an allowance is made for this difference, there is little doubt that conclusions might be applied to orchestra as well as band.

The study was conducted in the town of Coquille, Oregon, where the investigator was teaching. Students and families from a neighboring town, Myrtle Point, were included to provide a wider base of information. The study group was made up of families of all students who had been members of the respective high school bands for two years or

longer, plus families of students who had dropped out of band but were still in school.

A review of literature failed to reveal any similar study that might serve as a model, and procedures were devised and used in the ways that seemed best suited to the problem and its ramifications.

Band members were divided into high and low quartiles, according to observed interest, and designated as Groups A and C. The middle group, described as B, was included in the investigation but only reported up to the point of making detailed comparisons between Groups A and C. It was then omitted to allow a clearer picture of the similarities and differences between the high and low divisions. Dropouts were called Group D, and continued throughout as a matter of secondary concern.

A questionnaire was used to gather information. The results were tabulated according to interest grouping of students, and according to the town of origin. The initial plan called for combining responses from two communities, but this was not done until sufficient evidence was at hand to substantiate the preliminary estimate of similarity.

Certain limitations reduced the study group to 133 families, and 111 questionnaires were recovered. The A and B groups ranked highest in rate of response, with C and D following in order.

Information was organized and compared in four main areas: (1) fundamental factors of a social and economic nature; (2) background and interests of parents in performing and listening to music; (3) participation in selected phases of community life; and (4) some opinions of parents relative to particular problems of band students.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Genius and mediocrity spring from the ranks of rich and poor, professional and laboring class, city and country. Truly exceptional ability seems to flourish in spite of its environment, not because of it. It may well be, however, that the person of ordinary ability is more susceptible to environment, and shows greater or lesser growth according to the nature of his surroundings. The extent to which heredity and environment exert their respective influences is still a matter of controversy, and no attempt will be made here to settle the dispute. The fact remains that certain surface characteristics of homes and parents are indicative of what may be expected from the children. Whether these factors are related as cause and effect, or simply as correlative symptoms is of little consequence if they can be recognized and made to serve a useful purpose.

"Description becomes knowledge only when the pieces of description . . . become intelligible in terms of a

principle that accounts for their interrelationship."[1] Although the findings of this investigation cannot be assimilated and developed into a general principle, they do lead toward one fundamental conclusion: it appears possible, and feasible, to construct a profile, or check-list of parental characteristics which would be an extremely valuable tool for use in guidance of the prospective instrumental music student.

Certain trends are clearly visible. Collectively, they might well provide a basis for development of an instrument of guidance similar in scope and purpose to some of the occupational rating forms, which do not guarantee success in any particular field, but present a realistic view of probabilities of achievement and personal satisfaction.

Before the goal may be realized, much further study, investigation, and testing will be necessary. This report goes little beyond the point of indicating the possibilities, emphasizing the need, and outlining some avenues of approach.

It is commonly assumed that parents of good students are more alert to the problems of school life, and more

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[1]Max Schoen, The Understanding of Music (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 140.

cooperative in attempts at solution, than are parents of poorer students. The rate of questionnaire response gave further support to that belief. Not only did Group A parents show the highest response percentage, but they acted with more promptness and required less follow-up.

Children of parents engaged in professional and business occupations tend to be more interested in band than those of parents working in industrial jobs, although the influence of normal working hours seems to be greater than the type of occupation. Income is of dubious significance, so long as it is sufficient to bear the costs of instrumental study. Group A parents provided the highest portion of responses indicating "income adequate for most things desired," but this may well indicate a better management of income rather than a larger amount.

Mobility of the family is undoubtedly an important factor in musical achievement; possibly less important as it affects interest. No conclusion could be drawn in this regard because almost 94 per cent of the families had no more than two homes in the past eight years.

Items relating to musical experience of parents show a fairly strong correlation with interest rank of children. Having a piano in the home, and a parent who can play it, is important. The total number of parents who had played in school bands or orchestras was low, but Group A had more

than Group C, by a ratio of almost 4:1. Past experience as a music soloist merits some consideration; recent participation in choral groups appears less vital.

The single factor of greatest apparent significance is the sum total of parental participation in common activities: church, community concerts, school programs, and the like. The method of tabulating these has been explained. When the scores[2] for all activities (including listening to music at home) are added together, and divided by the number of responses in each classification, the quotient becomes an "activity factor." Group A not only led in each individual category, but produced an activity factor of 3.42, as compared with 1.64 for Group C.

It seems to be important that parents listen to music frequently and attentively, through radio, television, or phonograph; what they choose to listen to, however, is apparently of small concern.

Presence or absence of a television set makes little difference, but homes that contain TV and no piano, or TV and no phonograph, tend to produce children with lower degrees of musical interest.

Distribution of response in regard to parents' opinions and beliefs was so nearly equal that comparisons

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[2] Score here means the number reporting "regular or very frequent" attendance. See pp. 54-55.

are not meaningful. Perhaps the questionnaire was poorly designed in this respect. Opinions and prejudices of parents are almost certainly of real import if a way can be found to identify and evaluate them more accurately. A separate study in this direction might be warranted.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

None of the conclusions presented here should be interpreted as having any real meaning when considered alone. Evaluation must be based on a cumulative effect; not on individual items. Any useful check-list that might be conceived should be devised in such a manner that a single, numerical score would result, allowing a clear means of comparison. With "tests" administered on a broad scale, norms and standards could be developed to make statistical evaluation possible. Here is a wide open field for further endeavors.

It would be interesting to conduct a study similar to this one with students participating in the survey. Pairs of matched, but not identical, questionnaires might be submitted to both parents and students. Comparison of results would provide greater accuracy, and would allow consideration of aspects of home life as seen through the eyes of the student.

A study of drop-outs would be of value to school instrumental directors. It should include a number of schools of different types and sizes, and reveal the proportion of students who drop out at different grade levels, and some of the reasons therefor. It would not be an easy survey to make, because it would almost demand a personal interview with each student.

Another pertinent question which someone might try to answer: How long must a student participate in a school band or orchestra before his effort may be considered "worthwhile"? Many drop-outs are more competent performers than others who continue until graduation. Should they be considered <u>failures</u>?

Finally, there is a need for more study in the direction indicated by this investigation. Students and families in one or two communities are enough to provide suggestions for improving selection and guidance in instrumental music, but findings must be multiplied many times before visible trends begin to assume the shape of scientific validity.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Information concerning home background of band students.

SECTION I . . . Identification and general information:

1. Parents' name _____

2. Child (children) now or formerly in high school band:

_____

3. Occupation of principal wage-earner _____
(In general terms, such as "business," "millwork,")

4. During most of school year, are working hours usually:
( )normal . . . . . ( )irregular or night

5. Number of towns lived in during past eight years . . .
( )one ( )two ( )three or more.

6. How would you classify your family income?
( )Enough for necessities and little more.
( )Enough for most reasonable things desired.

7. Number of children in family . . . . . _____

8. Health of: FATHER . . ( )good ( )fair ( )poor
MOTHER . . ( )good ( )fair ( )poor

SECTION II . . . Musical background. (Circle "Y" for Yes; "N" for No; or check appropriate blank).

	Father	Mother
1. Ever play in a school band or orchestra?	Y - N	Y - N
2. Ever play or sing a solo in public? . .	Y - N	Y - N
3. Have you, at any time within the last five years, sung in a church choir or other organized choral group?	Y - N	Y - N
4. *If you did NOT play an instrument in school, do you often wish you had? . .	Y - N	Y - N

	Father	Mother
5. *If you DID play, how much did you use the instrument after leaving school? . . . . . Quite a bit . .	( )	( )
. . . . Very little, or none . .	( )	( )
6. *If your answer above was "very little," do you feel the effort was worthwhile?	Y - N	Y - N

*NOTE: Answer only those questions which apply in your own case.

7. Have you, in recent years, played any instrument, other than piano, which was learned outside of school?	Y - N	Y - N
8. a. Do you have a piano in your home?	( )Yes	( )No
b. Does either parent play it? . . .	( )Yes	( )No

SECTION III . . . Social and musical activities.

Circle the number that best indicates your answer:
1 = regularly, or very frequently.
2 = often, but not consistently.
3 = seldom, if ever.

	Father	Mother
1. Do you attend church?	1 2 3	1 2 3
2. Attend Community Concerts?	1 2 3	1 2 3
3. Attend school programs when your own children are NOT participating (other than athletic events)?	1 2 3	1 2 3
4. Attend school programs when your own children ARE participating?	1 2 3	1 2 3
5. Attend PTA meetings?	1 2 3	1 2 3
6. Attend a lodge, civic, or social club? .	1 2 3	1 2 3
7. Attend dances.	1 2 3	1 2 3
8. Ever take time to listen attentively to a piece of music on radio, TV, or phonograph?	1 2 3	1 2 3

9. What kinds of music do you like best? Indicate as many types as desired by circling numbers: "1" for best, "2" next, etc.

	Father				Mother			
Sacred, or church music	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Popular songs and dance music. .	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Modern, or "serious" jazz . . .	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Serious music of concert type. .	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
*Western, or hillbilly.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Folk songs and ballads	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Light classics & "mood music". .	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Military marches	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

10. Do you have a modern type, 3-speed phonograph? ( )

If so, which kind of music forms the largest single part of your record library?

. . . Hit-Parade and other popular song types ( )
. . . Serious music of concert type. . . . . ( )
. . . Lighter types of "show music," etc. . . ( )
. . .*Western or hillbilly . . . . . ( )
. . . "Mood," or "conversation music". . . . . ( )

*NOTE: "Hillbilly" is not used here in a derogatory sense, but simply to identify the kind of music known locally by that name.

11. Do you have TV in your home? . . . . (Y) (N)

SECTION IV . . . Some opinions.

1. Are both parents agreed that children should have an opportunity to play an instrument if interested?
( )Yes, agreed. ( )No, not agreed.

2. Granted that individuals differ greatly, at about what school age do you think most students should have a "free choice" in regard to continuing in band?
( ) end of 8th grade
( ) end of 10th grade.
( ) 11th or 12th grade.

3. Suppose your child wanted to quit band before reaching this "age of decision." (Disregard whether he actually did or not.) What would you probably do?

. . .continued

(Question #3, continued):
( )Let him quit without opposition.
( )Try to persuade him to continue.
( )Insist he continue for at least one more year.

4. Below the age indicated, who do you believe should be principally responsible for home practice?
( )the teacher
( )the parents.
( )the child.

5. When a child won't practice without being reminded, what do you think you should do?
( )leave him alone.
( )tell him to either practice or give it up.
( )go ahead and remind him, and/or discuss it with his teacher.

6. Suppose your child was noticeably below average in achievement, seemed to like band, but wasn't "getting anywhere." (As before, disregard what he actually is doing, or has done.) What would you probably do?
( )advise him to take some other subject.
( )make him practice more.
( )encourage him to do the best he could.

7. Does it disturb you to have your child practice at home when you are trying to relax (not sleep)?
Father . . Y N
Mother . . Y N

8. Is there a place in your home where your child may practice, comfortably, without disturbing others?
. . . . . Y N