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THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN BAND ON BAND MUSIC PREFERENCE

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Music
Degree
The University of Mississippi

by

BENNY T. RATLIFF

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on band music preference, and specifically, how this preference is affected by participation in band. With this knowledge I argue that band directors can select repertoire that both challenges and engages students while still being enjoyable to perform. Despite the existence of studies that consider the many factors that affect music preference, no study has focused exclusively on band music, which remains a vital part of music education in the United States.

Students from three high schools rated ten 30-second examples of concert music on a Likert-type scale. I placed these musical examples into five self-defined categories: Harmoniemusik wind pieces, post-tonal wind pieces, publisher-influenced band pieces, contemporary band pieces from within the past fifty years, and British band classics. The results suggest that participation in band has varying influences on music preference. Preference scores for three categories dropped through participation in high school band, while preference scores for two categories rose. Familiarity seems to be the single biggest contributing factor that influences music preference, and future research needs to be conducted in that area.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	19
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	22
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	33
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	39
VITA.....	43

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Music educators of different types of performance ensembles usually have one common goal – to teach musicianship to students, whether that be through performance or other areas, such as theory or composition. Teachers often concentrate on obvious parameters of music, such as pitch, rhythm, notation, and even more nuanced areas of musicality, such as intonation and phrasing. Sometimes, music educators overlook one of the single most important aspects of music, the repertoire itself. A teacher's music preference may be one of the most decisive factors on what type of repertoire gets performed, which then could directly impact a student's music preference. What exactly is music preference? Music researchers have defined music preference as how much a person "likes" or "enjoys" a piece of music (e.g. Leblanc 1983, Gregory 1994). There are certainly other factors that can determine music preference, but this study will focus solely on this enjoyment factor.

In what follows I will consider band music preference, and specifically, how the number of years a student has been enrolled in band affects this preference. Many aspects of band music affect music preference, including tempo, style, harmonic language, and instrumentation. Several studies have examined how these different factors affect music preference (e.g. Lamont and Greasley 2010, Leblanc 1987). There are fewer studies that examine how musical training affects music preference (Ginnocchio 2010, Gregory 1994), and none that focus specifically on school bands.

My interest in this study derives from my time as a student composer and a future band director. I want to examine how musical training and experience can affect the preference of students, so I can make better choices when selecting repertoire for my students. From a composer's viewpoint, I would like to determine the elements to which students are drawn that students like at different levels of experience so I can compose music that students enjoy, while also being musically meaningful. This study aims to be helpful to both band directors and composers for those same reasons. I hope band directors can learn what students enjoy and what students have the ability to enjoy. Some directors may avoid a specific piece of music because they believe that the students may not enjoy it. Likewise, composers may not compose music of a certain style because they believe students would dislike it. This study will provide insight for band directors and composers into student preferences for different styles of concert band music and how students' preference changes throughout their high school years.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is Music Preference?

The definition of music preference varies widely from person to person and discipline to discipline. The exact definition of what constitutes a good piece varies from culture to culture and is constantly changing. According to John H. Mueller,

... new beauties are constantly being invented and old ones discarded. The solution is clearly not to be found exclusively in nature of the beautiful objects themselves, nor exclusively in the human nature of the subject who enjoys them, but in the interaction or relation between both elements... The standard of "truth" in matters aesthetic differs fundamentally from that of science. Aesthetic "truth" or appreciation is a psychologically *terminal* experience, a subjective and contemplative state of mind, in which every participant differs from every other in slightly or greater degree according to his accumulated experience... Since aesthetic experiences are ends in themselves, and represent a state of personal fulfillment, they cannot be demonstrated as truthful or false by any external tests, for they reach their convincing termination in the subjective sense of gratification. Hence, aesthetic tastes cannot be "disputed"... Changes in aesthetic case and judgement do not emanate solely from the dicta of aesthetics¹.

In this passage, we find that what constitutes musical beauty is constantly changing. Furthermore, we find the causes for an aesthetic appreciation relies on both the pieces themselves as well as outside factors. From this, we can gather that music preference involves an aesthetic appreciation for music based on both musical and external factors.

All of these areas overlap with established philosophies of music education. By investigating further into these philosophies, we can understand more about how music

¹ John H. Mueller, "Musical taste and how it is formed," in *The Routledge reader on the sociology of music*, ed. John Charles Shepherd (New York: Routledge, 2015), 49-50.

preference is defined within the field of music education.

The two most commonly cited philosophical viewpoints in music education are by David Elliot and Bennett Reimer. Each approaches music in different ways. Reimer explores an aesthetic approach to music education, while Elliot presents a praxial view of music education, or music by “doing”. - Both views consider different factors that could contribute to music preference.

Reimer looks into the feelings of music and how those feelings are expressed through music education:

The subjective part of reality - the way life feels as it is lived - cannot be fully clarified or refined in our experience solely through the use of ordinary language. This is not because no one has taken the time to think up enough words to name all possible ways of feeling; it is because the nature of feeling is ineffable in essence... music does what language cannot do... the feelings of music are properties of the ways it organizes sounds, structures sounds through musical means, emphasizing, combining, juxtaposing sounds, and so forth.²

Here, Reimer shares the belief that many musicians already have: that music can express emotions and feelings in a way that language cannot. Reimer takes this a step further by stating that “creating music as musicians, and listening to music creatively, do precisely and exactly for feeling what writing and reading do for reasoning... creating music as musicians and listening to music creative educate feeling”. - Reimer states that music education’s purpose is to educate one’s feeling. These feelings are “dependent upon musical sounds in which culture influences”. - So while Reimer views music as feelingful emotion, he believes that culture impacts what sounds we find feelingful. Reimer’s philosophy is also in line with Mueller’s views on musical

² Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003), 85-86.

taste, looking at both aesthetic and cultural factors.

Elliot's philosophy looks into the fundamentals of music listening, and how listening is an active part of the human consciousness. - For Elliot, the

...combined powers of human consciousness actively construct the complex physical events we experience as musical sound patterns. In essence, music listening involves scanning acoustic waves for musical information, constructing cohesive musical patterns from this information (e.g., melodic patterns, rhythmic patterns, dynamic patterns), interpreting this information, and making comparisons among musical patterns.³

In essence, Elliot debunks the purely aesthetic reasons and unexplainable feelings for listening to music, bringing in the human consciousness and the actual participation in musical processes. Music preference, then, can be shaped in different ways by different people, by both musical and extramusical factors. These outside influences will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Elliot also discusses a term he calls "tones-for-us", or sounds that our minds make sense of as music within our culture. Based on this belief, Elliot observes that

...underlying each musical practice is a shared body of beliefs, concepts, and principles for constructing and listening for musical patterns in certain ways. As a result, musical works are never a matter of purely sonic information alone... Music listening includes attending to, being cognizant of, and remembering musical patterns as auditory information and as artistic and cultural "tones-for-us." ...every musical performance of a musical work evinces culture-specific and practice-based norms of musical artistry.-

One can deduce from Elliot's statements that music preference depends on the culture of which the music listener is a part, as well as being cognizant of the musical elements in a musical work. These are directly related to each other, as our culture shapes how we make sense of musical patterns.

Although Reimer and Elliot offer contrasting views, their philosophies give insight into the

³ David Elliot, *Music Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 39.

nature of music preference. Influenced by culture, aesthetics, feelings, and specific musical patterns, music preference is a personal endeavor. As stated earlier, music preference is an aesthetic appreciation for music based on both musical and external factors. Both the musical and external factors depend on the culture of which the music is a part, so the listeners or performers can make sense of the musical patterns. Reimer's and Elliot's views support this definition.

Going further, one can consider in greater depth the specific effects of different factors on music preference, especially factors that affect preference in the classroom. Knowing that music preference can be shaped in different ways for different people, the next section will offer a detailed explanation of the specific musical and extra musical influences on music preference.

What Influences Music Preference?

The first question can be framed in terms of what influences music preference on a day-to-day basis. Lamont and Webb⁴ produced a small-scale study using diary methods in order to investigate the fluctuations in music preference over time. In addition to the daily fluctuations, long-term favorite pieces of music differed from the daily favorites, with the long-term preference being linked to intense emotional events. The study shows that short-term music

⁴ Alexandra Lamont and Rebecca Webb, 2010, "Short- and long-term musical preferences: What makes a favourite piece of music?" *Psychology of Music* 38, no. 2: 222-241.

preference can be linked to repetition. Long-term music preference is influenced by a greater number of variables, including emotional and personal circumstances, repetition, choice, and positive effects on mood.

Lamont and Greasley⁵ discuss experimental aesthetics and how different musical characteristics, such as prototypicality, complexity, familiarity, tempo, and volume can affect the arousal of the brain. In addition, music preference can be influenced by mood and Lamont and Greasley divide this into four dimensions: Reflective and complex; Intense and rebellious; Upbeat and conventional; Energetic and rhythmic. Listeners that preferred a certain dimension of music were linked to different personality dimensions, hinting that personality can influence musical preference. The article also argues that listeners usually listen to different types of music for extra-musical effects, such as being put into a certain mood or to help accomplish a task. The authors warn that real-life involvement with music is not accurately reflected in graphs alone, and future research must attempt to find better ways to explain preferences.

While Lamont and Webb consider both musical and extramusical factors in connection with music preference, Larson⁶ presents a theory similar to Reimer while discussing an aesthetic approach to music education. His study implements a preference survey in which the groups are given either a musical or extra musical lesson on different pieces of classical music.

⁵ Alinka Greasley and Alexandra Lamont. 2009. "Musical preferences." In *The Oxford handbook of music psychology* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2009), 160-168.

⁶ Paul Larson. 1971. "The effect of musical and extra-musical information upon musical preference." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 19, no. 3: 350-354.

The music-only group in this study listened to pieces repeatedly throughout the study, with no background information. By contrast, the extra-musical group were provided with background information on the piece, including why it was written and who it was composed by. Larson found that the group that used only listening-based repetition showed higher preference increase than the group that received a lecture-based training. In fact, the extra-musical group showed virtually no change in preference. This demonstrates that the act of listening or participating in music impacts music preference more than simply knowing about the music.

Factors Contributing to Children's Music Preference

Knowing the influences of music preference led me to investigate what different factors, if any, influence the musical preference of children. Peery⁷ looked into the musical preferences of 45 preschool children. The study consisted of a short-range longitudinal study in which a pre-test and post-test were used. The study used six classical and two popular pieces. The average age of the participants was 4 years and 7 months. At that age, the children without exception enjoyed every musical example. During a 10-month period, an experimental group received weekly 45-minute lessons on classical music appreciation, where they listened, sang, and played games involving classical music. This experimental group showed a significant increase in preference scores, while the control group's preference scores declined. There was no significant difference in either group's preference for popular music. This shows that repetition,

⁷ Craig Peery, 1986, "Effects of exposure to classical music on the musical preferences of preschool children." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 34, no. 1: 24-33.

modeling, and social reinforcement in children can influence music preference. In fact, it could be crucial for children to listen to a wide variety of music at a young age, since young children seemed to enjoy all music. Not until later in age does preference for classical music begin to decline.

Supporting this idea that children need to be exposed to a wide variety of music at a young age, Prince⁸ investigated the effects of a guided listening program on the musical preference of junior high students for Baroque and twentieth-century music. In contrast with the younger children, students exposed to guided, analytical listening did not see an increase in preference for a particular style of music. Prince warns that music teachers should be cautious in their expectations of increased music preference for other genres among junior high school students.

Looking at music-specific factors, Leblanc⁹ investigated the effects of style, tempo, and performance medium on children's music preference. Popular music influenced by the broadcast media received the highest preference. Among art music, instrumental examples were rated higher than vocal examples, with fast pieces being preferred to slow pieces. Vocal art music was the lowest rated form of art music, while band music was rated the highest. LeBlanc mentions that band music could be the biggest competitor to popular music for

⁸ Warren Prince, 1974, "Effects of guided listening on musical enjoyment of junior high school students." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 22, no. 1: 45-50.

⁹ Albert Leblanc, 1981, "Effects of style, tempo, and performing medium on children's music preference." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 29, no. 2: 143-56.

children. As a teacher, this is important to note, as band music can be used as a gateway to classical music for children.

In a more recent study, LeBlanc¹⁰ identified factors influencing music preference and organized them into eight different levels. These eight levels can then be divided into input information, listener processing influences, and listener action variables. Level 8 variables include input information from the music and the media. The input information from the music included physical properties, complexity of stimulus, referential meaning of stimulus, performance quality, interaction of music stimuli, and changing music input to influence children's music preference. The input information from the media included input information from the cultural environment, the peer group, family, educators and authority figures, and incidental conditioning. LeBlanc describes levels 4-7 as "Listener Processing Influences". Music must pass through these variables before being processed by the listener's brain. These include intervening processing variables, physiological enabling conditions, basic attention, and current affective state. Level 4 includes personal characteristics, such as auditory sensitivity, musical ability, musical training, personality, sex, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, maturation, and memory. Levels 3 through 1 include listener action variables. Interestingly, Lemont notes that repetition can be both a Level 8 and Level 1 factor, as the repetition could be forced by an outside figure, such as a teacher, or voluntary carried about by the listener, making it a Level 1 factor. LeBlanc concludes by giving suggestions for introducing new music to students, including

¹⁰ Albert, Leblanc, 1987, "The development of music preference in children." *Music and child development* (New York, NY: Springer, 1987), 137-157.

choosing music with set parameters, such as a specific tempo, and choosing a complexity level appropriate for the child.

A study on development of musical preferences by Bradley¹¹ questions “To what extent must music be familiar to the listener to ensure an adequate listening response”? Bradley also refers to the work of Bennett Reimer and how aesthetic responses to music are what make music worthwhile to teach. Research suggests that repetition can help a student’s preferences, so Bradley investigates this using a pre-test and post-test among seventh grade students. The categories of music include Tonal, Polytonal, Atonal, and Electronic. In the pretest, Electronic scored the highest, Atonal scored the lowest. In the post-test, this was still true, but tonal music grew the most in preference, while electronic music grew the least. This suggests that students were more familiar with electronic music, while less familiar with the other types of music. On the post-test, the tonal and polytonal scores were nearly as high as the electronic scores, while atonal scores still lagged behind, but preference for it still gained significantly. This suggests that repetition can be a valuable tool for students while learning new pieces and types of music.

Johnston¹² has also conducted research on repetition and music preference. Her study observes how repetition can change impact preference ratings for unfamiliar musical examples.

¹¹ Ian Bradley, 1971, "Repetition as a factor in the development of musical preferences." *Journal of Research on Music Education* 19, no. 3: 295-98.

¹² Rebecca Johnston, 2016, "The effect of repetition on preference ratings for select unfamiliar musical examples: Does preference transfer?." *Psychology of Music* 44, no. 3: 514-526.

Through her study of other literature, she concluded that preference is a degree of liking, while taste is a more stable and lasting commitment to preferences, but she admits that a lot of research uses taste and preference interchangeably. For her study, Johnston used music appreciation classes at a large university in the Southeastern United States. Repetition studies were conducted over a 5-week period using a Likert-type scale. All of the music consisted of popular Romantic-era pieces found in many music appreciation textbooks. The study showed that repetition positively influenced the music preference for the musical examples. Johnston also found that using repetition for a piece could also positively influence preference for other similar types of music.

Hargreaves¹³ has also looked into how repetition can influence music preference of music appreciation students. He hypothesized an “inverted-U theory”, in which music preference is low with low familiarity, but rises when familiarity rises. With this theory, the preference of unfamiliar genres could pass the preferences held for previously more familiar genres. Interestingly enough, the results of the study did not follow this model. While familiarity with each genre rose, preference usually rose; however, in some categories, such as the avant-garde category, preference did not rise after the second week, even though familiarity did. Hargreaves’ study showed that while preference does rise with repetition, there does seem to be a threshold. Also, while preference did rise among classical and avant-garde

¹³ David Hargreaves, 1984, "The effects of repetition on liking for music." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 1: 35-47.

categories, it did not surpass the popular music category. This shows that one's predispositions to familiar genres may not change through repetition alone.

Alpert¹⁴ has investigated how outside influence from others can influence music preference. His study includes the effects of music teachers, disc jockeys, and peer approval on music preference of fifth-graders. Music teacher and disc jockey approval increased the preference of the classical music settings among the respondents. Peer approval, however, seemed to have a negative effect. This seems to hint that authority figures have more positive influence on preferences in children. Other examples outside of classical music included rock and country. In these examples, preference had no correlation with what students listed as their preferred types of music prior to the survey.

Gregory¹⁵ wanted to know if musical training broadened or narrowed listening preferences. Her findings reveal that research with young children as well as high school performance groups and college musicians yielded inconclusive results. Gregory aimed to isolate several aspects of musical training, including keyboard, chorus, band, and orchestra students, and their relationships with listening preferences. Three age groups of students participated in the study – sixth graders, high school juniors and seniors, and college juniors. These participants were divided into four groups, including keyboards, chorus, band, and

¹⁴ Judith Alpert, 1982, "The effect of disc jockey, peer, and music teacher approval of music on music selection and preference." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 30, no. 3: 173-86.

¹⁵ Dianne Gregory, 1994, "Analysis of listening preferences of high school and college musicians." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 42, no. 4: 331-342.

orchestra. Students listened to examples individually at a computer with Continuous Response Digital Interface, including four preference dials. The participants turn a dial and researchers can receive feedback in real time. There were 13 music selections from several different categories. The results were presented for the different age groups. There were significant differences in the three age groups for the Hindemith, Stravinsky, and Mozart examples in that the college music majors preferred this category the most. Jazz and the Silver Burdett/Ginn selections, which was an experimental group separate from the others, had very little change between the age groups. The eclectic group had around the same amount of preference by high school musicians and music majors. Gregory concludes that music performance experience does play a role in the evolution of classical music preference of musicians. Since music preference for other genres did not drop among music majors, Gregory also concludes that music training broadened listening preference.

Factors Affecting Music Preference of Performing Ensembles

Now that we have established the factors affecting general music preference, we can focus on factors applicable to the preference of students in performing ensembles. Ginocchio¹⁶ investigated how different types of performing experience can affect music preference. His three main types of musical training include, choir, band, and piano lesson. All three of those categories positively influenced music preference. Ginocchio made

¹⁶ John Ginocchio, 2009, "The effects of different amounts and types of music training on music style preference." *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 182: 7-18.

note that musical training in ensembles can also influence music preference outside of band or choir. The categories in his study included pop, hard rock, heavy metal, punk rock, dance music, rap, country, instrumental jazz, vocal jazz, orchestral classical, classical piano, and vocal classical. Training in any group positively influenced music preference in nearly every category. Ginnochio concludes that keeping students involved in as many musical activities as possible will positively impact their music preference across the board.

Teachout¹⁷ aimed to discover whether musical, environmental, performance, or referential factors influence junior high students' preferences for performance literature. Musical factors were the highest rated factor among students, followed by performance factors. Environmental and referential factors lagged behind. This study shows that students do not necessarily enjoy performing popular music all the time. Referential and environmental factors could also determine music preference more subconsciously than consciously, so students may not be aware of how these factors influence their preferences. Regardless, this study shows that students can be taught to enjoy music for the musical factors themselves.

Branching off from the environmental factors discussed by LeBlanc, Droe¹⁸ investigated the effects of teacher approval and disapproval of music rehearsed in ensembles. His study involved eight middle school bands who rehearsed assigned pieces using treatment conditions:

¹⁷ David Teachout, 1993, "The importance of musical, environmental, performance, and referential factors on junior high band students' preferences for performance literature." *Contributions to Music Education* 20, 25-31.

¹⁸ Kevin Droe, 2008, "The effect of teacher approval and disapproval of music performed in a rehearsal setting on music preferences." *Journal of Research on Music Education* 56, no. 3: 267-278.

(1) “rehearsal of one piece with teacher approval and rehearsal of the other piece without comment”; (2) “rehearsal of one piece with teacher disapproval and rehearsal of the other piece without comment”; (3) “rehearsal of only one of the pieces, with teacher approval”; (4) “rehearsal of only one of the pieces, with teacher disapproval”. The pieces used were unpublished pieces written specifically for the study so that both works would be by the same composer and similar in instrumentation, tempo, meter, key, and length. Through his study, Droe discovered that approval treatment conditions scored significantly higher than disapproval treatment conditions. This study shows that with positive approval by the teacher, students can be taught to appreciate music more. Teachers should also be cautious not to talk negatively of certain types of music, as that could negatively influence music preference.

Frederickson¹⁹ undertook a study which included a staple of band literature, Holst’s First Suite in E-Flat. He took performing ensembles that had rehearsed the piece’s opening movement, “Chaconne”, and compared how those performers listened to a recording of the movement with listeners who had never performed the piece. He aimed to investigate whether or not familiarity with the piece influenced how people listened and perceived tension within the piece. Interestingly enough, performance of the piece did not influence how listeners perceived tension within the piece. However, since this study did not measure preference (just how listeners perceived tension), this research suggests that the repetition factor does not

¹⁹ William Fredrickson, 1999, "Effect of musical performance on perception of tension in Gustav Holst's first suite in E-flat." *Journal Of Research In Music Education* 47, no. 1: 44-52.

affect the perceived tension of a piece. Perhaps further studies can investigate different areas of music to see how familiarity influences musical factors outside of preference.

What Influences Should Teachers Have on Music Preference?

Wapnick²⁰ asks the question of whether or not teachers should influence student attitudes toward music, which he states also influences students' values. Music choice in the classroom is the largest factor affecting these attitudes. As a result, Wapnick questions whether choice of music in the classroom should reflect student's interests and backgrounds, or rather be determined by what the teacher believes is most worthwhile. He notes that teachers may believe students should be introduced to great classical masterworks, while students may want to study more popular styles. Wapnick determines that the development of teaching methods is more important than what is actually taught. If a teacher decides to introduce students to new material, it needs to be introduced strategically and in a way that makes sense to students. Otherwise, this might be seen as an inefficient use of the students' and teacher's time. Wapnick also questions whether or not students who were unfamiliar with classical music would respond well to it, even questioning what good introducing students to this music would be, posing the question of whether or not teachers should treat classical musical as superior. Wapnick concludes by stating that this question cannot be answered indefinitely, and a teacher must ask the question "Can we?" and "Should we?" when determining what music to teach.

²⁰ Joel Wapnick, 1976, "A review of research on attitude and preference." *Bulletin of The Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 48: 1-20.

Through this review of a literature, I discovered four main contributing influences to music preference, including age, environmental factors, repetition/familiarity, and performance factors. Participation in band involves nearly all of these influences; students get older as they progress through band, students are impacted by their peers and teachers, students rehearse music everyday throughout the semester, and students are influenced by performance factors, such as what instrument gets the melody in a piece of music. This study aims to determine if participation in band influences student music preference across five categories of band music.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Pilot Study

While at Georgia Southern University, I conducted a smaller research project that aimed to answer the same questions as this study. The study was only conducted in one school district, so the results were undoubtedly affected by the small sample size. In this project, students listened to ten 30-second examples of band music and were asked to rate the excerpts using a Likert-type scale. While this project uses a similar survey, the categories and pieces of music I chose earlier were a product of my own musical repertory knowledge, and my knowledge in this area has grown significantly since I conducted the pilot study. The first study also surveyed middle school through high school students. The results of the middle school students were generally inconsistent, due in part to the age of these students, as well as their inability to sufficiently rate pieces of music. The high school results were much more consistent with a lower standard deviation. As a result, my new study will only survey high school students.

The results of the pilot study were inconclusive, though there was a positive effect on music preference in categories of music the students were most familiar with. This supports LeBlanc's findings of familiarity and repetition influencing students' music preferences. Using more school districts and students, I hope to gain a larger sample size in order to help more accurately determine what the effects participation in band may have on music preference.

Receiving Permission

The subjects who participated in this study consisted of students from Pontotoc High School in Pontotoc, MS, LaFayette High School in Oxford, MS, and Clarksdale High School in Clarksdale, MS. I first contacted the band directors at these school to receive permission. Once I received permission from the band directors, I contacted the principals at these schools. Once I had permission from every band director and administrator, I submitted my protocol to the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB), which then approved my application to conduct the research. Before I conducted my surveys, I distributed parental consent forms

Schools and Demographics

In choosing the schools listed above, I aimed to survey students with a variety of backgrounds in order to get more accurate results. The demographics of LaFayette High School are: 70% White, 27% Black, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Two or More Races, and 51% of students are on free or reduced lunch. The demographics of Pontotoc High School are: 65% White, 30% Black, and 4% Hispanic, and 54% of students are on free or reduced lunch. The demographics of Clarksdale High School are: 99% Black, 1% White, and 100% of students are on free or reduced lunch²¹.

Preparation

I assigned ten concert band pieces into five different categories, Harmoniemusik (18th and 19th century wind pieces), British band classics, contemporary band pieces from the past fifty years, publisher-influenced band pieces, and post-tonal band pieces. These categories

²¹ "School Ratings and Reviews for Public and Private Schools," GreatSchools, accessed April 10th, 2017, <http://www.greatschools.org/>.

were self-determined, and I selected these pieces through my own knowledge of band repertoire. The Harmoniemusik category consisted of *Rondino in Eb Major* by Ludwig Van Beethoven and *Serenade in d minor* by Antonín Dvořák. The British band classics category consisted of the first movement of *Lincolnshire Posy* by Percy Grainger and the second movement of *Second Suite in F* by Gustav Holst. The publisher-influenced category consisted of *Ride* by Sam Hazo and *Encanto* by Robert W. Smith. The contemporary abnd category consisted of *Zion* by Dan Welcher and the third movement of *Southern Harmony* by Donald Grantham. The post-tonal category consisted of *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* by Igor Stravinsky and *Theme and Variations in "g minor"* by Arnold Schoenberg. I selected approximately thirty seconds from each piece. I selected both technical and lyrical pieces for each category, since tempo is one of the biggest influences on music preference (LeBlanc 1983).

Survey

I created a survey with a Likert-type Scale from 1-6 for students to circle a preference rating (1 = low, 6 = high). The survey asked for grade level, how many years they had been in band, their instrument, if they had taken music lessons prior to sixth grade, and how many years they had taken lessons. After I made the survey, I visited each site to administer the listening test. Before beginning the survey, I read aloud an assent form and that each student filled out and other required dialogue before administering the surveys. The students listened to the pieces over the band room audio system, and they had approximately fifteen seconds in between examples.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

After the surveys were completed at all the schools, I inserted all the data into a spreadsheet. Table 1 contains all the information about the students at each school, including the number of students surveyed, their average years in band, and the average number of years of prior music lessons.

Table 1. Participant Information

School	# Surveyed	Years in Band	Years of Prior Lessons	# of Students Who Took Private Lessons
Lafayette High School	65	4.63 (1.38)	0.37 (1.22)	8
Pontotoc High School	77	5.65 (1.19)	0.61 (2.15)	11
Clarksdale High School	54	5.16 (1.27)	1.00 (1.58)	10

Clarksdale High School had the fewest number of students surveyed, while Pontotoc High School had the highest number surveyed. Lafayette High School had the fewest years of experience in band, while Pontotoc High School had the most. Clarksdale High School collectively had the most years in music lessons, while Lafayette High School had the least.

Tables 2a-2e. Mean (Standard Deviation) Scores by Grade Level for Each Piece

Table 2a. British Band Classics.

Grade Level	Lincolnshire Posy				Song Without Words			
	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	AVG	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Pontotoc HS	AVG
9	4.50 (1.10)	4.17 (1.07)	N/A	4.34 (1.08)	4.45 (1.39)	3.94 (1.56)	N/A	4.22 (1.47)
10	4.00 (1.38)	3.69 (1.18)	5.43 (0.75)	4.47 (1.35)	4.24 (1.84)	4.69 (0.85)	3.43 (1.80)	4.03 (1.70)
11	4.20 (1.30)	3.86 (1.15)	4.86 (1.15)	4.33 (1.25)	4.60 (1.35)	4.95 (1.02)	4.00 (1.34)	4.5 (1.28)
12	3.25 (1.67)	3.92 (0.93)	4.25 (1.54)	3.89 (1.27)	3.13 (2.17)	4.12 (1.63)	5.50 (0.52)	4.30 (1.71)

In general, the British band classics category was rated similarly between the lyrical and technical selection. Some grades rated *Lincolnshire Posy* higher, while other grades rated *Song Without Words* higher. Overall, the preference for the technical piece decreased from ninth to twelfth grade, while the preference for the lyrical piece increased. This supports LeBlanc’s theory that younger students prefer music with faster tempos. There was a high degree of variability between schools and grade levels in regards to preference.

Table 2b. Publisher-influenced Preference

Grade Level	Ride				Encanto			
	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	AVG	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Pontotoc HS	AVG
9	5.55 (0.60)	5.06 (1.37)	N/A	5.32 (1.00)	5.1 (1.07)	4.76 (1.68)	N/A	4.94 (1.37)
10	5.41 (1.2)	5.77 (0.85)	6.00 (0.00)	5.71 (0.83)	4.48 (1.33)	5.00 (1.29)	4.85 (1.28)	4.75 (1.29)
11	5.80 (0.42)	5.48 (0.75)	5.71 (0.46)	5.63 (0.60)	4.1 (1.66)	5.43 (0.68)	3.85 (1.28)	4.53 (1.36)
12	5.63 (0.74)	5.69 (0.55)	6.00 (0.00)	5.76 (0.52)	4.88 (1.64)	4.85 (1.19)	4.75 (0.45)	4.82 (1.21)

The publisher-influenced band category was the highest rated category, with every grade rating the category five or above out of six for the average of both pieces combined. Preference for *Ride* increased from 9th to 12th grade, while preference for *Encanto* decreased, albeit slightly. This category had a lower degree of preference variability between schools and grade level. This category of music is closest in nature to the popular music that students hear on the radio.

Table 2c. Post-tonal Band Preference

Grade Level	Symphonies of Wind Instruments				Theme and Variations			
	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	AVG	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Pontotoc HS	AVG
9	3.00 (1.21)	3.18 (1.94)	N/A	3.08 (1.57)	3.75 (1.33)	2.24 (1.48)	N/A	3.05 (1.58)
10	2.71 (1.52)	2.62 (1.66)	3.42 (1.54)	2.96 (1.57)	3.76 (1.37)	2.61 (1.61)	2.43 (1.54)	2.98 (1.59)
11	2.90 (1.37)	2.67 (1.15)	4.29 (0.71)	3.37 (1.28)	3.30 (1.16)	2.29 (1.49)	3.14 (1.01)	2.83 (1.31)
12	2.38 (1.06)	2.69 (1.54)	2.25 (0.86)	2.52 (1.31)	3.50 (0.93)	2.54 (1.47)	2.75 (0.45)	2.76 (1.23)

The post-tonal band category was the lowest rated category among all grade levels and schools. Preference scores for both pieces decreased between ninth to twelfth grade. Similar to the popular band category, variability between grade levels and schools were low, although with low rather than high scores. This type of music is least similar to the music students listen to on the radio, and repertoire of this type is not often played in school band classes.

Table 2d. Contemporary Band Preference

Grade Level	Southern Harmony				Zion			
	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	AVG	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Pontotoc HS	AVG
9	5.35 (0.88)	5.18 (1.24)	N/A	5.27 (1.04)	4.85 (1.35)	3.53 (1.42)	N/A	4.24 (1.52)
10	5.57 (0.81)	5.15 (1.46)	5.85 (0.35)	5.58 (0.91)	4.71 (0.96)	3.46 (1.20)	4.71 (1.06)	4.42 (1.17)
11	5.30 (0.82)	4.95 (1.53)	5.71 (0.46)	5.32 (1.12)	4.90 (0.99)	3.85 (1.27)	4.00 (0.77)	4.12 (1.10)
12	5.25 (1.49)	5.00 (1.36)	6.00 (0.00)	5.30 (1.24)	4.88 (0.64)	3.92 (1.12)	3.75 (1.86)	4.04 (1.33)

The contemporary band category was the second-highest rated category in this study. Much like the popular band category, students preferred the technical piece *Southern Harmony* over the lyrical piece, *Zion*. This category did have a higher degree of variability between schools than other categories did. High School 3 rated *Southern Harmony* significantly higher than the other two schools, while High School 1 rated *Zion* significantly higher than the others. Overall, preference remained steady between grades for *Southern Harmony*, while preference for *Zion* decreased slightly.

Table 2e. Harmoniemusik Preference

Grade Level	Serenade in d				Rondino in Eb			
	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	AVG	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HSHS 2	Pontotoc HS	AVG
9	4.00 (1.21)	4.82 (0.88)	N/A	4.38 (1.14)	3.65 (1.31)	3.06 (1.56)	N/A	3.38 (1.44)
10	4.19 (1.08)	4.92 (1.32)	3.86 (1.59)	4.24 (1.39)	3.10 (1.51)	2.38 (1.12)	3.14 (1.39)	2.95 (1.39)
11	4.4 (0.51)	4.71 (1.14)	4.43 (0.93)	4.54 (0.96)	2.40 (1.65)	3.10 (1.26)	3.57 (1.21)	3.15 (1.36)
12	3.75 (0.71)	4.38 (0.88)	4.25 (0.87)	4.24 (0.97)	4.00 (1.31)	3.08 (1.41)	4.25 (1.35)	3.54 (1.46)

Much like other categories, students rated the technical piece higher than the lyrical piece. There was a high degree of variability between schools, especially with *Rondino in Eb*. High School 2 rated *Serenade in d* higher than the other two schools in every grade level, while High School 3 rated *Rondino in Eb* higher than other schools.

Next, I wanted to determine if different schools and grade levels had a wider range between the highest and lowest scoring piece. If some schools had a significant difference, then the results at that school could be slightly skewed than when compared to the other school. These results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Difference Between Highest and Lowest Scoring Piece

Grade	Lafayette HS	Pontotoc HS	Clarksdale HS	Average
9	2.55	2.95	N/A	2.75
10	2.86	3.39	3.42	3.22
11	3.40	3.19	2.57	3.05
12	3.25	3.15	3.75	3.38
All	3.02	3.17	3.25	3.15

There was slight variation in the difference between schools, but not a notable difference. There was a 0.23 difference between the school with the highest difference and school with the least different. There was a slightly more prominent change between the averaged grade levels, with the twelfth grade's difference being 0.63 higher than the ninth grade. This could be attributed to older students having a better knowledge of the type of music they enjoy than younger students do.

Difference in Preference Means by Familiarity with the Piece

Next, I wanted to determine if a student's familiarity with a piece affected how they rated each piece. Unfortunately, in this study there were only one or two students who were familiar with each piece, so I was not able to gather enough data for accurate results. However, in my pilot study there were more students familiar with each piece, and I was able to make graphs on that preference difference. I used different pieces and categories in that study, but in every piece and every category at every grade level, students who were familiar with a piece rated it higher than students who were not familiar a piece. This confirms research that discusses how familiarity can positively impact music preference.

Preference by Category

After looking at the raw data of each piece at each grade level and school, I averaged the results of all categories by combining the averages of each piece at each grade level (see Figures 1a-1e). These figures more easily show how preference between different categories changed through each grade.

Figures 1a-1e. Preference by Category

Figure 1a. British Band Classics

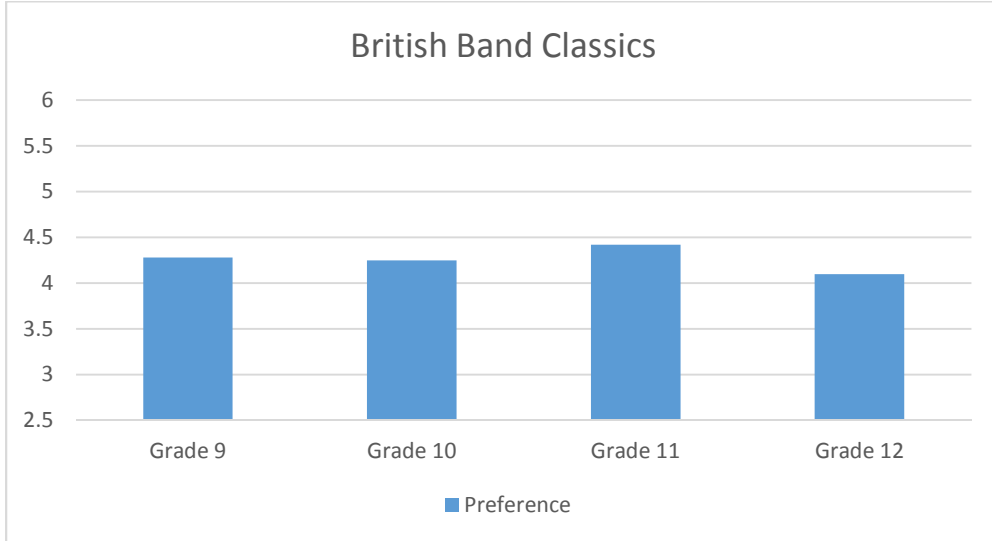


Figure 1b. Publisher-Influenced Band Preference

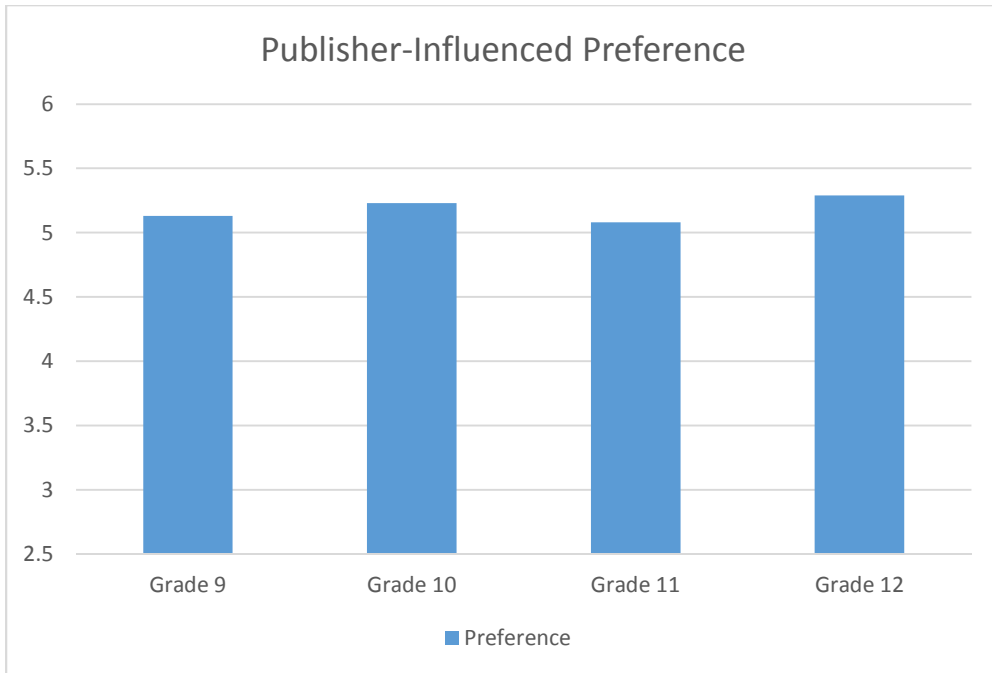


Figure 1c. Post-tonal Band Preference

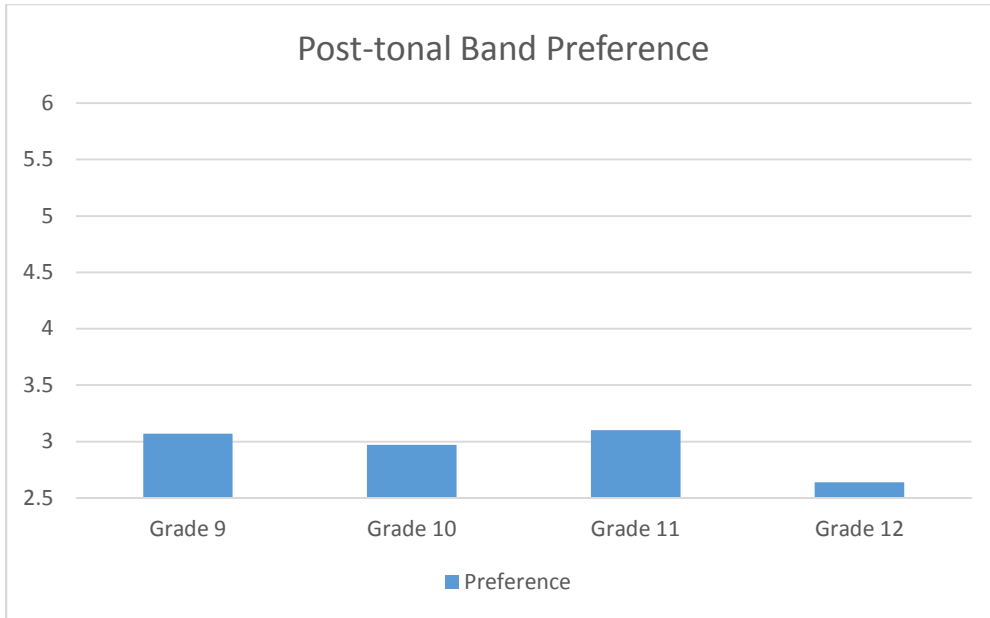


Figure 1d. Contemporary Band Preference

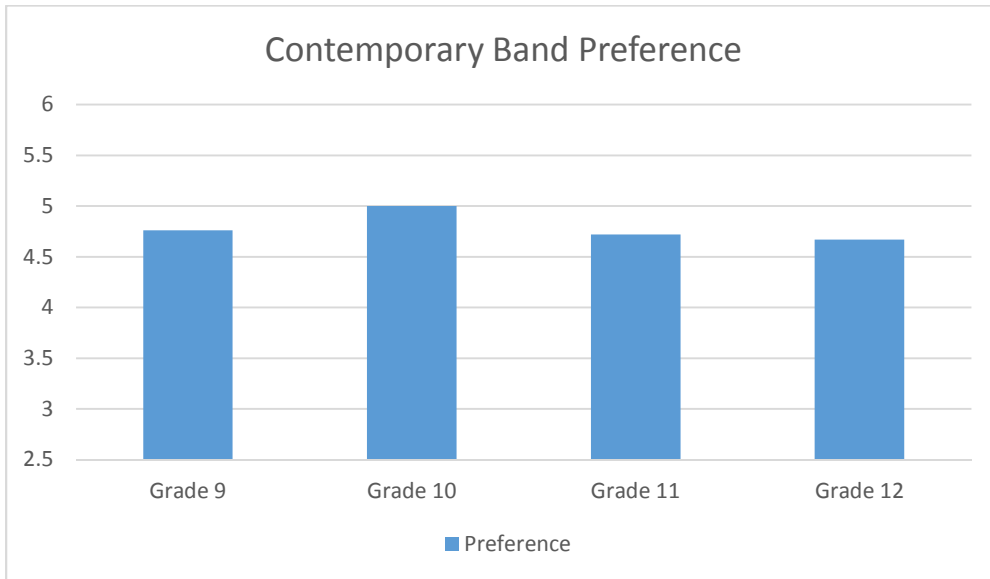
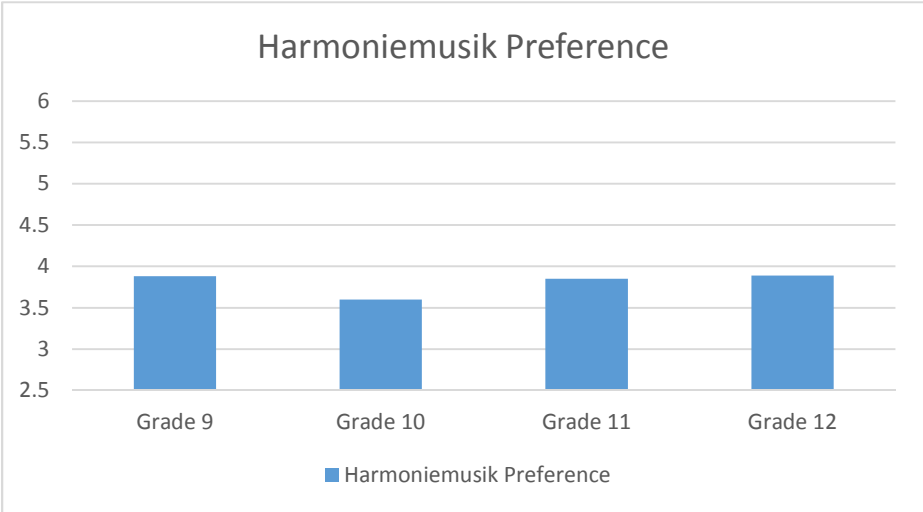


Figure 1e. Harmoniemusik Preference



CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

This study investigates how participation in band affects music preference. I selected five genres of band music, as well as a technical and lyrical piece for each genre. The genres were 20th century British band classics, publisher-influenced band, post-tonal band, and Harmoniemusik wind pieces. I then had 196 high school students complete a preference listening test at three different schools.

Looking strictly at lyrical and technical pieces, nearly every grade rated the technical piece of each category higher than the lyrical piece. There were a few exceptions, especially in the atonal category and classical band category. In the atonal category, this might be attributable to the fact that students are unfamiliar with the category as a whole. In the classical band category, older listeners actually rated the lyrical piece higher than the technical piece, which shows students may have learned to enjoy lyrical pieces more in a category with which they are familiar. These results support the findings of LeBlanc (1983) on music preference, which showed that younger listeners preferred faster passages similar to the popular music that they listen to.

The only category that increased in preference level through years in band was the Publisher-Influenced Band category. In fact, years in band negatively impacted music preference in most categories, including the atonal category, the classical band category, and the contemporary band category. The Harmoniemusik category had similar preference through all grade levels. A band director looking at these results may decide against broadening

programming of new genres of band music. Ultimately, students are in band to perform music, so why not program repertoire that the students enjoy playing? Students may have rated the popular-band category higher as they progressed through band due to their higher degree of familiarity with that type of music.

If a band director broadened their repertoire selection, I believe students would learn to enjoy more types of music. The results from this study suggests that preference for the categories students performed often increased throughout their years in band, while preference for the categories students did not perform decreased. Band directors can combat this by incorporating different genres of wind music, beginning with technical pieces, since students preferred technical pieces in each category.

Another interesting observation was the variation in scores from school to school among different pieces. Some schools rated certain pieces significantly higher than other schools did. One such piece is *Southern Harmony*, High School 3 rated the piece much higher than the other two schools. This could go back to the familiarity that preference research consistently relies upon. During the playing of this piece at High School 3, many students clapped along and made comments such as “this sounds like what we do in church”. Observing these comments, I believe it is safe to say that the students in High School 3 hear that type of music on a more consistent basis.

Looking at the difference between the highest and lowest scoring piece can help us understand why and how students score a certain way. Throughout high school, the difference in preference between the highest and lowest scoring piece increased. I believe this is because as students progress through high school, they are truly immersed in the music, so they can

more accurately determine their own musical opinions. This would explain why the difference goes up after tenth grade, since the students have finally been introduced to enough music to form their own musical opinions.

Familiarity has a huge influence on how much a student enjoys a piece (Bradley 1971). In my original pilot study, on every piece at every level, students familiar with a piece rated it higher than students not familiar with it. This shows that band directors simply need to familiarize their students with more music. Becoming more familiar with different types of music may open up students' minds to new and different types of music. Band directors who are reluctant to try newer and different types of music are doing their students a disservice. Students will never enjoy a type of music if they never hear it.

The results from this study can be beneficial to both band directors and composers; educators and composers can get an idea on how music preference changes throughout years in band and what categories of band music students prefer. Many band directors may have concerns about how students will react to certain pieces. The results of my study show that years in band does indeed impact music preference, but not always in a positive way. In fact, three out of five categories decreased in overall ratings as the number of years of experience in band increased. What I believe affects music preference more is familiarity with certain types of music. The results of my study seem to support band directors' concerns about only programming certain pieces of music because that is what students like; however, I believe band directors are exacerbating this by only performing publisher-influenced band pieces, creating a never-ending cycle of only exposing students to a certain type of band music.

Recommendations for Future Research

More research should be done to further our understanding of musical preference, especially in band and other performance ensembles. This study, while encompassing a wide range of demographics, only surveyed students in relatively rural areas and small towns within a 100-mile radius. A study investigating preferences for categories of band music in more urban and suburban areas could teach us even more about music preference. Different groups of students can respond differently to different types of music, as the results from different pieces at different schools showed. A study that includes the same group of students as they progressed throughout band would be ideal in determining how years in band affected music preference, including purposely introducing different categories of band music to those students.

Final Recommendations for Teachers and Composers:

Students ultimately want to play music that they enjoy. Part of the job of being a band director is picking repertoire that students enjoy playing. Students playing music they do not enjoy is a lot like a student playing a sport they do not enjoy – they probably will not stay! However, band directors should not use this to fuel their fear of certain types of repertoire. One of the biggest parts of music preference is enjoyment, and other research has shown that students can be taught to enjoy a wide range of music. My primary suggestion to band directors is to introduce as many types of music to students as early as possible. Performance of every

type of music is not necessary; even listening can increase music preference, which can allow one's curiosity to explore all music has to offer. Our job as music educators is to teach students about music. If we are only introducing students to a fraction of the type of music that is out there, are we really doing our job? Based on this and past studies, band directors should introduce technical pieces first, and then branch out into lyrical pieces. Familiarity is important, so as long as band directors introduce different types of music to students, then the students will respond more positively to that music.

Composers should also not be afraid to compose music based on perceived student interests. They should not limit themselves to certain musical elements simply because students may not respond well to new elements. This created a band repertoire which consists of many pieces that sound the same, with many elements similar to pop music on the radio. Composers for younger bands should aim to write music that contains both fast and slow sections to introduce students to lyrical elements early, while still having fast elements that the students already enjoy. However, this is not necessary for every piece of music, especially more difficult pieces and should be avoided in more difficult pieces to avoid formulaic writing.

In addition to students listening, band directors should listen to new music and listen to it often. Band directors should be able to listen and know what music will help develop their students' musicianship. If a band director can do this, they can pass it down to their students, allowing students to come out of band with their own unique music preference, which will continue developing the existing repertoire of band music.

Final Cautions:

The results of this study have a few limitations that need to be addressed that may prevent the findings from being generalizable across the country. The schools surveyed consisted of only rural school within a 100-mile radius of Oxford, MS. A study that includes urban, suburban, and rural locations throughout the United States would be required to generalize the results. One also cannot determine whether a decline or increase in scores through high school is a result of participation in band, or simply as a result of students getting older. A control group and experimental group would be required to more accurately determine the causes of preference score changes.

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