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(Twenty-sixth of the series)



**A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF INTERESTS AND
PREFERENCES OF PRIMARY CHILDREN
IN MOTION PICTURES, COMIC STRIPS,
AND RADIO PROGRAMS AS RELATED
TO GRADE, SEX, AND INTELLI-
GENCE DIFFERENCES**

By IONA YOUNG



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the investigation which follows, *Studies in Education* presents to its readers a study of a different type from that found in any of the previous twenty-five issues. There is no attempt here to present the results of research of a scientific nature, to secure desirable social legislation, or to preserve historical material. Rather the purpose of Miss Young has been to aid primary-grade teachers (and incidentally their principals and superintendents) in gaining a clearer understanding of the children whom they teach.

Miss Young has found with some definiteness what these 117 youngsters from the first three grades of the Laboratory Schools of the Kansas State Teachers College (Emporia) see and hear in the movies, the comic strip, and the radio. Having spent on an average of seven hours a week in observation in these schools during the year, Miss Young was well enough known to these children that she had no difficulty in making the 15-20 minute interview with each child both pleasurable and profitable.

Making no claims that she is speaking for school children of the first, second, and third grades in general, Miss Young does believe, however, that she has determined and recorded accurately how this particular group of 117 reacts to questions such as follow: The time and amount of attendance at movies; favorite actors and actresses; first and second choice in pictures; the "funniest" character in the movies; the children's favorite comic strip and the reasons for choosing it; the least-liked comic strip; the "best" radio program; and the reaction to "straight" musical programs and news broadcasts.

Although no statistical presentation is given, an attempt was made to correlate answers with intelligence test scores, chronological ages, and the economic level of the homes as represented by occupations of parents or guardians.

Studies in Education appreciates much the aid given Miss Young in arranging her interviews by Miss Emma Humble, Principal of the Primary Grades of the Laboratory Schools. Acknowledgment is also made of indebtedness to Miss Florence Davis, Miss Gladys Kemp, Miss Bertha Robinson, Miss Ruth Tice, and to Miss Gwendolyn Townsend, all of the Laboratory Schools primary-grades staff who aided in various ways.

EDWIN J. BROWN, *Editor*.

ERRATA:

Page 8, line 6 should read "while 9 percent."

Page 10, under "Comic Strips," line 1 should read "because only nine percent of the 117 children."

pictures, comic strips, and radio programs. The value of such a study, it is believed, is to gain a clearer picture of what children see, read, and hear in the amusement field with the idea of applying guidance and correction, if necessary, to children's tastes in these three areas of entertainment.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

To the writer's knowledge, there has been no previous study made embracing the entire combination of movies, comic strips, and radio programs. A doctorate dissertation written by Azriel L. Eisenberg in 1936 dealt with the study of radio preferences of more than three thousand children in the New York Metropolitan area.¹

He submitted questionnaires to children in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades to determine whether any differences in the radio-listening habits and preferences existed between those of the lower and higher grades. His conclusions were that boys and girls differ in degree rather than in kind in the programs to which they listen. However, he found that boys listen more to programs that are adventurous and mysterious while girls preferred programs of sentiment, home, and family life.²

John James De Boer in his investigation of the emotional responses of children to radio drama for a doctor's dissertation devoted a portion of his study to finding children's preferences in radio programs. A questionnaire was distributed to seven hundred and thirty-eight pupils in grades one to eight in six elementary schools of Chicago, Ill. Conclusions regarding children's interests in radio programs were as follows:³

1. That children are interested in a vast range of types of radio programs.
2. Crimes, mystery, and horror stories are not popular on any grade level.
3. Both boys and girls expressed strong preference for adventure stories.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this survey has been to find the interests, preferences, and appreciations of children of the primary age-grade level with regard to motion pictures, comic strips, and radio programs. The value of such a study, it is believed, is to gain a clearer picture of what children see, read, and hear in the amusement field with the idea of applying guidance and correction, if necessary, to children's tastes in these three areas of entertainment.

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1. That children are interested in a vast range of types of radio programs.
2. Crimes, mystery, and horror stories are not popular on any grade level.
3. Both boys and girls expressed strong preference for adventure stories.
4. Programs which had a large appeal to boys and girls on all the grade levels of the elementary school included both adult and children's programs, humor, mystery, adventure, aviation, and musical-variety programs.

A survey of what Akron Public School children listen to on the radio was conducted by Irene Alice Ziegler. This survey included a sampling of one thousand and three hundred children. It revealed that children of the public

1. Azriel L. Eisenberg, *Children and Radio Programs* (Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1936), p. 33.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

3. John James De Boer, *The Emotional Responses of Children to Radio Drama* (Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, The University of Chicago, Chicago, 1938), pp. 31-37.

schools in Akron, irrespective of sex, race, age, or advantages selected the same type of programs and strongly favored three particular ones that were classified as children's programs. She also found that children rarely chose straight musical programs.⁴

Elizabeth M. Munger studied the preferences of school children for newspaper comic strips as related to age and sex differences. Her study revealed that there was a definite difference in both age and sex in choices for the "funnies."⁵

Only one significant investigation into children's preferences for motion pictures could be found. This study was made by Alice Miller Mitchell, who gathered data from 10,052 public-school children in Chicago in 1929. She concluded that children show preferences for certain kinds of pictures at different ages. The kinds of "movies" liked best were those which have plenty of action, as children enjoy the thrills that "movies" furnish for them.⁶

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This survey included all of the children in the first, second, and third grades of the Elementary Laboratory School of The Kansas State Teachers College located at Emporia, Kan. The total number of children interviewed was 117, including sixty-eight boys and forty-nine girls, with an average age of seven years and eight months.

The number of pupils investigated for each grade level was as follows: Grade I, thirty-four pupils with an average age of six years and seven months; Grade II, fifty-one pupils with an average age of seven years and eight months; and Grade III, thirty-two pupils averaging eight years and nine months.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

After determining the topic for research, the decision was made to narrow the investigation to the first, second, and third grades because of the writer's interest in the children of these age groups. It was decided that it would be advisable to prepare an interview blank for each child and to record the answers since the younger children would be unable to fill out a questionnaire unassisted.

A bibliography, composed chiefly of magazine articles pertaining to children's interests in movies, comic strips, and radio programs, was compiled. After considerable reading, the interview questions were then prepared. Before submitting these to the children, consultations were held with the supervisor and the five teachers of the primary department as to the most convenient periods for holding interviews and the technique of preparing the children for them.

The technique selected was simple. The teacher merely told the pupils that the writer wanted to see each child alone and to talk with him about some of his interests and the things he liked to do. This preparation was apparently sufficient, as the children were most responsive and coöperative. There was

4. Irene Alice Ziegler, *A Survey of What Akron Public-School Children Voluntarily Listen to on the Radio, Outside of School Hours* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, 1939), pp. 3-21.

5. Elizabeth M. Munger, *Preferences for Various Newspaper Comic Strips as Related to Age and Sex Differences in School Children* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 1939), p. 65.

6. Alice Miller Mitchell, *Children and Movies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), pp. 124-132.

never an instance in which one seemed hesitant or fearful. In fact, many pupils at the close of the interview would remark, "That was fun."

During the course of the early interviews, less important questions were omitted until the interview was shortened to the extent that it could easily be administered in fifteen minutes, the time allotted for each interview.

Upon the completion of the interviews, data were compiled for each grade rather than by section A and B of each grade in order to expedite and to facilitate tabulation.

To check answers that seemed doubtful as to authenticity, a news dealer was interviewed in regard to comic strips, the *Movie-Radio Guide Magazine* consulted for radio programs, and a letter of inquiry sent to a local theater manager about particular characters in motion pictures.

SOURCES OF DATA

The greater part of the information for this study was obtained from interviews.

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED

The following types of data were obtained from interviews with the teachers and the sources mentioned:

1. First and second choices of movies.
2. Favorite actors and actresses.
3. Time and amount of attendance at movies.
4. Children's opinion of the funniest character in movies.
5. Favorite comic strip and reasons why it is a favorite.
6. Comic strip least liked and reasons why.
7. Favorite activity among going to movies, reading comic strips, and listening to radio program.
8. Favorite radio programs of children.
9. Second and third choices of radio programs.
10. The number of children owning radios.
11. Likes and dislikes of children with regard to straight musical programs and news broadcasts.
12. Intelligence test scores, chronological ages, and the economic levels of homes as represented by occupations of parents or guardians.

CHAPTER II

GRADE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN CHOICE OF MOTION PICTURES, COMIC STRIPS, AND RADIO PROGRAMS

If there should be any preconceived conclusion that children prefer reading the "funny papers" to other types of amusement, this survey refutes such an idea. Of the 117 children in the primary grades, the entire student body being included rather than having a select group, approximately 72 percent said that they preferred to attend moving pictures, 19 percent would rather listen to radio programs, while only 9, or less than one percent, elected to read comic strips as their *favorite* amusement. One second-grade girl said that she had no preference. *Radio listening* was the most popular with the pupils of the third grade for the very excellent and practical reason, as expressed by them, that radio programs were always available while opportunities for seeing "movies" were sometimes restricted. It is evident that children of the first grade would prefer motion pictures to the comic strips because of their limited ability to read them, though just looking at the pictures is an enjoyable pastime with them.

MOTION PICTURES

While there are similarities in the types of motion-picture tastes running throughout the three grades, there are also expressed differences in grade levels. Westerns rank as first choice in each of the three grades, and with boys and girls alike. Adventure pictures that include mysteries, war, and those considered "scary" (their expression) were given preference by the children in Grade III as their second choice. While pupils in the first and second grades would rather see cartoons and comedies, next to the thrilling "Wild West" show.*

A noticeable difference, too, was observed in the third-grade children wherein they had begun to show an interest in pictures classified as educational. Only one second-grade child expressed an interest in this type of film. Two children of the first grade gave as their first choice an educational type of film, and one of them expressed as his second choice the same type. The second grade differed from both the first and third grades in the respect that no preferences were expressed for any artistic type of movies. (See Table I.)

Children were asked to name their favorite actress. In the first grade Judy Garland ranked first with Shirley Temple and Penny Singleton, who plays the

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Although every child interviewed was tremendously interested, as would seem natural for children in this age group, some answers and opinions were a bit vague and indefinite. One girl in Grade I said that she liked news reels best because she saw one once. One said that she didn't attend "movies" because her mother wouldn't let her, but that she knew that she liked them. Another said that she liked Shirley Temple shows the best, and that was the only kind she attended. Two boys of the first grade said they had seen only one show, which was *Pinocchio*. One of these said that *Pinocchio* frightened him, and that he did not like "movies" at all nor does he attend them. One pupil liked "singing" shows the best because, as she put it, "I don't like those old shooting ones." Some children expressed a preference for Westerns, even though they did not attend "movies," because they thought that they would like them the best. The most common reason for liking Westerns as given in the first-grade group was as follows: "Lots of shooting," "I like the cowboys," "People jump off their horses, get into fights, push people off cliffs and into oceans," "They ride horses." These remarks indicate that children like both action and thrills. First-grade children also like the humor and comedy of cartoons. They said, "I like the technicolor," and "I like to see animals that act like people."

part of Blondie, appearing equally as close seconds. With children of the second grade, Shirley Temple came in first position. Carole Lombard rated second. It was believed that Miss Lombard's tragic death in an airplane accident combined with the fact that her most recent film had just been shown at a local playhouse while this survey was being made may have largely disqualified this comparison, rendering it more or less invalid.

The children of the third grade also chose Shirley Temple as their favorite actress. Frances Gifford in the role of *Jungle Girl*, a serial, was the second choice in this grade. Numerous children of all grades had a favorite actress,

TABLE I
DIFFERENCES BY SCHOOL GRADES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
MOTION-PICTURE PREFERENCES*

TYPE OF MOTION PICTURES.	First grade.		Second grade.		Third grade.	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Adventure.....	5	14	6	11	7	22
Artistic.....	1	3	0	0	1	3
Cartoon.....	7	20	12	23	4	12
Comedy.....	2	6	2	4	4	12
Educational.....	2	6	0	0	1	3
Juvenile.....	3	9	2	4	0	0
Serial.....	1	3	1	3	3	10
Western.....	10	30	28	55	12	37
No choice.....	3	9	0	0	0	0

Read table thus: Five pupils in the first grade or (14%) said they preferred the adventure type; six pupils or (11%) in the second grade preferred this type of picture; seven pupils (22%) of the third-grade pupils preferred this type. Read in like manner for other types of pictures.

but they were unable to describe her sufficiently to make identification possible to the investigator. Only three children, or 9 percent of those interviewed, were indifferent as to preference.†

Next followed the selection of their favorite actors. Since the western "movies" ranked as first choice throughout all three of the grades, it was not surprising to find that Gene Autry was the prime favorite. In Grade I, however, Mickey Rooney showed an equal popularity with Gene Autry. Two

* Adventure pictures included those about airplanes, the army, pirates, mysteries, gangsters, and war; juvenile, Andy Hardy, Judy Garland, and Shirley Temple shows; educational, news reels and those pictures with a setting in a foreign country; artistic, musical comedies, and those involving skills such as skating.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Children selected an actress as their favorite for various reasons. "I like the way that she acts," was a common answer. Strangely enough, the actresses mentioned would be among the most outstanding stars of the day. This would indicate that their appreciations are markedly developed. Often, too, they would remark that certain actresses appeared in good shows. Children also expressed a liking for them as being humorous or if they were beautiful.

The survey revealed that the boys of this grade had less interest in actresses than in actors since they had more difficulty in recalling their names. Many of the boys did not have a favorite among the actresses though they had pronounced favorites among the actors. The girls, however, were the more familiar with both actors and actresses. This exhibited the more romantic trend.

children of this grade selected another cowboy, Wild Bill Hickok (Bill Elliott) as a favorite while 17 percent expressed no particular individual preference.

In Grade II, while Gene Autry continued as first choice, nineteen actors in all received acclaim. Less than one percent mentioned Wild Bill Hickok. Two children had no particular choice. One little girl said that she didn't like boys but only girls in motion pictures.

In Grade III Gene Autry received first ranking in 42 cases (37%), and the remainder was widely scattered. Although adventure movies were given a strong second choice in this group as to type of shows enjoyed, the comedian, Lou Costello, ranked as second choice as an actor with a 10 percent rating. It was further shown that 10 percent of this group had a favorite, but they did not know his name.†

COMIC STRIPS

Because only nine, or less than one percent of the 117 children examined in this survey, chose the reading of the comic strips as their favorite amusement among the three under consideration does not mean that children in the primary grades are not interested in the funny papers. On the contrary, only one child of the entire 117 in the group reported that he did not read them.

However, this fact may denote that children do not consider sources of entertainment involving reading as a favorite form of diversion. Yet, there can be no denial that comic strips, considered no longer comic, have a marked influence in shaping the thoughts and ideals of boys and girls.

Casual observation confirms this statement. Children are heard to use familiar terms of the comic strips in their daily conversations and in their play activities. A child has been seen, by the writer, sitting on the floor in a busy bookstore intently reading a book of comics and entirely oblivious to all the activities about him. A group of children whose attendance at a musical performance was compulsory brought with them comic books as a counteraction to dullness and boredom.

"Funnies" rating the highest in the primary grades were *Dick Tracy*, *Blondie*, and *Gasoline Alley*. In Grade I the choice ranged as follows: *Blondie*, 32 percent; *Gasoline Alley*, 17 percent; and *Dick Tracy*, 14 percent. *Superman*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Winnie Winkle*, *the Breadwinner*, rating around one percent each, and several others received mention as favorites, the group totaling 14 percent.

In Grade II the order of "funnies" was reversed.* *Dick Tracy* was the favorite of 37 percent. *Blondie* came in a rather poor second with 17 percent, and *Gasoline Alley* third with an 11 percent vote. A miscellaneous group comprising *Donald Duck*, *Superman*, *Smilin' Jack*, and *Mickey Mouse* each rated around one percent while sundry others combined total 13 percent.**

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The writer learned early that children are more familiar with the term "funnies" than with "comic strips." In fact, some were puzzled when asked what their favorite "comic strips" were.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Gene Autry ranked as the prime favorite among both boys and girls and for the same reason with both. His singing and his marksmanship particularly appeal to children. Typical answers were as follows: "He can shoot straight," "He's got a nice voice," or "I like his singing." Very seldom, if ever, did the children state that they liked an actor because he was handsome. The acting attracted them more than the appearance of the actor. A significant example in which a child recognized good acting was the one who mentioned Spencer Tracy as his favorite because as he said, "He played his part so good."

** AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The character best liked by both girls and boys in the comic strip, *Blondie*, is Dagwood. One first-grade pupil said that he liked it because as he declared, "There isn't so much shooting." A second-grade boy said that he liked it because, "Dag-

This reversal of choice between the first-grade children from *Blondie* with 32 percent and *Dick Tracy* with a 14 percent vote to the second-grade children wherein *Dick Tracy* received 37 percent and *Blondie* dropped to 17 percent showed conclusively the particular trend of age development.

In Grade III *Dick Tracy* not only retained but increased his popularity to 40 percent, while *Blondie* dropped another notch to 15 percent. *Popeye* appeared here with a 9 percent rating, while 25 percent of the others named were scattered among various characters of the comic strips. One boy in this grade declared that he did not read comics. This ascendancy of *Dick Tracy*, declining popularity of *Blondie*, the appearance of the oft-belligerent *Popeye* and his frequently contentious group all pointed to the trend toward the more adventuresome and away-from-the-home spirit.

There were, as to be expected, decided grade differences in the matter of the children who read and those who do not read the comics. It was found in Grade I that only 11 percent of the children read the comic strips for themselves: 14 percent "looked" at them, and 73 percent of the children have disclosed that an adult reads the "funnies" to them.

The second grade, having acquired greater reading ability, increased the percentage from 11 percent in the first grade to 33 percent of those reading the comics for themselves. Nevertheless, 50 percent still required the funny papers to be read to them.

The highest percentage of those reading the comic strips unassisted has been found in the third grade. Here the percent was 67, which represented an increase of 56 points over what had been found in the first grade. Only 10 percent just "looked" at the comics, and but 18 percent said that they preferred to have someone read the "funnies" to them.

RADIO PROGRAMS

It has been found that children have greatly diversified tastes in their selection of radio programs. This fact seemed odd when considered with the results of a survey made with the same group of children as to their tastes and preferences of motion pictures and comic strips. Percentages of choice as to age groups, grade levels, sex differences, and intelligence variations had pursued much the same ratio throughout both the latter entertainments.

When it has been recalled, however, that practically every home has one

wood yells at *Blondie* and because of the cats and dogs that are in it." A third-grade girl said that she liked it as she listened to it on the radio. In general, children liked it because they say *Dagwood* always gets into trouble, and that it is funny.

Children usually identify a comic strip by the character that attracts them the most. *Gasoline Alley* frequently was identified by Judy, the little girl who appears in it, rather than by *Skeezix* or *Uncle Walt* as adults are wont to do. In several instances it was identified by *Lollypop*, Judy's small pet dog. Some interesting reasons given by the children for their liking *Gasoline Alley* are quoted here: "Judy waded in the mud," "The dog gets into a lot of trouble," "Judy is funny," and "It's so funny."

Interviewing a local newsdealer, the writer remarked that boys liked *Dick Tracy*. "Not only little boys, but big boys," replied the newsdealer. "Whenever there is a new edition of *Dick Tracy*," he continued, "business men rush in to buy the paper. When I make deliveries to drugstores, the proprietor and the soda jerk stop their work to see what *Dick Tracy* is doing."

Children have said that they like *Dick Tracy* for the reasons as follows: "There's a lot of trouble in it," "Dick Tracy always gets into something and gets right out," "It's about police, and they have guns," "So many serious things happen," "He's really in a tight spot, and I like scary ones," "It has a lot of adventure in it. You always know he'll get out of trouble. It would be kinda' nice to have him killed, and another take his place." Then there was the third-grade boy who has given this reason, "He's a detective, and I like mysteries, and my last name is Tracy, too."

or more radios, and that there are many and varied programs on the air almost continuously, these scattered tastes and preferences are to be expected. Hence classification has become necessary. The programs chosen by the children have been grouped as follows: Quiz shows, drama, religious, children's programs, music, variety, news and educational. Even though this grouping at times has become somewhat arbitrary, it has best served the purpose.

In Grade I, 53 percent of the children selected children's programs as their favorites, while 20 percent preferred drama, with variety and quiz shows each coming in for a scant 10 percent. Two children of this grade said that they did not listen to the radio.

Children's programs mentioned with the greatest frequency in this grade were the *Lone Ranger*, *Mystery Man*, and *Little Orphan Annie*. Other programs in the same classification included *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch*, *Jack Armstrong*, *Jimmy Allen*, *Scrapes of Scrappy*, *Shirley Temple*, and *I Love a Mystery*.

Drama pertaining to family life and home sentiment more suited to juvenile entertainment was preferred by first-grade children to mystery and gangster stories. *Mr. District Attorney* was the only mystery show mentioned. The other programs were *Blondie*, *Doctor Christian*, *Meet Mr. Meek*, and *The Aldrich Family*.

Of programs classified as variety which includes jokes and music, *Maxwell House Coffee Time* with Baby Snooks was cited. *Red Skelton* and *Jack Benny* were also selected. Only two quiz shows were stated as choices. They were *Truth or Consequences* and *Victory Spin It and Win It*, the latter program being broadcast by a local station.

In Grade II slightly under 50 percent elected children's programs with a scant 20 percent choosing the drama. Variety came in for a slightly-under 12 percent choice. Educational, music and religion comprised the remainder of the programs.

The *Lone Ranger* retained its popularity in the group of children's programs in the second grade.* This was followed by *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch*, *Jack Armstrong*, *Mystery Man*, *Little Orphan Annie*, and *Shirley Temple* in a descending order of preference.

Of the dramas, the *Aldrich Family* was the prevailing selection. *Bulldog Drummond*, *Mr. District Attorney*, *Story of Bob Clayton*, *Blondie*, and *Front-Page Farrell* received mention.

Red Skelton was a favorite comedian as well as Charlie McCarthy on the *Chase and Sanborn* program and Baby Snooks on the *Maxwell House Coffee Time* hour. *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *Jack Benny* were the remaining variety programs that comprised the group.

Hobby Lobby was considered an educational program. The only musical program mentioned throughout the grades was *Henry and Jerome*. Two religious programs were given as first choices, and of these, the *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour* was listed in this, the second grade.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—There were some grade differences in the reasons given for liking a program. Children's explanations were more elaborate in the second and third grades. For instance, when queried why they liked the *Lone Ranger*, first-grade pupils said, "The fast horses," "Lots of shooting," and "I like Silver." Several second-grade children stated, "He's like Gene Autry, and he's in serious things. Silver goes so fast," "He's always getting the crooks and never misses," "He's a cowboy, and he's for the law and doing right things." In Grade III the *Lone Ranger* is liked by a pupil because he never gets caught, and he always tricks someone. Another merely asserted, "It's exciting."

Grade III has continued to show a preference for the children's programs though to a lesser degree. Here 43 percent listened to them. The drama rose to a 31 percent choice. Variety held to a scant 10 percent. Educational, religious, and quiz programs each came in for mention. One small girl announced that they had just bought a radio and that she had not yet become acquainted with the programs.

With the exception of *Terry and the Pirates* and *Tom Mix* that were not specified in the second grade, the same children's programs in their order were continued in the third grade. However, the *Mystery Man* had been discarded here as a choice.

Interest was shown in the same dramas excluding the *Story of Bob Clayton* and *Front-Page Farrell* with the continuance of *The Aldrich Family* at the top of the list. Two additions made to the group were *Inner Sanctum Mystery* and *Meet Mr. Meek*.

Variety programs were narrowed to a field of three. These were *Fibber McGee and Molly*, the *Chase and Sanborn* program, and *Maxwell House Coffee Time*. *Light of the World*, a religious program, *Truth or Consequences*, a quiz show, and *Homemaker's Forum*, an educational program from the local station composed a miscellany of first-choice programs.*

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—"Because you get ice cream free," was the reason a first-grade boy said that he liked the program, *Victory Spin It and Win It*. "They have letters from soldiers, and the air corps, and I like the hymns," was the explanation for preferring the *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour* program. One second-grade girl said that she liked Shirley Temple because, "She acted so much like my cousin." The reason most children selected Red Skelton was because of his remark, "If I dood it, I get a whippin'; I dood it." *Mr. District Attorney* was chosen for the reason that it was scary. A number of children admitted that they liked to be frightened. When the *Homemaker's Forum* was designated by a third-grade girl, the writer was nonplussed. It developed that the girl's mother was the author and producer of the program, and "I like to hear the recipes and hints for cooking," she added.

CHAPTER III

SEX DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN CHOICE OF MOTION PICTURES, COMIC STRIPS, AND RADIO PRO- GRAMS

MOTION PICTURES

An analysis of the motion-picture tastes as reported by sixty-eight boys and forty-nine girls comprising the whole group showed notable sex differences in their selections. The preference for Westerns as revealed in the comparison of grade differences was not modified.

Over 50 percent of the boys throughout the primary grades expressed a preference for "cowboy shows." That their love for action which includes triumph over formidable obstacles, detection of criminals, and daring feats of aviators was evidenced by the fact that 28 percent chose movies in the adventure category as their second choice. The humor of cartoons appeals to boys of the primary level slightly more than "movies" classified as purely comedy since the cartoons ranked third in their preferential list.

Boys of the six-to-nine-year age apparently do not care for the juvenile types of entertainment as represented by the Andy Hardy series, Judy Garland, and Shirley Temple dramatizations. Only one boy in the third grade registered any interest for this type of "movie," and it was only as his second choice.

Nor do boys care for dancing and singing that are characteristic of musical comedies. Here again, there was only one vote given by a third-grade boy for them. It is noteworthy to find that they were more interested in "movies" considered educational, if having a degree of adventure, than they were in the juvenile and artistic type of movie entertainment. This was particularly true of the third-grade boys. Serials were not so popular as comedies. Less than one percent elected them as first choice.

In both their first and second-choice selections, cartoon types were the paramount preference of the girls in the primary grades. This does not imply that girls do not care for Westerns and adventure films. On the contrary, these two classes of movies received a large percentage of votes. This is shown in Table II.

The interests of girls were more evenly distributed among the remaining classifications with the exception of the artistic type. In this category less than one percent chose musical-comedy films and those displaying skills such as the skating skill of Sonja Henie.

It may be said that these girls have a wider range of interests than these boys in their preference of movies, but that the interests of the boys are relatively narrower and have a greater degree of intensity.

The children were asked to name two moving pictures, and of the two, the one they liked the better. This was done with the view of confirming their first and second choices of types of motion pictures. However, it was found that of the films liked the better, the majority named those that were being shown at the time of the investigation, making the results somewhat invalid.

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
MOTION-PICTURE PREFERENCES*

TYPE OF MOTION PICTURES.	First grade number.	Second grade number.	Third grade number.	Total grade number.	Percent.
Boys					
Adventure.....	3	6	5	14	20
Artistic.....	0	0	0	0	0
Cartoon.....	4	2	1	7	10
Comedy.....	1	0	3	4	6
Educational.....	1	0	1	2	4
Juvenile.....	0	0	0	0	0
Serial.....	1	1	2	4	6
Western.....	7	20	9	36	53
No choice.....	1	0	0	1	1
Totals.....	18	29	21	68	100
Girls					
Adventure.....	2	0	2	4	8
Artistic.....	1	0	1	2	4
Cartoon.....	3	10	3	16	33
Comedy.....	1	2	1	4	8
Educational.....	1	0	0	1	2
Juvenile.....	3	2	0	5	10
Serial.....	0	0	1	1	2
Western.....	3	8	3	14	29
No choice.....	2	0	0	2	4
Totals.....	16	22	11	49	100

* Read table thus: Three boys in the first grade preferred the adventure type; six boys in the second grade preferred the same type; five boys in the third preferred the adventure type also. This makes a total of fourteen boys (20%) that preferred this type. Read in like manner for other types of pictures.

Also, a number of the children were unable to recall the title, but they identified the picture by the characters. This situation would probably prevail for adults, also.

Results of this phase of the research established well the fact that boys liked Westerns best.* This type of motion picture mentioned with the most frequency included Gene Autry in *Deep in the Heart of Texas*, *Cowboy Serenade*, *The Fargo Kid*, and the *Three Mesquiteers*. A few of the comedies mentioned were *Hold That Ghost*, featuring Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, *Shut My Big Mouth*, with Joe E. Brown, *To Be or Not to Be*, with Jack Benny and Carole Lombard, and *Look Who's Laughing*, with Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy, Fibber McGee and Molly.

Adventure movies named with some degree of repetition were *Sundown* and *Johnny Eager*, war stories, *Castle in the Desert*, a Charlie-Chan mystery, *Dive Bomber* and *Captains of the Clouds*, both the latter having the appeal of airplanes for boys.†

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The writer was amused at a number of the boys when they were asked about "movies" they liked better. They stated the title first, and then they went into lengthy details about the story, accompanying their story-telling with gestures and terms that presented a concept of the thrills they had experienced in seeing the "movies."

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—First-grade children were as adept in recalling the title of "movies" as second- and third-grade boys and girls. A first-grade boy mentioned *Johnny Eager*, and made this comment, "It was exciting. I saw Jap uniforms, and they were dirty. American uniforms were as clean as pins." Another named *Gulliver's Travels*, classified as educational, and remarked, "They had a wolf. I've got the book at home." A second-grade boy chose *How Green Was My Valley*, a tragedy, because he liked the characters. A boy in the same class chose *Castle in the Desert* saying "It had more killing, and people who got killed really

Questioning revealed that 24 percent of the girls named "movies" which they liked better as those of the Western class. This was contradictory to their previous selection of cartoons as their first choice. These remained at 22 percent, making them second choice. Comedies named by 20 percent were ranked as third choice. Westerns mentioned by girls were the same as those named by the boys. In the cartoon class, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, and *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* were those seen and enjoyed by the girls. *Charlie's Aunt*, *Blondie Goes to College*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Hold That Ghost*, and *To Be or Not To Be* were those among the group liked the better of the two movies appearing on the girls' list.*

COMIC STRIPS

The fascination for *Dick Tracy* continues. Forty-six percent, or nearly one-half of the sixty-eight boys interviewed, designated this comic strip as the one they liked best. This was the largest percentage given to any one "funny" named by both boys and girls. It was a general favorite with boys in all three grades whereas the girls relegated *Dick Tracy* to third position.

Where *Blondie* rated as first choice with the girls, but 15 percent of the boys selected it after *Dick Tracy*. The girls elected *Gasoline Alley* as the "funny" to read after *Blondie*, making it apparent that girls respond more to "Dagwood sandwiches," the antics of the quintuplet dogs, Baby Dumpling's precocity, and the "homey" surroundings in *Gasoline Alley*.

There were thirty-two comics mentioned by the 117 children. Twenty of these were selected by both boys and girls. The boys named six that were not included on the girls' list. They were *Smitty*, the *Lone Ranger*, *Harold Teen*, *Jimmy Allen*, *Terry and the Pirates*, and *Winnie Winkle, the Breadwinner*. The girls chose *The Gumps*, *Peter Horsefeathers*, *Little Annie Rooney*, *Smoky Stover*, the *Wonder Woman*, and *Bugs Bunny* not mentioned by the boys.

Girls read the same comics that boys did, but they cared less for the adventuresome story that has become serialized in a majority of the comics. They also liked the comic strips in which a girl is a leading character. Similarly, boys tend to have a greater fondness for stories about men and boys.

A noteworthy fact is that comics such as *Superman*, *Scorchy Smith*, and

weren't dead." *Sundown* was selected with the commentary, "It was about war." *Pinocchio* was liked because, "Pinocchio gets smaller, and a giant picks him up." *To Be or Not To Be* was selected with the explanation, "Funny. At the end a man who looked like Hitler told men to jump out," and another boy said of the same show, "It was funny, and it was Carole Lombard's last show." A second-grade boy expressed his disgust with a "movie" by stating, "It was about love and dancing. The girl was married three times." A third-grade boy elected *Boys' Town* with the reason: "Because it's good to help you work when you get older." One in the same grade liked *Robbers of the Range* better. He said, "It was funny, and I liked the way Tim Holt caught the robbers. I laughed until my sides burst." A fragile-appearing lad chose *Bring 'Em Back Alive* with the statement, "It shows how the python got out and how they captured the animals."

* AUTHOR'S NOTE. Three little girls in different grades chose *How Green Was My Valley*, classified as educational, as their "best" picture. Their reasons were as follows: "I just liked it better. A girl was in it, and some boys I liked were in it." "It was over in Wales. I liked the father. It was sad at the last," "The little boy had lots of things about him. He went to school, his brothers teased him; then he got hurt. At the last it was sad." A first-grade girl said she liked *Pinocchio* and added, "I thought he was so cute." A second-grade girl chose Mickey Mouse cartoons, explaining, "I like something simple, so I won't have bad dreams." One liked *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* for the reason there were little people in it. *Gone With the Wind* was mentioned only once, and this was by a second-grade girl who made the statement, "It was techni-colored, and I have paper dolls like the people in it." *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, adult entertainment, was liked for this reason: "Jimmy Durante was so silly." A sophisticated miss in the third grade selected *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and commented, "The characters were dressed nice, and I liked Dopey and the dwarfs. I was glad when the wicked queen was killed."

Smilin' Jack, questionable as to their wholesome effect on children, were not given a significant rating. These findings may be seen in Table III.

What comic strips do children like the least? Contrary to a general assumption, neither sex professed a liking for *Little Orphan Annie*, the paragon of good behavior.* Twenty-five percent of the girls expressed a dislike for this particular comic. *Superman* ranked second as the comic strip least liked. *Li'l Abner*, *The Gumps*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Little Annie Rooney*, each named

TABLE III
DISTRIBUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
COMIC STRIP PREFERENCES

TITLES OF COMIC STRIPS.	First grade number.	Second grade number.	Third grade number.	Total grade number.	Percent.†
Girls					
Blondie.....	5	7	3	15	31
Bugs Bunny.....	0	0	1	1	2
Dick Tracy.....	1	3	2	6	12
Donald Duck.....	0	1	1	2	4
Gasoline Alley.....	5	5	0	10	20
Li'l Abner.....	0	1	0	1	2
Lit. An. Rooney.....	1	0	0	1	2
Mickey Mouse.....	1	1	0	2	4
Peter Horse-feathers.....	1	1	0	2	4
Popeye.....	0	1	1	2	4
Scorchy Smith.....	0	1	0	1	2
Smilin' Jack.....	1	0	1	2	4
Smoky Stover.....	0	0	1	1	2
Superman.....	0	1	0	1	2
The Gumps.....	1	0	0	1	2
Wonder Woman.....	0	0	1	1	2
Totals.....	16	22	11	49	99

Read table thus: Five girls in the first grade preferred *Blondie*; seven girls in the second grade chose the same comic strip; three girls in the third grade selected *Blondie* as first choice. This makes a total of fifteen girls (31%) who preferred *Blondie*. Read the remainder of the table in like manner.

by less than one percent, were among those in the group liked the least by girls. Ten percent stated that they liked all of the "funnies."

Among the boys, 23 percent disliked *Little Orphan Annie*. Twelve percent disliked *The Gumps*, and *Bringing Up Father* had no particular interest for

* Author's note. The following reasons were given by first-grade boys for liking *Little Orphan Annie* the least; "It takes so long to read it," "There's too much fighting in it," "I don't understand the words," "It's too much hospital and things like that." *The Gumps* wasn't liked by boys in the same grade because they said, "There's too much stuff that isn't true," "It has dark pictures, and I can't see them very well." One boy didn't like *Bringing Up Father* because, "Maggie always has a wig, and her face remade." *Scorchy Smith* is too impractical for one child, for according to him, "Scorchy Smith let an airplane wreck, and they should have given it to the army." "It has too much dumb stuff in it, and not enough shooting," was the remark made about *Little Orphan Annie* by a second-grade boy. Others said, "You know what's going to happen," and, "It's sort of like love and stuff, and I don't like so much of that," "Can't understand it," and "Nothing like *Dick Tracy*, but just doctor stuff." One boy described *Captain Marvel*, a comic little-liked, as being "too junky." The general complaint against *The Gumps* was the lack of interesting things in it. *Superman* wasn't liked by one small lad because he changes into other clothes. Boys in the third grade disliked *Little Orphan Annie* for practically the same reasons that the lower-grade boys gave. Criticisms of *The Gumps* included these remarks: "There couldn't be such things as dinosaurs these days. It isn't true." "It's just an old story. Nothing exciting usually happens except one time Chester brought home a dinosaur," and "They talk about bad stuff." *Bringing up Father* was censured by one with this statement, "Jiggs never does much except to walk around." Another said, "Not much to it." *Gasoline Alley* was mentioned by one with the reason, "I don't like the dog because it chases after people."

† Percent to nearest whole numbers.

the boys. Less than one percent said they didn't know of any comics they liked least, and less than one percent said they liked all of the comic strips.† The results are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV
DISTRIBUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
COMIC-STRIP PREFERENCES

TITLES OF COMIC STRIPS.	First grade number.	Second grade number.	Third grade number.	Total grade number.	Percent.*
Boys					
Blondie.....	6	2	2	10	15
Dick Tracy.....	4	16	11	31	46
Donald Duck.....	0	1	0	1	2
Gasoline Alley.....	1	1	0	2	3
Harold Teen.....	0	1	0	1	1
Jimmy Allen.....	1	0	0	1	2
Lil' Abner.....	0	1	1	2	3
Lone Ranger.....	0	1	0	1	1
Mickey Mouse.....	1	1	1	3	4
Popeye.....	0	0	2	2	2
Scorchy Smith.....	0	0	1	1	2
Smilin' Jack.....	0	2	1	3	4
Superman.....	3	1	1	5	7
Terry and Pirates.....	0	1	0	1	1
Winnie Winkle.....	2	1	0	3	5
No choice.....	0	0	1	1	2
Totals.....	18	29	21	68	100

Read table thus: Six boys in the first grade chose *Blondie*; two boys in the second grade and two in the third grade preferred *Blondie*. The total that preferred this comic strip is ten boys or 15 percent. Read in like manner for other comic strips.

An attempt was made to find whether or not children read the comic strips in which they had no especial interest. It was found that 57 percent of the girls read all these comics despite lack of interest, 16 percent didn't read them, 16 percent said that they just "looked" at them while 10 percent were indefinite.

In questioning the boys, 40 percent reported reading the less-liked "funnies," 24 percent didn't read them, 19 percent read them "sometimes," 9 percent merely "looked" at them, and 8 percent gave no reply.

Conclusions indicated that specific sex differences existed as to the choice of the comic strips among boys and girls.

RADIO PROGRAMS

The findings in Table V show that children differed in their choice of radio programs. Among the forty-five programs listed by both groups, twelve pro-

* Percents to nearest whole number.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—"Sometimes they put people in haunted houses, and they don't like to stay there," "It's so sad and kinda' makes you cry sometimes," "It's hard to understand, and it isn't funny," were interesting commentaries made by girls in the first grade about *Little Orphan Annie*. Of *Superman* one said, "There are bad people in it." Second-grade girls didn't like *Superman* for the following reasons: "He gives me bad dreams," "It's about shooting," "I wish he would stay dressed up one way or another." *Lil' Abner* was mentioned with more frequency in this grade, and some criticisms were: "I don't like the way he looks, and the way he talks," "There are too many murders, and I don't like them." Girls in the third grade were emphatic in their statements concerning their dislike for *Little Orphan Annie*. One asserted, "It isn't true, and it isn't about Orphan Annie." Other statements included, "Not very exciting. She gets sick," "Anybody could read it in a minute, and I like hard things," "It's sort of droopy and sad."

TABLE V
DISTRIBUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
RADIO PROGRAM PREFERENCES

RADIO PROGRAMS.	First grade number.	Second grade number.	Third grade number.	Total grade number.	Percent.
Girls					
Baby Snooks.....	1	2	1	4	8
Blondie.....	1	1	1	3	6
Fibber McGee and Molly.....	0	1	0	1	2
Front-Page Farrell.....	0	1	0	1	2
Gene Autry.....	1	1	2	4	8
Henry Aldrich.....	1	4	2	7	14
Hobby Lobby.....	0	1	0	1	2
Homemaker's Forum.....	0	0	1	1	2
I Love a Mystery.....	1	0	0	1	2
Jack Armstrong.....	1	1	0	2	4
Jack Benny.....	1	0	0	1	2
Little Orphan Annie.....	3	2	0	5	10
Lone Ranger.....	1	0	1	2	4
Meet Mr. Meek.....	1	0	0	1	2
Mr. District Attorney.....	0	0	1	1	2
Mystery Man.....	1	1	0	2	4
Red Skelton.....	0	2	0	2	4
Scrapes of Scrappy.....	2	1	0	3	6
Shirley Temple.....	1	2	1	4	8
Story of Bob Clayton.....	0	1	0	1	2
No choice.....	0	1	1	2	4
Totals.....	16	22	11	49	98

Read table thus: One girl in the third grade chose *Baby Snooks*; two girls in the second grade preferred same radio program while one in the third grade specified it as a favorite. The total number preferring *Baby Snooks* was four or 8 percent. Read in like manner for other radio programs.

grams appearing on the boys' list did not appear on the girls,' and seven programs appearing on the girls' list did not appear on that of the boys.*

While the leading percentages for each group were for children's programs, certain sex differences were evidenced in the selections of those that comprised the classification.†

Girls preferred *Little Orphan Annie*, Shirley Temple's *Junior Miss* program, and *Scrapes of Scrappy*, whereas boys liked those adventure stories typified by the *Lone Ranger*, *Jack Armstrong*, and *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch*.

The type of program preferred by girls and boys as second choice was drama. Differences were again apparent in the programs listened to by each sex. The one favored by the girls was *The Aldrich Family*, and next to that was *Blondie*. Two programs in this category not appearing on the boys' list were the *Story of Bob Clayton* and *Front-Page Farrell*.‡

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Children apparently make little distinction between children and adult programs. Those listened to for humor and comedy were all for adult entertainment. However, it may be said that these are presented at hours most convenient for children with the exception of *Red Skelton*, which is on the air after the bedtime of most children. The number of children who listen to programs and those who stay up to hear programs are discussed in a later chapter.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The writer made the attempt at the beginning of the study to record those radio stations to which children listen with regularity. The majority of the children examined did not know the call letters nor the locations except the local radio station. A number of the children designated the station by giving a reply as the following, which was considered typical, "You find the station three points below 120 on the dial."

‡ AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Because of the interest the writer has in the program, *Quiz Kids*, she asked a number of children if they liked to listen to this program. A comparatively small group of boys and girls heard the program regularly, but those that did, said that they liked it.

TABLE VI

DISTRIBUTION OF SEX DIFFERENCES (NUMBER AND PERCENTS) IN
RADIO PROGRAM PREFERENCES

RADIO PROGRAMS.	First grade number.	Second grade number.	Third grade number.	Total grade number.	Percent.
Boys					
Baby Snooks.....	1	1	0	2	3
Blondie.....	1	0	0	1	1
Bulldog Drummond.....	0	1	1	2	3
Chas. McCarthy.....	0	3	1	4	6
Dr. Christian.....	1	0	0	1	1
Fibber McGee and Molly.....	0	1	1	2	3
Gene Autry.....	1	5	1	7	10
Henry Aldrich.....	0	1	3	4	6
Henry and Jerome.....	0	1	0	1	2
Hobby Lobby.....	0	1	0	1	2
Inner Sanctum Mystery.....	0	0	1	1	2
Jack Armstrong.....	1	3	3	7	10
Jimmy Allen.....	1	0	0	1	1
Light of World.....	0	0	1	1	2
Little Orphan Annie.....	0	0	2	2	3
Lone Ranger.....	2	8	3	13	20
Meet Mr. Meek.....	0	0	1	1	1
Mr. District Attorney.....	2	1	0	3	4
Mystery Man.....	2	1	0	3	4
Old Fashioned Revival Hour.....	0	1	0	1	1
Red Skelton.....	1	1	0	2	3
Terry and the Pirates.....	0	0	1	1	1
Tom Mix.....	0	0	1	1	2
Truth or Consequences.....	2	0	1	3	4
Victory Spin It and Win It.....	1	0	0	1	2
No Choice.....	2	0	0	2	3
Totals.....	18	29	21	68	100

Read table thus: Baby Snooks was chosen by one boy in the first grade and by one in the second grade while no boy in the third grade selected this program. The total number preferring Baby Snooks was two or three percent.

The boys were more interested in programs of mystery, as, for example, *Inner Sanctum Mystery*, *Bulldog Drummond*, and *Mr. District Attorney*. The boys also named *Doctor Christian* and *The Aldrich Family*, the latter having a slight lead over all the other programs. § This is indicated in Table VI.

§ AUTHOR'S NOTES.—Children were asked offhand to name five other programs which they enjoyed. No statistical data were compiled from this information since it was done only with the motive of curiosity and the hope of finding additional programs to which children listened. Following are the programs and their classifications as mentioned by the girls: Children's programs—*The Children's Hour* and *Let's Pretend*; drama—*Woman in White*, *The O'Neill's*, *Scattergood Baines*, *The Shadow*, *Rainbow House*, *That Brewster Boy*, *Big Town*, *Lincoln Highway*, *Grand Central Station*, *Young Widder Brown*, *Against the Storm*, *This is War*; variety—*Kate Smith Hour*, *Cheer-up Gang*, *Johnny Presents*, *Kraft Music Hall* with Bing Crosby, and the *Texaco-Star Theater* with Fred Allen; musical—*Fitch Bandwagon*, *Pause That Refreshes*, *Major Bowes-Original Amateur Hour*, *Your Hit Parade*; and quiz show—*How Am I Doing?*

Some of the programs on the girls' list also appeared on the boys' list, but to avoid repetition, they are not given in the following chosen by the boys: Children's programs—*Captain Midnight*, *In the Future With Biff Baker*, *The Flying Patrol*; drama—*Maudie's Diary*, *One Man's Family*, *Valiant Lady*, *We*, *The Abbotts*, *Portia Faces Life*, *Ma Perkins*, *Abie's Irish Rose*, *Betty and Bob Drake*, *Little Theater Off Times Square*, *The Crime Doctor*, *Adventures of the Thin Man*, and *Gangbusters*; variety—*Burns and Allen*, *Eddie Cantor*, *The Arkansas Traveler*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, and the *Kansas Round-up*; quiz show—*Dr. I. Q.*, *Battle of the Sexes*, *Pepsi-Cola Kwizz for Kidz* sponsored by a local station; religious—*Life Can Be Beautiful* and the *Lutheran Hour*; educational—the *Spelling Bee*; music—*Poetic Reveries*, a local program, the *Prudential Family Hour*, and *Fred Waring in Pleasure Time*.

In looking over both lists of programs, one can note the number of dramas that are colloquially called "soap operas" or "cliff hangers" that hold an interest for boys and girls. *Poetic Reveries*, featuring organ music, was named by a first-grade boy whose father's business establishment sponsored it. The second-grade boy whose favorite program was the *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour* also chose the *Lutheran Hour*, reflecting an influence of religion within the home.

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The third choice of programs of both boys and girls was the variety show. The humor of Baby Snooks on the *Maxwell House Coffee Time* was listened to slightly more by the girls presumably because of the "little girl" character. *Jack Benny* also exercised a greater attraction for the girls.

The first preference of boys for comedians was for those of their own sex. These were Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy on the *Chase and Sanborn* program. Their interests were then evenly divided among *Red Skelton*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and *Maxwell House Coffee Time*, programs also mentioned by the girls.

A difference stood out in that boys revealed a wider range of program preferences than girls did. To those previously discussed, religious, musical, and educational programs, each receiving less than one percent mention, were included, whereas only four classes of programs were selected by the girls.

CHAPTER IV

INTELLIGENCE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN CHOICE OF MOTION PICTURES, COMIC STRIPS, AND RADIO PROGRAMS

MOTION PICTURES

This investigation in particular had for its objective a comparison of similarities and differences in the tastes and preferences found among boys and girls in various intelligence groups. These groups were determined by the intelligence quotients that were obtained from the most recent intelligence test the individual had taken.*

The dull, normal, and "bright" were classified in each grade. In all, the following number of students were found in the different groups: Eighteen, or 15 percent, in the very superior; forty-six, or 39 percent, in the superior; forty-seven, or 40 percent, in the normal; six, or 5 percent, in the dull classifications. It readily can be seen by these figures that the group is an extraordinary one in that there is an extremely low percentage of pupils of low intelligence.

Few differences were observed among them in their preferences as to types of motion pictures. Westerns were the supreme choice by far with all of them. The normal group, which was the largest, elected Westerns by 47 percent.

Forty percent of the superior group, the next largest, specified the same type. In the very superior group, preferences were more scattered, but the "Wild West" show continued to lead slightly. Four children within the dull groups preferred Westerns while two of them chose comedies.

The four classes of pictures that ranked less than one percent among the normal and bright students as first choice were the serial, juvenile, educational, and artistic. The dull pupils expressed no preference for these classifications.

The variant among the intelligence groups was more noticeable in their second choice of types of photoplays. The humor of the animated cartoons as depicted by Mickey Mouse, Pluto, the Pup, and Porky, the Pig, had a great appeal for the extremely "bright" boys and girls.

However, the fact that 60 percent of the dull ones chose cartoons also indicated that intelligence did not enter as a potent factor in the selection. Among the dull, comedy, and the juvenile types, each rated 20 percent as revealed by the investigation. The child with the extreme deficiency selected adventure as his second choice of films.

* **AUTHOR'S NOTE.**—The intelligence quotients were obtained from various tests including the Pintner-Cunningham and the Kuhlman-Anderson, all group tests. The writer was advised by Dr. H. E. Schrammel, Director of the Bureau of Educational Measurements of the Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, that the Terman's classification of intelligence quotients was applicable to the interpretation of these test scores. His classification is as follows:

Above 140	Genius or near genius.
120-140	Very superior intelligence.
110-120	Superior intelligence.
90-110	Normal or average intelligence.
80-90	Dullness.
70-80	Border-line deficiency.
Below 70	Definitely feeble-minded.

Fifteen children, or 33 percent, in the normal class preferred the adventure type of film. The superior group, after selecting cartoons as second choice, rated the adventure film as their third preference. Cartoons were rated as second choice by the very superior children. Twenty-two percent were divided between the adventure and juvenile types of entertainment.

Of the very superior children, one expressed a dislike for motion pictures; one stated parental disapproval, and eight gave no definite reason for not attending shows except on rare occasions. This was probably parental influence.

"Who do you think is the 'funniest' person in the movies" was a query put to the children. The tabulation of replies revealed interesting results. The normal group gave a wide range of preferences that included characters of the animated cartoons and well-known comedy teams. Ranking as the top-notch comedian was none other than Mickey Mouse who was chosen by 19 percent of the children. A cowboy character, "Frog," as portrayed by Smiley Burnette in the Gene Autry photoplays, was selected by 12 percent as the "funniest" person. Nine children, or 19 percent, stated that they had no preferences.*

With the superior children, Mickey Mouse maintained his position at the head of the list. Frog or Smiley Burnette and the comedy team of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were equally favored in that each received a 15 percent vote. Jack Benny was also well-liked by this group.†

Those pupils classified as very superior had a larger percentage (33) who had no favorite comedian. This may have been due to the fact that they attended "movies" less often than the others as revealed by the survey. Donald Duck stood the higher on the preferential list with these children than did Mickey Mouse. The latter was chosen for second position.‡

An attempt was made to discover what factor home influences may have had to do with the greater percent of nonattendance and indifference to "movies" found among the very superior children. Insofar as those coming from homes among the professional or religious classification, no such influence predominated.§

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—A western enthusiast who selected the character, Tadpole, explained upon inquiry that he was the brother of Frog. This lends the thought that perhaps the names to possible relationships of comedians appealed as much to children as did the comedians themselves. In the following the names of other comedians as selected by the normal group are given in addition to their percentages: Mickey Mouse 19; Frog 12; Donald Duck 9; Bud Abbott and Lou Costello 6; Dagwood 4; the Marx Brothers 4; Pinocchio 2; Tadpole 2; Seven Dwarfs 2; Cannonball (Dub Taylor) 2; Mickey Rooney 2; John Payne 2; Pluto, the Pup 2; Blondie 2; Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy 2; Porky, the Pig 2; Joe E. Brown 2; Jimmy Durante 2; and no choice 19.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Following were the comedians and the percentages by which they were chosen in the superior classifications: Mickey Mouse 20; Lou Costello and Bud Abbott 15; Frog 15; Jack Benny 10; Donald Duck 8; Pluto, the Pup 7; the Marx Brothers 3; Joe E. Brown 3; Cannonball 3; Blondie 2; Pinocchio 2; Bob Hope 2; Curly (Eddie Acuff) in *Jungle Girl* 2; Nelson Eddy 2; Hugh Herbert 2; and no choice 4.

‡ AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The comedians and the percentages by which they were selected in the very superior classification were as follows: Donald Duck 22; Mickey Mouse 17; Pluto, the Pup 5; Mickey Rooney 5; Charlie McCarthy 5; Lou Costello 5; Jack Benny 5; and no choice 33.

§ AUTHOR'S NOTE.—It is the opinion of the author that, since the majority of the very superior children who were infrequent attendants at the movies were among the younger children from Grade I that such nonattendance was due to parental restraint in the majority of cases rather than to their expressed indifference or lack of interest. One should not overlook as well the assumption that extremely "bright" children so restrained may have a stronger inclination to rationalize or to save face, as it were, than do those among the dull. That is, they would not care to admit being so restricted and would fall back upon the excuse that they did not care for movies while the dull ones would be frank, readily admitting the true reason.

The dull ones preferred a human being as a comedian rather than a cartoon character. Frog was elected by 40 percent. Abbott and Costello received 20 percent of the votes, and 40 percent claimed having no preferences. The comedian selected by the borderline case was Joe E. Brown.

The sole discrepancy, if any, that was found among these children grouped by their intelligence ratings was that the normal and "bright" groups expressed the thought that the humor of cartoon characters was more appealing than the amusement offered by an animate comedian. This is the appeal of the imagination for the high grade intelligence.

COMIC STRIPS

Tabulations revealed that in choosing their favorite comic strips, there were a few specific differences among the children when grouped according to their degree of intelligence quotients. An odd note was that, while Mickey Mouse was rated as a top entertainer in the movies, he was not given significant ranking by any save the dull, with whom he polled a 20 per cent or a minority vote.

The outstandingly "bright" group chose *Blondie* as the leading "funny." The comic strip next selected, although by only 10 percent, was *Superman*. Each of the nine comics on the remainder of the list received nearly identical percentages.*

The fact that *Blondie* was chosen by the highest percentage may indicate that the more intelligent children demand less adventuresome or less thrilling comics. The interests and selections by both the superior and normal children were discovered to be practically identical in comic strips. Both groups chose *Dick Tracy*, *Blondie*, and *Gasoline Alley* and in the order named.‡

The fourth choice of the superior group was *Popeye*, showing that they have a slightly greater interest in humor than in the accomplishments and the pseudo-scientific marvels found in *Superman*. This comic strip was chosen also for fourth place by the normal class of children. A wider variety of selections in comic strips was found in the superior group than in any other.†

Eighty percent of the dull children expressed a preference for *Dick Tracy*, and 20 percent chose *Mickey Mouse*. The border-line case was a comic-book devotee, and his favorite "funny" was the *Green Arrow*.

A query of interest was that of finding the number of children that were in the habit of buying comic books at the news stands. It was found that the percentages were very close between those that did buy them, and those that did not. A number of children reported that they did not purchase comic books because they had other opportunities to read them. Questioning revealed that 52 percent of the children were saving their money for defense stamps and bonds.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE. The comic strips included were *Blondie* 38; *Superman* 10; *Bugs Bunny* 6; *Mickey Mouse* 6; *Dick Tracy* 6; *Winnie Winkle, the Breadwinner* 6; *Little Annie Rooney* 6; *Gasoline Alley* 6; *Smilin' Jack* 6; *Smitty* 5; and *Donald Duck* 5.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The following selection of comics, together with their percentages, was named by the superior group: *Dick Tracy* 33; *Blondie* 16; *Gasoline Alley* 11; *Popeye* 8; *Scorchy Smith* 4; *Smilin' Jack* 4; *Mickey Mouse* 4; *Winnie Winkle, the Breadwinner* 4; the *Wonder Woman*, *Superman*, *Lone Ranger*, *Li'l Abner*, *Donald Duck*, *Jimmy Allen*, and *Peter Horsefeathers*, each receiving 2 percent.

‡ AUTHOR'S NOTE.—These comic-strip preferences were given by the normal group: *Dick Tracy* 36; *Blondie* 23; *Gasoline Alley* 15; *Superman* 6; *Mickey Mouse*, *Scorchy Smith*, *Smoky Stover*, *Donald Duck*, *Harold Teen*, *Li'l Abner*, *Peter Horsefeathers*, and *The Gumps*, each receiving 2 percent. Less than one percent expressed no preference.

RADIO PROGRAMS

Are there any perceptible differences in the kinds of programs to which children of various intelligence scores listen? While similarities outweighed the variations, there were some differences revealed.

Children's programs maintained their popularity consistently with the exclusion of the child with the lowest intelligence score. A variety show, the *Chase and Sanborn* program with Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, was a greater attraction in this single instance.

The children's programs to which boys and girls of superior intelligence listened more consistently were the *Lone Ranger* and *Jack Armstrong*.

The children of very superior intelligence had no specific program which could be classed as a favorite, though the *Mystery Man* and *Jack Armstrong* were mentioned.

Boys and girls of the normal intelligence level liked the *Lone Ranger* program first and *Little Orphan Annie* second. This was followed closely by *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch*.

Those of low intelligence divided their preferences among four programs, but in the children's program classification, *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch* was mentioned by 40 percent.

The very superior group singled out no dramatic program that could be considered as representative of their tastes. Since the adventure story did not make an appearance here, it is the belief, as formerly stated, that children of unusually high intelligence cared less for this type of thing.

Those of the average and of the superior levels of intelligence seemed to have preferred nearly the same programs, which were classed as dramatic. *The Aldrich Family* stood the highest on both lists.

Boys and girls rated as superior were more attracted to *Baby Snooks* although *Charlie McCarthy*, *Red Skelton* and *Jack Benny* were named. *Baby Snooks* was also the only variety program mentioned by the dull group.

The expression, "Tain't funny, McGee," the wisecracks of Fibber McGee, the voice of Wallace Wimple, and the belittling of Mrs. Uppington apparently make a greater appeal to the average boys and girls than other programs as *Fibber McGee and Molly* was selected for first place.

There were five radio programs mentioned that have been adapted from the comic-strip field. No close correlation in preferences was found between listening to these radio programs and reading the corresponding comic strips.

Little Orphan Annie was much better liked as a radio program than as a comic strip. The radio program, the *Lone Ranger*, maintained a high degree of popularity while the comic strip was mentioned by only one child. *Terry and the Pirates* as a radio program and a comic strip never received a high ranking from any of the children. The statement may be duplicated for *Jimmy Allen*. *Blondie*, the comic strip, had a scant lead in preference over the radio program.

The survey of children's listening habits to news broadcasts and musical programs was set aside for this particular phase of the study as it was believed that wider differences, if any, would arise among those with various intelligence scores.

To find the children's interests along these two lines, they were asked rather bluntly, "Do you like to listen to straight musical programs, and if so, what kind?"

An analysis of their replies made it apparent that nearly all the children were particularly fond of music. Some variations were found in the types of musical programs to which the children listened. In the normal, superior, and very superior groups, the music most favored was that of bands and dance orchestras.*

The one extremely dull child said that he didn't like musical programs. Forty percent of the second dull group liked band music, and 40 percent chose cowboy songs.

The larger percentage of children in the four groups preferred not to listen to news broadcasts. The highest percentage of those not listening was found in the dull group, where 60 percent exhibited no interest in the news. The mentally deficient lad said that he liked to listen to news broadcasts. This, of course, tends to invalidate all findings slightly.

In summary, it may be said that few differences existed among the children of various intelligence ratings in regard to their interests in news and musical programs.†

An examination was conducted among the 117 children in order to determine, if possible, the variation of their tastes and preferences for moving pictures, comic strips, and radio programs as related to age differences. The investigation proved to be of little value, however, since there was a difference of less than two years in the average ages of the children in Grade I and the children in Grade III. It was decided to omit this comparison as having little, if any, determinable trend. Differences, when found, were never statistically significant.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Contradictory to general belief, the very superior group was not so interested in the intellectual type of musical programs. The only program mentioned with classical music was the *Prudential Family Hour*. Music of modern orchestras was more favored, and programs mentioned were *Kay Kyser's Orchestra*, *Freddie Martin's Orchestra*, *Your Hit Parade*, and the *Fitch Bandwagon*. No special program that featured band music, cowboy songs, popular songs, and old-time fiddling was named with the exception of the *Kansas Roundup*. Eighteen percent said that they liked any kind of music. The superior group listed more preferences in classical music though the only program specified of this type was the *American Album of Familiar Music*. One child said that he liked a harp and also the music of a symphonic orchestra. Another stated that he liked famous conductors and symphonies. This statement was in contrast to that of the child who had a fondness for "jitterbug" music. Modern swing music was the most popular. The normal group without naming definite programs listed in order of preferences band music, dance orchestra, popular songs, cowboy songs, and patriotic songs. One child in this group said that she liked the little toy band heard on the program, *Scrapes of Scrappy*, and another said that she liked the kind of music heard in *Hansel and Gretel*.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Some of the reasons given by those who professed a liking for news programs were as follows: "It's about the United States," "It tells what the Americans and the Japs are doing," "They advertise things I like to hear," "I like war stuff," "I like to hear what is happening in Germany and England just as my daddy does." Some of the most interesting comments made by those who didn't like war news were the following: "I'm scared the Japs will get us," "They talk about killing," and, "It reminds me of my grandfather who died."

CHAPTER V

MOTION PICTURES, COMIC STRIPS AND RADIO PROGRAMS ANALYZED AND DISCUSSED

MOTION PICTURES

According to Henry James Forman, children and adolescents constitute 37 percent of the total motion-picture audiences in the United States. His figures show that in the area studied, those under seven form but 2.8 percent of the total, and children aged seven to thirteen form 11.8 or nearly 12 percent.¹

While these figures are based upon the 1930 census, it is reasonable to believe there has been no marked change in these percentages.

In a study of over fifty-five thousand school children, ranging in age from kindergarten to the last year of high school, from forty-four communities in Ohio, Forman found that the most popular days for youthful "movie"-going were Saturday, Sunday, and Friday in the order named.²

His research also revealed that second-and-third-grade children remembered 91 percent of what they had originally retained from seeing a moving picture. This fact was determined by giving a test the day after the picture was shown, and then repeating the test without warning after a period of six weeks.³

For convenience, Forman and his assistants classified the information derived from the "movies" by the children into twelve categories, which were as follows: Emotional, mysterious, humorous, revue (dancing and vaudeville), crime, fighting and violence, romance, sex, love-making, drinking, general conversation, and general action. The gain in information took place in all of these divisions, no one of which entirely "passed over the heads" of the eight-and-nine-year-old children.⁴

The children say that a "movie" must have a hero, a villain, and "plenty of action." Anything extra may be added, but they consider these the fundamental ingredients of the "movie pie." With these three basic elements thoroughly mixed, a motion picture may be Western, a romance, a historical film, or one of adventure. Any child will like it, for children as a rule like photoplays of all types. At different ages, they usually show preferences for certain kinds of pictures.⁵

In regard to the kind of scenes in the "movies" that are the most enjoyed by children, Mitchell makes the following conclusion:

The scenes which make the greatest appeal to the boys are usually those which satisfy some desire which is in them. The scenes which appeal most to the girls are those which correspond to but apparently do not satisfy some desire they have. The boys seem to be content with the things as they see them on the screen while the girls only long for the things that they see there. The boys like to see acts of bravery because it makes them feel that they are

1. Henry James Forman, *Our Movie-Made Children* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 17.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

5. Alice Miller Mitchell, *Children and Movies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), p. 97.

participating in the deeds. The girls like to see scenes of love-making because it makes them wish that they were in the place of the heroine. The boys seem to live in the pictures more than do the girls.⁶

Insofar as the writer's investigation paralleled the above, the information elicited was strikingly similar, so much so that it was but fair to draw conclusions that were very nearly the same.

Interests in motion pictures, like that in reading and day dreaming, serve to give children a chance at vicarious adventure. By identifying themselves with the hero or heroine they become, for the moment, the successful daring character portrayed.⁷

Fred C. Lasch, writing for the *Parents Magazine*, has made the following statement:

There are inherent in the movies important values for children provided that parents and teachers are aware of what constitutes the better type of picture, know something about the story behind the story of the picture—especially in the case of the historical pictures—and discuss the story with the children before they are taken to see it; then have a discussion with them after seeing the pictures, helping them discover what they got out of it, finding out what true life values the pictures contained, what was not true to life, and so on. Finally, the children's need to be encouraged to do individual research work to find out where the story followed history, and where it deviated, and to bring to light any further facts which the picture did not have space to include.⁸

As to the quality of motion pictures for 1941, Bosley Crowther, "movie" critic of the *New York Times*, believes that films had fallen considerably below par. He attributed this fact to world conditions and the consequent caution of studios.⁹

He said that very little originality or innovation was found in the general run of films, and those which stood out were exceptional "mainly because of their superior cut along conventional lines."¹⁰

He further concluded that comedies predominated among the year's pictures. Eighteen of them dealt with marital discord, and eleven were "service" comedies. Slapstick came into its own again, and there seemed to be more Class A Westerns. Sixteen films, excluding those about the defense forces of this country, dealt with war or some phase of the international situation.¹¹

In a nation-wide poll, the Young Reviewers composed of boys and girls between the ages of eight and eighteen selected ten pictures as the year's outstanding productions. *Sergeant York*, starring Gary Cooper, was voted the best film by these children. The nine other productions selected in the order of choice were as follows: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Blossoms in the Dust*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *A Yank in the R. A. F.*, *The Little Foxes*, *Dumbo*, *Dive Bomber*, *Citizen Kane*, and *Meet John Doe*.¹²

Reviewing the foregoing information, the children in the Emporia survey had had few opportunities to see this list of ten productions. Those that were

6. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

7. S. L. Pressey, *Psychology and the New Education* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1933), p. 86.

8. Fred C. Lasch, "Movie Values For Boys and Girls" *Parents*, 12:26-27, December, 1937.

9. Feature article in the *New York Times*, December 28, 1941.

10. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1941.

11. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1941.

12. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1941.

seen and notably commented upon were *Sergeant York*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and *Dive Bomber*.

The ten leading box-office favorites of 1941, as determined by a nation-wide poll of exhibitors conducted by the *Motion Picture Herald*, were the following:¹³

(1) Mickey Rooney. (2) Clark Gable. (3) Lou Costello and Bud Abbott. (4) Bob Hope. (5) Spencer Tracy. (6) Gene Autry. (7) Gary Cooper. (8) Bette Davis. (9) James Cagney. (10) Judy Garland.

All of these box-office favorites were given numerous mention by the children in this investigation with the exception of Clark Gable and James Cagney.

COMIC STRIPS

Before some children can hardly talk, the Sunday colored comic-section has attracted them. So the importance of the comic strips as a factor in aiding children to learn to read should not be underrated. A child can easily grasp the meaning of the words by looking at the pictures. Then, too, comics have a dialogue that is simple and brief.

If a child becomes interested in the story depicted by the comic strip, he feels a need and urge to read, and this fact is considered the most worthy incentive. For when interest does not have to be stimulated artificially, as so frequently happens when a child is forced to use a textbook, he reads more readily and easily.

Homes may lack libraries, but usually there is at least one newspaper that comes daily or weekly. If the community is sufficiently large to support a library, newspapers may be found there. In many instances, children borrow the comic section from neighbors and friends.¹⁴

The regularity of the comics should not be disregarded. Everyday or at least every week there is a new supply. Children can keep up with the experiences of their favorite characters through reading matter that is ever new. In contrast with this, numerous schools and homes have no books for children beyond a few well-thumbed readers.¹⁵

The comic strips have been a challenge to the writers of children's books. A number have accepted this challenge and have written books with the picture sequence and the brief dialogue as Dorothy Kunhardt has done in *Junket Is Nice* and Wanda Gag in *Millions of Cats*. Marjorie Flack, the author of *Angus and the Ducks* and *Angus and the Cat*, used the full-page picture with a single caption of reading.¹⁶

Tuttle describes an interesting experiment carried out by a teacher who was interested in children's selection of "funnies." Tuttle's description was as follows:

Not many weeks ago the writer observed a first-grade teacher in the midst of an experiment with children. The teacher had asked the children to bring in their favorite funnies for discussion. Of course *Mickey Mouse*, *Tippy*, *Peter Rabbit*, *The Kewpies* all appeared. In discussing the various characters with the children, the teacher suggested that they select the animals which behaved

13. *Ibid.*, December 28, 1941.

14. Jennie Milton, "Children and the Comics," *Childhood Education*, 16:60-64, October, 1939.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

16. F. P. Tuttle, "Educative Value of the Comic Strips," *American Childhood*, 23:14-15, March, 1938.

like real people and those which did not, those which possessed real animal characteristics and what those characteristics were. In order to make a right comparison, the children had to study real animals. This meant that many of their pets were brought into the classroom—rabbits, cats, puppies, birds, chickens. Some children looked up animal stories in their library books and read them to the group. Other children wished to draw funny sequence pictures with the comic strip in mind. Still other children brought in funny poems and songs about animals. Through the study their love for animals was strengthened, their sense of humor was sharpened, and their reading became better and broader. With wholesome experiences such as these in mind, I would suggest a query. In widening the curriculum to meet an ever-changing world should we not recognize in the comic strip a real possible force in education which, under the wise and discriminating guidance of parents and teachers, may help the child to form his moral concepts, to stabilize his judgments, and to increase his intelligent thinking?¹⁷

Lehman and Witty have found in a number of investigations that "looking" at the Sunday "funny" paper was more generally engaged in than any other of a list of two hundred games, sports, and other play activities. Certainly, it was the one activity most popular with children during all of the seasons of the year.¹⁸

The two writers set forth their opinion as to why comic strips have such a complete hold upon children. They look at it from a psychological viewpoint, and proffer the belief that reading the comic strips is a compensatory activity. The characters are unrestrained in their actions and speech, and the children identify themselves with the characters. Thus, the children can sit in a comfortable arm chair and receive all the thrills of flying through the air as *Superman* or undergo the dangers in the detection of criminals as does *Dick Tracy*.¹⁹

Some psychologists have suggested that perhaps present-day children need to escape from the humdrum daily routine, which they are forced to follow, to find more real adventure than the current civilization is giving them. It is possible that this desire for the thrilling and humorous comics is symptomatic of a need which institutions are not meeting.²⁰

Certainly these psychologists have a point to argue, for most surveys, including the one herein presented, have shown that children like comics for their adventure, suspense, and action. They, particularly the older children, admire the characters that are brave, daring, and infallible. Humor is of second importance.²¹

This brings to mind the criticism that comic strips are no longer comical. Brent has made the following assertion:

Some 60 comics are flourishing today which began before 1920; that is, they have the same names, but they are not of the same nature. "Mutt and Jeff" were born in 1907; "Little Jimmie," in 1905; and the "Katzenjammer Kids" back in 1897. To call them "funnies" is to insult a good American colloquialism. If humor has not disappeared entirely, it has at best a low visibility. In its place are silly fantasy and melodrama.²²

17. Harvey C. Lehman and Paul A. Witty, "The Compensatory Function of the Sunday 'Funny' Paper," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 11:202-211, 1927.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

19. Milton, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

20. George E. Hill, "Taking the Comics Seriously," *Childhood Education*, 17:413-414, May, 1941.

21. Silas Brent, "Are Comics Bad for Children?" *Rotarian*, 56:18-19, March, 1940.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Frank Vlamos has bitterly attacked the comics with the declaration that murder and torture are featured activities in comic strips today. He says that the mischievousness of the *Katzenjammer Kids*, the antics of Happy Hooligan's mule, and Maggie's rolling pin have been displaced by homicide, arson, kidnaping, political treason, international espionage, and other kinds of vice—all under the label of comics.²³

To these censorious statements, Chester Gould, the creator of *Dick Tracy*, has made an interesting reply. He said:

What? The "comics" aren't funny anymore? Well, the "funny" ones still are! and then we have a newer type of "comics," like the "good old detective" strips. I agree that few cartoon strips of today hold up for juvenile emulation the mischievous young rascals who plant tacks in their elders' chairs or snatch steaming mince pies from kitchen-window sills, but there are those who never thought those antics so very funny anyway. And, too, there are those who think the cartoon strips of today, which serialize dramatic adventure, lead the old slapstick stuff about the way a 1940 Rolls-Royce does a 1912 Model T on a super highway.

I like to show a good policeman doing his work with the finesse of a brilliant pianist, not wallowing through gore. Nothing, however, despite an inclination to repeat a previous statement, is so stupid as mediocre humdrum. The high lights of crime detection must be featured. My experience also teaches me that no two tastes are alike. When a cartoon strip is censored to a point of being absolutely harmless, it becomes pointless. The thing must have tang—something worth the time of reading.²⁴

The writer agrees with the viewpoint of George E. Hill. Whatever one's opinion is of the comics, teachers and parents must provide guidance of children's tastes in one of his most consuming interests. As Hill has stated, the idealized comic characters of the high-type can be used to teach and reinforce these ideals within children. Their selection of the best type of comics can be brought about through training just as their selection of the best kind of books.²⁵

RADIO PROGRAMS

Recent investigations have shown that the average child spends from two to three hours daily listening to the radio. When it is remembered that this is for twelve months, although studies have revealed that during the summer months, there is a decrease, radio programs as a source of communication must be considered with the thought that they are a vital force in the process of educating children.²⁶

That millions of children compose a potential radio audience is borne out by figures released by the *United States Census Bureau for 1940*. According to these figures, the number of boys and girls from the years five to nine is 10,725,873.²⁷

In a study conducted by De Boer to determine children's emotional responses with approximately one thousand Chicago school children from Grade I to and including Grade VIII, he first surveyed their radio interests.

23. James Frank Vlamos, "The Sad Case of the Funnies," *The American Mercury*, 52: 411-416, April, 1941.

24. Chester Gould, "Are Comics Bad for Children?" *Rotarian*, 56:19-53, March, 1940.

25. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

26. John J. De Boer, "Radio, Pied Piper or Educator?" *Childhood Education*, 16:74, October, 1939.

27. Dorothy Lewis, *Broadcasting to the Youth of America* (Washington, D. C.: The National Association of Broadcasters, 1941), p. 76.

He found that the programs consistently popular with all children were those classified as children's programs. While some dealt with the detection of crime, horror and mystery were noticeably absent. A characteristic noted of the primary-grade children was their preference for child characters.²⁸

In a series of experiments in which primary children were individually brought into a laboratory to listen to transcriptions of *Little Orphan Annie*, *Jack Armstrong*, and *Clara Barton*, the intensity of children's emotional responses to this type of program was determined by De Boer. This was done through the process of taking photo records of changes in blood pressure, pulse, respiration and electrodermal responses.²⁹

Results indicated that children responded greatly to drama, and to a wide variety of situations. A little boy telling his sister of his affection for her produced as strong an emotional response as a lion crouched in the midst of a jungle. Comedy, it was shown, was as effective in producing an emotional response as a falling airplane.³⁰ The significance of these findings is that children respond to other situations as satisfactorily as to those of "blood and thunder," and that child interest does not depend upon inferior plots that are found in numerous programs.*

Children like sound effects, as it helps them to visualize the story that is unfolding before them, but if it happens to be plain noise, it leaves them in a state of emotionality and fatigue.³¹

In a survey made by the *United Parents Association of New York City*, sixty thousand questionnaires were sent to children ranging from kindergarten to the first year of high school, parents, and teachers in twenty-one cities. It was discovered that the *Lone Ranger*, *Ellery Queen*, *Five-Star Final*, *Information Please*, *Cavalcade of America*, *Charlie McCarthy*, and *Jack Benny* were the programs receiving the highest ranking.³²

Children were asked to name the type of programs they would like to hear more frequently on the air. Replies pointed out that they wanted to hear *Cavalcade of America*, dramatizations of Bible stories, fairy tales, and American historical events; a child *Information Please*, and news of, for, and about children. They preferred mysteries and adventures and asked for music and more operettas. It so happened that the parents asked for the same kind of broadcasts for their children.³³

Ziegler, in her study of the preferences of one thousand and three hundred children from the public schools in Akron, Ohio, found that children's choices rarely fell within the classification of straight musical programs. She offers this fact as a challenge to music educators today.³⁴

28. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

29. John J. De Boer, "Radio and Children's Emotions," *School and Society*, 50:369-373, September 16, 1939.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

* Italics not in quotation.

31. Vernon Crane, "Are the Programs They Like Bad For Them?" *Parents*, 15:32-72, April, 1940.

32. William C. Bagley, editor, "A Survey of Children's Radio Preferences," *School and Society*, 52:33, July 13, 1940.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

34. Irene Ziegler, *A Survey of What Akron Public School Children Voluntarily Listen to on the Radio, Outside of School Hours* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, 1939), p. 49.

That children seek adventure and action, instead, is not surprising to Josette Frank. She concludes that when one considers the monotony of children's daily routine, they are forced in a sense, to seek that something which modern living does not provide. She further adds that a particular attraction of the radio programs for children are the clubs sponsored for them. Children obtain satisfaction from being a member, and in addition, this is a significant factor in the social relationships children have with each other.³⁵

The fact that children can listen to the types of programs that are offered, and they are seemingly not too disturbed by them, should make adults hesitate to condemn such programs as they may possibly meet a need and provide a valid outlet.³⁶

This argument is carried on by Gruenberg, who has commented:

Intelligent and solicitous parents want to do the best possible for the few children upon whom they can shower their anxieties. They are eager to have their children read only good books, see only the good pictures, hear only good music. It never occurs to them that they may be depriving them of the opportunity to live through their childhood, to experience what belongs to childhood, to outgrow childhood normally. We find that many boys and girls who are exposed exclusively to "the best" of everything revert at times to the cruder and more childish levels of enjoyment.³⁷

Motion pictures, the "funnies," and the radio have become as bound up with present-day culture as books and automobiles. Children need to be familiar with these three phases to have something in common with their playmates. Children who have been associated with "movies," comic strips, and the radio see and hear much that adults see and hear, but in doing so, it is true that they overlook much that worry and harass adults.³⁸

The writer is of the same opinion as those educators that the "movies," comic strips, and radio programs, admitting that the level of story and drama quality is always open to improvement, can furnish wholesome and emotional outlets for children. However, temperance should be a guiding factor when participating in the three areas of amusement in order to avoid the overstimulation of minds and bodies.

35. Josette Frank, "These Children's Programs," *Parents*, 14:28-29, February, 1939.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

37. Sidonie M. Gruenberg, "New Voices Speak to Our Children," *Parents*, 16:23, June, 1941.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

In recapitulation, the findings made as the result of this survey to determine the interests and preferences of children in the primary department of the Elementary Laboratory School at the Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, in relation to grade, sex, and intelligence differences were as follows:

1. Children in the first and second grades preferred to attend the *motion picture*, listen to *radio programs*, and read *comic strips* in the order named, while the third grade gave preference to listening to radio programs before attending motion pictures.

2. Similarities as differentiated by grades in preferences of *motion pictures* and *radio programs* were evident whereas there were few differences in the choice of favorite *comic strips*.

3. The *Western* film was the predominant first choice in each grade.

4. Children in the first three grades preferred actresses in the adolescent-age group rather than those in the adult group, although an adult actor, Gene Autry, was selected as first choice. Shirley Temple was mentioned most frequently in each grade.

5. The differences observed in the selection of *comic strips* were that children in Grade I liked those depicting humor found in domestic scenes whereas Grades II and III children preferred the intricacies of the detection of criminals.

6. First-grade children depended upon an adult to read the comics to them, whereas the second-grade children were growing in ability to read comics. The third grade was practically independent in its reading.

7. In the selection of *types* of radio programs, children's programs ranked first; drama, second; and variety shows, third.

8. Notable *sex differences* were apparent in the preferences of motion pictures, comic strips, and radio programs.

9. Boys enthusiastically elected the Western as first choice of "movies" while the girls expressed a first preference for cartoons although they attended and enjoyed Western films.

10. The more sophisticated type of motion picture, such as society, manners, and drawing-room scenes as found in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, had little appeal for either sex. However, little girls under nine years liked "movies" centered about romance while small boys expressed disgust with this type of plot.

11. Boys were not so interested in actresses as girls; hence they had more difficulty in recalling their names. Girls had an equal interest in actresses and actors.

12. In selecting comic strips, girls in general reacted as did both boys and girls in the first grade. Girls in general read and enjoyed the same comics as did boys. However, they cared less for action and adventure.

13. Girls preferred comic strips in which a member of the feminine sex is the leading character. Similarly, boys tended to have a greater fondness for a character of their sex.

14. Among the comic strips least liked, both sexes elected *Little Orphan Annie* as being uninteresting and unexciting.

15. *Sex differences* that were manifested in the selection of radio programs were in the naming of specific programs that comprised the three leading classifications—children's programs, drama, and variety.

16. When classified by the various *intelligence* groups ("very bright," "bright," normal, etc.), there were found to be a decided correlation in motion-picture preferences. In other words, "bright" children placed the same pictures as "best," "very good," and so on. There were also similarities in radio program preferences while differences were revealed in comic-strip selections.

17. The Western type of photoplay was the first choice of intelligence groups at all levels. In listing their second preferences, "bright" children chose cartoons, and the normal and dull groups chose adventure and comedy, respectively.

18. Intelligence differences were apparently conclusive in the selections of favorite comedians. No attempt was made to run correlations. Cartoon animals were given first rating by the "bright" and normal groups whereas living comedians were selected by the "slower" group.

19. Generally, the very superior class of children were found to attend motion pictures less frequently than children in other intelligence levels.

20. Comic strips that were selected by the highly superior children were of the less exciting and adventuresome types while the normal and superior groups were interested in mystery and the adventures of a detective. There was a tendency for dull groups to express a preference for comic strips that were more fantastic.

21. The similarities existing in the selection of radio programs were displayed by the choice of each intelligence group in the adventure of children's programs, first; the dramatized story, second; and the jokes and music on variety shows, third.

22. Irrespective of grade, sex, and intelligence, the children's programs led in interest over those of music, jokes, religion, education, and news.

23. Five radio programs adapted from comic strips were mentioned in the study as favorites. However, no close correlation in preferences were seen between listening to the programs and reading the corresponding comic strips. All of these programs were duplicated in a comic strip.

24. Age differences as found in preferences for "Movies," comic strips, and radio programs were revealed as being too insignificant to be reliable.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Motion pictures serve as escape mechanisms whereby children obtain vicarious experiences as the hero or heroine of the story. Comments in Table I.

By this means they receive satisfaction in their search for excitement, adventure, and action that are provided by moving pictures, and particularly the ever-stimulating "Wild-West" film.

2. Children of primary-grade age recognize and appreciate acting ability in motion-picture characters.

This is evidenced by their selection of actresses and actors who had been given recognition as star performers.

3. Masculine qualities rather than good looks in an actor make a greater appeal to children.

He should possess the power to triumph over obstacles in the face of the greatest odds. Abilities such as singing, fast drawing of a gun, and riding a horse also appeal to children.

4. There is evidence to support the viewpoint that boys display a deeper interest in motion pictures and a keener appreciation of them than do girls.

5. It seems that girls have a wider range of interests than do boys in types of motion pictures, but boys' interests tend to have more consistency or a greater depth. Table II.

6. The type of picture (comedy or tragedy) does not determine whether or not it will be liked or disliked by children in the first three grades of the Elementary Laboratory School of the Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas.

7. There is no distinction as to grades in the ability of children to recall titles of motion pictures.

8. "Bright" children through imaginative ability interpret cartoon characters in a different light than do dull children.

9. Dull children require physical action from living comedians in order to secure true enjoyment from a comedy.

10. There is no evidence as derived from studying these 117 children from the Kansas State Teachers College Laboratory School, Emporia, Kansas, to indicate that religious influence and occupational status in the home are factors in motion-picture attendance.

11. In considering comic strips, the appeal to children is determined more by *characters* (in the strip) than by the content of the subject matter.

12. Interest in comic strips (types) varies definitely with the maturity of the child reader.

13. Cartoon characters in motion pictures are more popular with boys and girls than the same characters in comic strips. Table III and Table IV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since comic strips have a far-reaching appeal in the daily lives of children, it would seem advisable to make far greater use of the comic strip than is now done in teaching reading. At the same time, children could be taught to evaluate more critically comic strips and their characters to help form ideals and standards and to guide them in more intelligent selections of literature in general.

Some suggestions which may assist in the utilization of comic strips for reading and other educational purposes are as follows:

A. **READING READINESS.** In preparing first-grade children for reading, *Blondie* and *Gasoline Alley* are suitable to read to the children. Afterwards sentences composed by the children could be written on the board and then read by them in order to acquire word recognition. For example, sentences like the following could be used: 1. The name of the man is Dagwood. 2. He likes to eat and sleep. 3. Daisy is the name of the dog.

B. REMEDIAL READING. The interests of poor readers must be carefully considered in planning a remedial program for them. Since nearly all children are interested in comic strips, it would seem advisable to start with this level in building reading skills.

C. VOCABULARY USES. Comic strips, because of their simplicity and brevity of dialogue, as well as pictorial quality, have much value in helping children to recognize words and to grasp their meanings. *Superman* is outstanding because of its quality of vocabulary.

D. DISCUSSIONS. Since children are vitally interested in comic strips, they would welcome talks in which characters are evaluated as to whether or not they are good or evil, whether they use good or poor English, and whether such situations could happen in real life. The discussion could be enlivened with such questions: What will happen next? How will the episode end? How would you like to have it end? What would you have done in this situation?

E. RECOGNITION OF COLORS. In teaching first-grade children the names of colors, the Sunday colored comic-section would be very attractive to children, and because of natural interest, colors would be more easily learned.

F. ART WORK. Comic strips can be a source of ideas for drawing. Children could imitate drawing comic strips by composing picture sequences and using a dialogue. The latter would be an additional exercise in the usage of words.

G. CLUBS. Primary children may be interested in forming a club like the Junior Commandos in *Little Orphan Annie* to collect scrap materials and to assist in other such defense services which children of this age are able to perform.

2. A possibly useful project on the part of schools and educators to combat the inferior types of motion pictures would be the sponsoring of "movie" convocations for children in the primary grades. Discussions preceding and following the showing would have educational value and should prove to be a potential basis for a more intelligent selection of motion pictures.

Activities in relation to these discussions would include the following:

A. If a cartoon as, for example, *Dumbo*, were to be shown, stories about elephants could be read by and to the children to prepare them for the motion picture. Comparisons of the elephants in the stories and those in the cartoon could be made following the showing.

B. The same procedure could be followed if a film portraying the life of a famous person, for example, Thomas Edison, were shown. Stories and reference material could be read, followed by discussions to determine whether or not the film deviated from the facts, and if so, in what manner.

C. Discussions of films in regard to their settings, costumes, architecture, geographical, or historical scenes in addition to an appraisal to the qualities of the characters would have value.

D. Because children like to talk about motion pictures which have made an appeal to them, motion pictures would be an appropriate subject for brief talks before the class or for short written papers.

E. In addition to films for entertainment, numerous educational films are available to supplement classroom work.

3. With the curriculum being expanded to meet the needs and interests of children, a worthy inclusion would be that of utilizing daily radio programs to supplement subjects such as reading and music. A few of the programs

that could be included and activities in connection with the use of such programs are briefly outlined as follows:

A. Music appreciation could be further promoted by the *Music Appreciation Hour* conducted by Walter Damrosch, the *Army Band*, and the *Naval Academy Band*. These are only a small number of the musical programs from which to choose. Discussions pertaining to the lives of the composers represented on these programs as well as the instruments heard could be held afterwards in music classes.

B. Children's programs, including the *Mystery Man*, *Light of the World*, and *Life Can Be Beautiful*, when heard in the classroom may serve as sources for a variety of activities. For example, dramatizations, composition of poems and stories, and the presentation of school work in the form of radio programs that would include quiz shows, spelling bees, and story telling. Radio programs can also be used as a means of developing interest in good stories and books by finding those with related plots.

4. More investigations are needed to ascertain the physiological and psychological effects of the motion picture, comic strip, and radio upon children. These investigations could be extended into an appraisal of the part these three media of entertainment have in the formation of moral concepts, judgments, attitudes, ideals, and habits.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW FORM

MOTION PICTURES

1. Name..... Address.....
2. Age..... Date of birth.....
3. Intelligence quotient..... Grade.....
4. Do you like to go to "movies"?
5. What kind of "movies" do you like best?
6. Second best?
7. What are two "movies" you have seen and liked?
8. Which did you like the better?
9. Why?
10. Who is your favorite actress?
11. Why do you like her the best?
12. Name a "movie" actor that is your favorite.
13. Why is he your favorite?
14. Who do you think is the "funniest" person in the "movies"?
15. What time of the day do you go to the "movies"?
Matinees?..... Evenings?
16. On what day do you usually go?..... How often?.....
17. Do you go alone to the "movies"?..... With whom?.....
Parents?..... Brothers?..... Sisters?..... Other relatives?..... Friend?.....
18. How do you get money for the "movies"?..... Allowance?.....
Earn it?..... Somebody take you?.....

COMIC STRIPS

1. What are three comic strips that you like to read best?
2. Which one of these is your favorite?
3. Why do you like it?
4. Name a comic strip that you like the least.
5. Do you read it regularly anyway?
6. Why don't you like it?
7. Do you buy comic books at the newsstand?
8. Do you read comic strips yourself or does somebody read them to you?
9. Which one of these three do you like to do best?
 1. Go to "movies"?
 2. Listen to radio programs?
 3. Read comic strips?

RADIO PROGRAMS

1. What is your favorite radio program?
2. Second?
3. Third?
4. What do you enjoy the most on these programs?
5. Do you have a radio in your room?
6. Do you listen to programs after you have gone to bed?
7. Do you stay up after bedtime to hear programs?
8. What are the programs you listen to while lying in bed?
9. What are the programs you hear when staying up after bedtime?
10. Do you like to listen to musical programs?
11. What kind?
12. Do you like to listen to news broadcasts?
13. Why?
14. Why not?

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