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# STUDENT WRITING INTERESTS AND TEACHER EXPECTATION*

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SUMMARY

This study explores student writing interests and the accuracy with which teachers perceive those interests. Ninth grade students, grouped by sex and ability, selected and rated theme topics. Selected topics were then rated by teachers in accordance with their perceptions of the average student. Data interpretation involved factor analyses by sex for the average ability group and analyses of variance for investigating differences by sex between: 1) teachers and students of average ability; and 2) student ability levels.

Topics selected were relatively independent and differed somewhat by sex. Teachers were less effective judges of the writing interests of students of their own sex. Sex and ability grouping significantly contributed to variance in writing interests. Results should interest teachers involved with this age group.

On several occasions while observing classroom behavior of ninth grade English students, the investigators noticed what appeared to be general dissatisfaction with writing assignments. Typical complaints were that topics chosen by teachers were "dumb" or "not very interesting." Where this condition exists, there would appear to be a serious problem in communications between the teacher and at least some students. Some minimal awareness of pupil interests is hardly conducive to creative writing (Crosby, 1959). Optimal learning experiences are more likely to occur by engaging the student's interests (Figurel, 1959). Consequently, teachers lacking adequate awareness of student interests possibly create more problems than they are able to solve.

A search of the literature for studies conducted in the last decade specifically related to the writing interests of the junior high student was unproductive. Many studies, however, can be found relating to other areas of interest, particularly in reading

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(Robinson, 1955). Squire in his review (1969), states that most investigators are in general agreement on several broad points regarding student reading interests. Intelligence does not appear to be a significant factor for reading interests; whereas, sex, age (elementary school only), socio-economic status, and ethnic background are. His review further indicates that *scientific themes* tend to appeal to most young readers; boys respond well to *sports, action* and *adventure;* and girls respond more to *romance and depiction of adolescent life.*

Probably the most thorough investigations into student interests have been conducted by Paul Witty (1961, 1963). His studies of children in grades nine through 12 explored their interests in *television, movies, radio, recreation, reading, school subjects, vocations,* and *educational goals* (Witty, 1961). Stanchfield (1962), in an investigation of the reading interests of 153 boys, grades four, six and eight found a preference for *outdoor life, explorations, expeditions, sports, science fiction* and *war. Cowboys westerns,* and *teenage romance* on the other hand, were given little attention, and practically no interest was indicated for such topics as *music, art, family, home life* and *pets.* No differences in reading interests were found between ability levels. A more recent study (Jackson, 1968), investigating seventh grade student preference for English composition titles found the intellectually bright student to be more interested in titles of an abstract nature, a male preference for *adventure* and *scientific titles,* and a female interest of a wider spectrum.

In conclusion, as interesting and relevant as these studies may be, they fall short of exploring specifically the writing interests of the ninth grade student and the accuracy with which the teacher perceives these interests.

The purpose of this study was to determine what topics ninth grade students consider worth writing about; how accurately the ninth grade English teacher perceives the writing interests of the average ability student; and if the writing interests of ninth grade students tend to be a function of academic ability in English.

**Sample**

The subjects included 245 white ninth grade students from Sunrise Junior High School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Most of the children were from either middle or upper middle class families. Despite this relative homogeneity, there were two obvious dimensions on which they differed, sex and aptitude for ninth grade English (Table 1).

**Table 1**
*Distribution of Ninth Grade English Students*

| Ability Level | Boys | Girls |
|---|---|---|
| High (Advanced English) | 14 | 44 |
| Average (Regular English) | 84 | 67 |
| Low (Basic English) | 29 | 7 |
| Total | 127 | 118 |

The criteria for placement was entirely dependent upon the recommendation of the student's eighth grade English Teacher. The median student age was 14.5 and ranged from 14 to 16 years.

Eighteen ninth grade English teachers, nine males and nine females, from Sunrise Junior High, St. Thomas Aquinas High, and Boca Raton High School also participated in the study. The latter two schools were involved to increase the size of the teacher sample. The schools were selected on the basis of general student similarity at the ninth grade level with the subjects from the Sunrise school (Table 2).

**Table 2**
*Distribution of Ninth Grade English Teachers*

| School | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| Sunrise Junior High | 3 | 4 |
| St. Thomas Aquinas High | 5 | 1 |
| Boca Raton High | 1 | 4 |

**Table 3**

*Writing Topics Most Frequently Mentioned by Ninth Grade Students*

| Topics Selected | Topics Specific to Sex |
|---|---|
| Drugs | Cooking (F) |
| God | Boys (F) |
| War | Communism (F) |
| Sports | Peace (F) |
| School | Travel (M) |
| Animals | Motorcycles (M) |
| People | Voting Age (M) |
| Hippies | Teachers (M) |
| Life | Girls (M) |
| Generation Gap | Countries (M) |
| Love | Movies (M) |
| Pop Music | Cars (M) |
| Sex | Vietnam (M) |
| Death | The Wild West (M) |

**Procedures**

Each student was given the list of topics appropriate to his sex and instructed to rate them according to his interests on a seven-point scale. Teachers were asked to react to both male and female scales as would a student of average ability. In summary, this procedure yielded data on student writing interests by sex and ability level and the judgments of both male and female teachers of the writing interests of boys and girls of average ability.

Factor analyses of topic ratings for the average ability group were made with the library of Guertin and Bailey (1970) to determine if there were factor-structure differences between sex

groups. Differences in performance between teachers and average ability students and three levels of student ability were explored with the method of analysis of variance. Pearson correlations and t-tests were conducted as justified for additional clarification.

## Instrument

Each student was asked to submit a list of ten topics he considered interesting enough to write about. It was assumed that individual and group differences would produce topics meaningful to the students and thus capable of being sensitive to their individual differences. Response validity was enhanced by requesting the students to withhold their identity. As topics listed first by the student were considered to have the greatest personal meaning, the last five topics on each list were disregarded. Of the remaining topics, only those mentioned by more than 15% of the students were retained for further use in the study. The purpose of this procedure was to construct a conservative list of topics that all students might react to with feeling. The result was a list of 24 topics for boys and 18 for girls; 14 of which were similar for both sexes (Table 3).

**Table 4**

*Intercorrelations of Interest Ratings on Twenty-four Topics By Male Students of Average Ability (N = 84)*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | .23 | .24 | -.21 | -.06 | .27 | .15 | .13 | .01 | .30 | .34 | .32 | .11 | .01 | -.20 | -.08 | .22 | .03 | .00 | .53 | .33 | .48 | .15 | .00 |
| 2 | | | .02 | .02 | -.15 | .07 | .16 | .33 | .00 | -.10 | .79 | .10 | -.03 | .13 | -.11 | .03 | .12 | .02 | -.05 | .39 | .36 | .28 | -.14 | .48 |
| 3 | | | | -.13 | -.16 | -.06 | .18 | .00 | .19 | .39 | .03 | .16 | .12 | .17 | -.03 | .11 | .11 | .00 | .09 | .14 | .03 | .32 | .12 | .02 |
| 4 | | | | | -.22 | -.01 | .26 | -.36 | -.20 | .25 | .01 | .05 | -.10 | -.04 | .00 | -.01 | .30 | -.11 | .07 | -.04 | .18 | .27 | -.16 | -.01 |
| 5 | | | | | | .18 | -.16 | .08 | .21 | -.12 | -.06 | .33 | .17 | .17 | .00 | -.02 | .10 | .15 | .02 | .14 | .07 | -.21 | .15 | -.16 |
| 6 | | | | | | | -.19 | .14 | -.10 | -.08 | .19 | .24 | -.02 | .14 | -.08 | .00 | .13 | .10 | -.03 | .42 | .00 | .04 | .13 | .08 |
| 7 | | | | | | | | .05 | .19 | .22 | .03 | -.10 | -.19 | .07 | .01 | -.08 | .10 | .06 | .15 | .02 | -.04 | .43 | .29 | .11 |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | .28 | -.08 | .34 | -.09 | .19 | .06 | .17 | .10 | -.14 | .02 | .15 | .40 | .34 | .06 | .17 | .05 |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | .06 | .01 | .02 | .12 | .02 | .29 | .32 | -.01 | .01 | .39 | .21 | -.02 | -.20 | .17 | -.11 |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | | -.02 | .29 | -.21 | .17 | .10 | .20 | .06 | -.10 | .18 | .20 | -.07 | .25 | .20 | -.13 |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | .08 | .07 | .14 | .08 | .08 | .18 | -.03 | .03 | .53 | .39 | .24 | -.16 | .42 |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | .14 | .30 | -.01 | .06 | .08 | .39 | .03 | .29 | .13 | .09 | .19 | -.21 |
| 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .00 | .00 | -.16 | .06 | .21 | .02 | .19 | .05 | .09 | -.06 | .12 |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .06 | .31 | .09 | .03 | .21 | .15 | .18 | -.20 | .29 | .06 |
| 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .30 | .04 | .02 | .06 | .00 | .26 | -.08 | .06 | -.14 |
| 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.10 | -.11 | .43 | .13 | .13 | -.12 | .02 | -.16 |
| 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .13 | .02 | .06 | -.19 | .00 | .17 | .36 |
| 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.04 | .13 | -.17 | -.17 | .12 | .07 |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .14 | .01 | .08 | .06 | -.06 |
| 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .34 | .28 | -.03 | .14 |
| 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .32 | -.05 | -.10 |
| 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.15 | .22 |
| 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | -.05 |
| 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Variables**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Travel | 7 | War | 13 | Life | 19 | Cars |
| 2 | Drugs | 8 | Girls | 14 | Generation Gap | 20 | People |
| 3 | God | 9 | Sports | 15 | Love | 21 | Sex |
| 4 | Motorcycles | 10 | School | 16 | Pop Music | 22 | Vietnam |
| 5 | Voting Age | 11 | Hippies | 17 | Movies | 23 | Wild West |
| 6 | Teachers | 12 | Countries | 18 | Animals | 24 | Death |

## Results

The intercorrelations between topics for both males and females resulted in few relationships. For the male students, only six of the 276 independent off-diagonal values in the R matrix were greater than .39; and only 11 of the 153; for females (Tables 4 and 5).

**Table 5**

*Intercorrelations of Interest Ratings on Eighteen Topics by Female Students of Average Ability (N = 67)*

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cooking | | .52 | -.06 | .16 | -.09 | -.10 | .20 | -.21 | -.07 | .15 | .21 | .04 | -.15 | .12 | .00 | -.23 | -.04 | .00 |
| 2 | Sports | | | .05 | .08 | .03 | .16 | .29 | -.02 | -.09 | .17 | .14 | .28 | -.14 | -.01 | .09 | .02 | -.21 | -.09 |
| 3 | People | | | | -.14 | -.08 | .22 | .24 | .07 | .33 | .04 | -.13 | .00 | -.15 | -.10 | .00 | .32 | -.18 | -.03 |
| 4 | Love | | | | | .04 | -.34 | -.18 | .05 | -.08 | .45 | .21 | .25 | .48 | .73 | .40 | -.20 | .28 | .06 |
| 5 | Generation Gap | | | | | | .25 | .00 | .25 | .18 | .06 | -.08 | -.02 | -.06 | -.04 | .26 | .19 | .37 | .04 |
| 6 | War | | | | | | | .33 | .05 | .50 | -.03 | -.20 | -.12 | -.30 | -.21 | .14 | .43 | -.16 | -.03 |
| 7 | School | | | | | | | | -.16 | .18 | .11 | .04 | -.09 | -.25 | -.16 | -.17 | .23 | -.40 | .08 |
| 8 | Hippies | | | | | | | | | -.13 | .17 | .01 | -.22 | -.16 | .04 | .35 | .31 | -.51 | -.36 |
| 9 | Death | | | | | | | | | | .00 | -.10 | .03 | -.13 | -.14 | .20 | .27 | .04 | .12 |
| 10 | God | | | | | | | | | | | -.03 | .44 | .36 | .34 | .27 | -.04 | -.05 | .17 |
| 11 | Animals | | | | | | | | | | | | .11 | .04 | .14 | .12 | -.06 | .19 | .25 |
| 12 | Pop Music | | | | | | | | | | | | | .33 | .16 | .37 | -.05 | .24 | .03 |
| 13 | Boys | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .41 | .26 | -.06 | .07 | .11 |
| 14 | Life | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .32 | -.08 | .34 | .15 |
| 15 | Sex | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .06 | .42 | .29 |
| 16 | Communism | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .11 | .08 |
| 17 | Drugs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | .32 |
| 18 | Peace | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Orthogonal varimax rotation of the principal axes matrices produced six factors for boys of average ability and five for girls (Table 6). The oblique solution showed very low intercorrelations of factors and since it is very similar to the varimax solution it will not be reported. Only variables with factor loadings of more than .39 are included in Table 6. With only one exception, all variables have at least one table entry of at least .40.

**Table 6**
*Orthogonal Factors Derived From Interest Ratings of Average Ability Students*

**MALE FACTORS:**

| I | | II | | III | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drugs | .90 | Vietnam | .80 | Pop Music | .70 |
| Hippies | .85 | Travel | .65 | Sports | .57 |
| Death | .62 | War | .54 | Cars | .53 |
| People | .47 | School | .54 | Gen. Gap | .48 |
| | | God | .48 | Love | .39 |

| IV | | V | | VI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Countries | .77 | Girls | .56 | Sex | -.61 |
| Teachers | .51 | Motorcycles | -.53 | Movies | .53 |
| People | .42 | Sports | .47 | Wild West | .41 |
| Voting Age | .42 | Life | .46 | Animals | .36 |

**FEMALE FACTORS:**

| I | | II | | III | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drugs | .90 | War | .77 | Love | .83 |
| Hippies | .63 | Death | .60 | Life | .79 |
| Sex | .53 | Communism | .54 | Boys | .49 |
| Gen. Gap | .45 | School | .52 | God | .47 |
| Peace | .44 | People | .48 | | |

| IV | | V | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sports | .74 | Pop Music | .74 |
| Cooking | .73 | God | .56 |
| Animals | .33* | Boys | .40 |

*Highest Loading by Variable on any Factor

That the principal axes accounted for slightly less than 52% of the total variance for either the male or female subjects is further evidence of the relative independence of many of the topics (Table 4 and 5). Rather than speculate as to the nature of the clusters, the factors were employed primarily as the most meaningful method of reduction to permit investigation of group differences via analysis of variance.

A comparison of average ability student performance with teacher performance is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

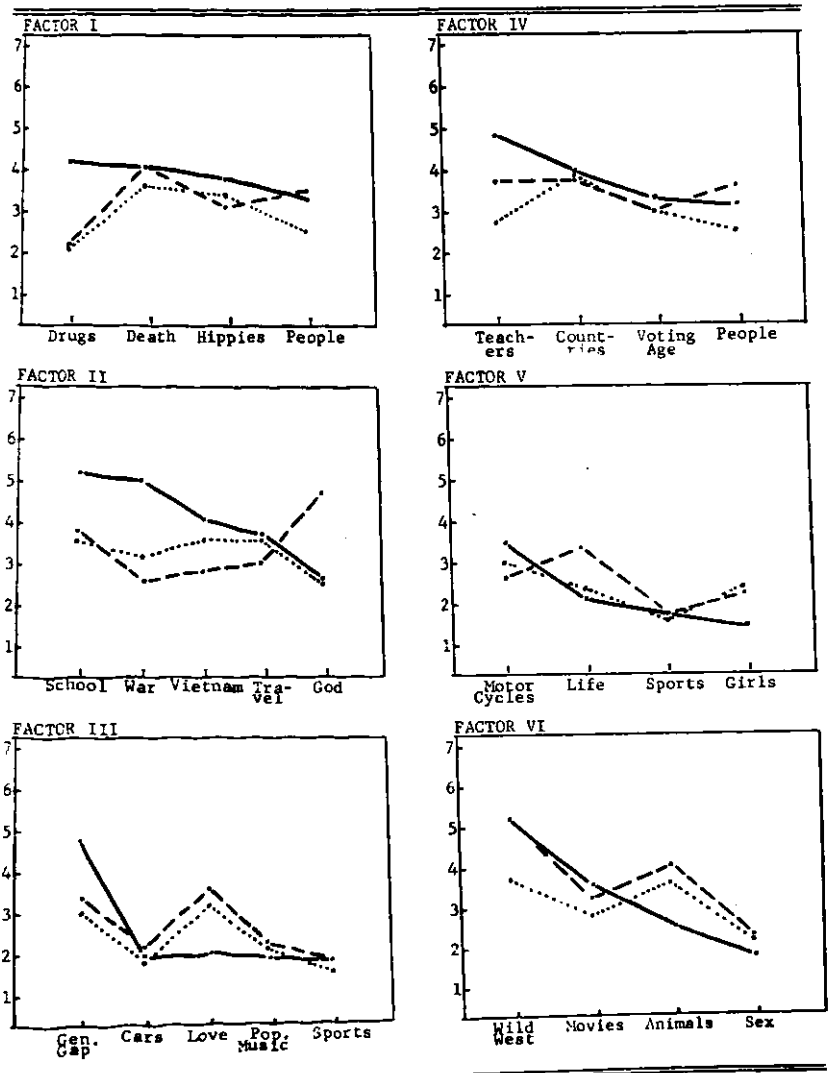
More agreement may be observed between teachers than between students and teachers for particular factors. The most accurate judgments made of student interests were those by the male teachers regarding the female students.

Analyses of variance by factors resulted in eight of the 22 student-teacher F ratios being significant (Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10). Differences were found within all factors but two. Interaction between main effects occurred for six of the 22 analyses. Interaction generally involved male students.

Of the most popular writings subjects for the average ability male student, *Girls*, *Sports*, *Pop Music*, *Sex*, *Love*, *Cars* and *Life* were at the top of the list; whereas, *Wild West*, *School*, *War*, *Teachers* and *Generation Gap* drew the lowest preference (Table 11). For the female students, *Life*, *Love*, *Peace*, *Boys* and *God* were given highest preference; and *School*, *Community*, *War* and *Death*, lowest (Table 12).

Due to the proportion of significant F's for the teacher-student effect and the number of interactions, t-tests were computed for each topic (Tables 11 and 12). Of 24 topics for boys, both male and female teachers differed with students on eight. They also differed with male students on five of the same topics, i.e., *Girls*, *Love*, *Drugs*, *Generation Gap* and *War*. Female teachers differed with female students on five of 18 topics, whereas, male teachers differed only on two. Male and female teachers differed with female students on two of the same topics, i.e., *Life* and *School*. Student-teacher differences occurred more often with topics generating more extreme student reaction.

Group means for each topic were utilized in determining the correlation between teacher and student performance (Tables 13 and 14).




NOTE: Higher number on scale denotes less interest; lower number, more interest.

**Fig. 1** *Means by Factor for Male Student and Teacher*

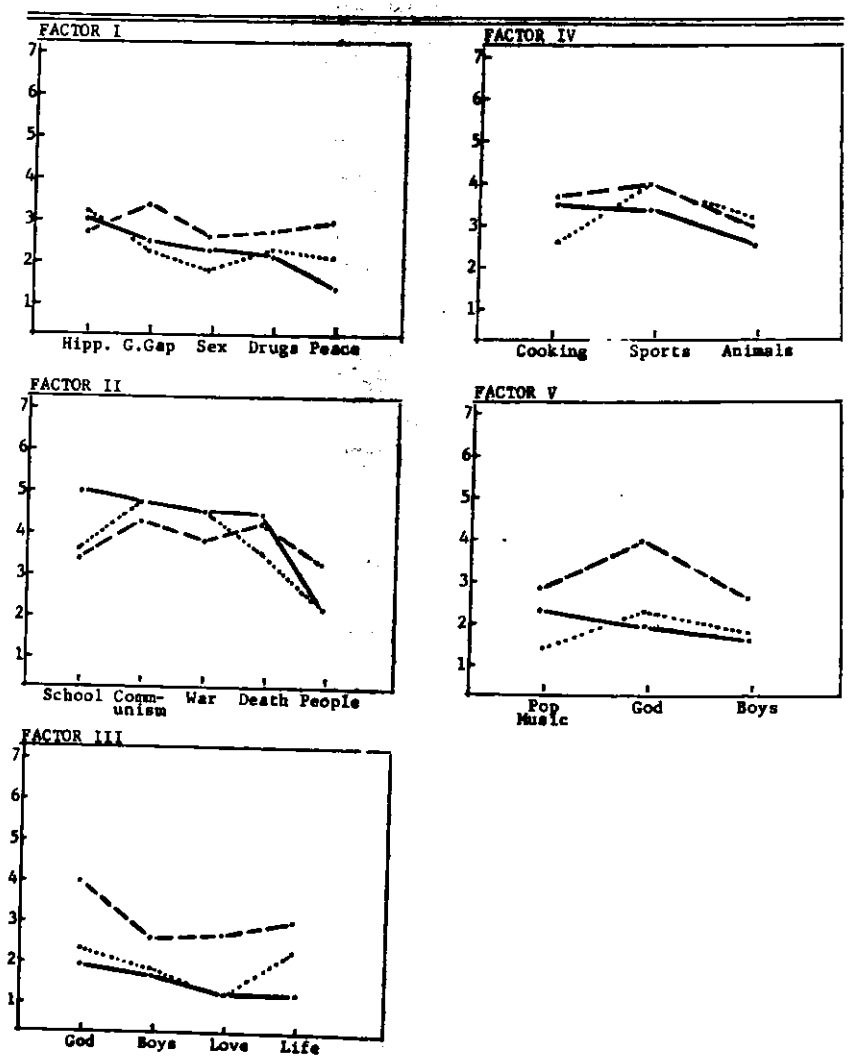



Fig. 2 *Means by Factor for Female Student and Teacher*

**Table 7**

*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for Average Male Students and Male Teachers (N = 93)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 20.23 | 1 | 20.23 | 4.18 | .039 |
| | Topics | 17.19 | 3 | 5.73 | 1.19 | .314 |
| | Interaction | 11.85 | 3 | 3.95 | .82 | .512 |
| | Within Cells | 1759.94 | 364 | 4.84 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1809.22 | 371 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 42.67 | 1 | 42.67 | 9.00 | .003 |
| | Topics | 49.52 | 4 | 12.38 | 2.61 | .034 |
| | Interaction | 22.16 | 4 | 5.54 | 1.17 | .323 |
| | Within Cells | 2157.16 | 455 | 4.74 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2271.50 | 464 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .58 | 1 | .58 | .27 | .611 |
| | Topics | 98.16 | 4 | 24.54 | 11.38 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 40.42 | 4 | 10.11 | 4.69 | .001 |
| | Within Cells | 980.98 | 455 | 2.16 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1120.14 | 464 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 19.03 | 1 | 19.03 | 5.65 | .017 |
| | Topics | 23.68 | 3 | 7.89 | 2.34 | .071 |
| | Interaction | 19.18 | 3 | 6.39 | 1.90 | .128 |
| | Within Cells | 1225.59 | 364 | 3.37 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1287.48 | 371 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .13 | 1 | .13 | .06 | .802 |
| | Topics | 46.19 | 3 | 15.64 | 7.15 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 7.69 | 3 | 2.56 | 1.17 | .320 |
| | Within Cells | 797.16 | 364 | 2.19 | | |
| | TOTAL | 851.89 | 371 | | | |
| Factor VI: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 1.67 | 1 | 1.67 | .61 | .560 |
| | Topics | 103.55 | 3 | 34.52 | 12.70 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 26.16 | 3 | 8.72 | 3.21 | .023 |
| | Within Cells | 988.99 | 364 | 2.72 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1120.36 | 371 | | | |

**Table 8**

*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for Average Male Students and Female Teachers (N = 93)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 9.44 | 1 | 9.44 | 1.91 | .165 |
| | Topics | 11.95 | 3 | 3.98 | .80 | .505 |
| | Interaction | 19.66 | 3 | 6.55 | 1.32 | .266 |
| | Within Cells | 1803.26 | 364 | 4.95 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1844.30 | 371 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 20.69 | 1 | 20.69 | 4.34 | .035 |
| | Topics | 24.86 | 4 | 6.22 | 1.30 | .267 |
| | Interaction | 83.50 | 4 | 20.88 | 4.38 | .002 |
| | Within Cells | 2170.35 | 455 | 4.77 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2299.41 | 464 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .89 | 1 | .89 | .38 | .547 |
| | Topics | 106.05 | 4 | 26.51 | 11.27 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 41.92 | 4 | 10.48 | 4.45 | .002 |
| | Within Cells | 1070.62 | 455 | 2.35 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1219.48 | 464 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 3.34 | 1 | 3.34 | 1.00 | .319 |
| | Topics | 26.54 | 3 | 8.85 | 2.65 | .048 |
| | Interaction | 7.89 | 3 | 2.63 | .79 | .505 |
| | Within Cells | 1216.49 | 364 | 3.34 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1254.26 | 371 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 1.75 | 1 | 1.72 | .75 | .610 |
| | Topics | 38.71 | 3 | 12.90 | 5.64 | .001 |
| | Interaction | 20.90 | 3 | 6.97 | 3.04 | .028 |
| | Within Cells | 833.20 | 364 | 2.29 | | |
| | TOTAL | 894.54 | 371 | | | |
| Factor VI: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 4.15 | 1 | 4.15 | 1.46 | .225 |
| | Topics | 162.75 | 3 | 54.25 | 19.14 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 14.57 | 3 | 4.86 | 1.71 | .162 |
| | Within Cells | 1031.94 | 364 | 2.84 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1213.41 | 371 | | | |

**Table 9**

*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for Average Female Students and Female Teachers (N = 76)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 16.38 | 1 | 16.38 | 4.99 | .025 |
| | Topics | 13.52 | 4 | 3.38 | 1.03 | .392 |
| | Interaction | 15.10 | 4 | 3.77 | 1.15 | .333 |
| | Within Cells | 1215.08 | 370 | 3.28 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1260.08 | 379 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 5.57 | 1 | 5.57 | 1.45 | .227 |
| | Topics | 72.78 | 4 | 18.20 | 4.73 | .001 |
| | Interaction | 30.32 | 4 | 7.58 | 1.97 | .097 |
| | Within Cells | 1424.13 | 370 | 3.85 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1532.81 | 379 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 73.88 | 1 | 73.88 | 34.55 | .000 |
| | Topics | 22.55 | 3 | 7.52 | 3.52 | .016 |
| | Interaction | 5.60 | 3 | 1.87 | .87 | .542 |
| | Within Cells | 632.85 | 296 | 2.14 | | |
| | TOTAL | 734.88 | 303 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 3.46 | 1 | 3.46 | 1.40 | .237 |
| | Topics | 14.66 | 2 | 7.33 | 2.96 | .053 |
| | Interaction | .81 | 2 | .41 | .16 | .850 |
| | Within Cells | 550.34 | 222 | 2.48 | | |
| | TOTAL | 569.27 | 227 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 30.03 | 1 | 30.03 | 8.80 | .004 |
| | Topics | 12.99 | 2 | 6.49 | 1.90 | .149 |
| | Interaction | 9.07 | 2 | 4.54 | 1.33 | .266 |
| | Within Cells | 757.46 | 222 | 3.41 | | |
| | TOTAL | 809.56 | 227 | | | |

Table 10

*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for Average Female Students and Male Teachers (N = 76)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .17 | 1 | .17 | .06 | .808 |
| | Topics | 29.64 | 4 | 7.41 | 2.48 | .043 |
| | Interaction | 5.48 | 4 | 1.37 | .46 | .769 |
| | Within Cells | 1107.78 | 370 | 2.99 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1143.07 | 379 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 9.37 | 1 | 9.37 | 2.39 | .119 |
| | Topics | 145.06 | 4 | 36.27 | 9.24 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 14.07 | 4 | 3.52 | .90 | .532 |
| | Within Cells | 1452.99 | 370 | 3.93 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1621.50 | 379 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 26.55 | 1 | 26.55 | 13.40 | .001 |
| | Topics | 3.76 | 3 | 1.25 | .63 | .599 |
| | Interaction | 16.76 | 3 | 5.59 | 2.82 | .038 |
| | Within Cells | 586.38 | 296 | 1.98 | | |
| | TOTAL | 633.44 | 303 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .17 | 1 | .17 | .07 | .785 |
| | Topics | 11.60 | 2 | 5.80 | 2.42 | .090 |
| | Interaction | 10.27 | 2 | 5.13 | 2.14 | .118 |
| | Within Cells | 533.24 | 222 | 2.40 | | |
| | TOTALS | 555.29 | 227 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | .71 | 1 | .71 | .24 | .633 |
| | Topics | 3.35 | 2 | 1.68 | .56 | .580 |
| | Interaction | 6.95 | 2 | 3.48 | 1.15 | .318 |
| | Within Cells | 670.22 | 222 | 3.02 | | |
| | TOTAL | 681.24 | 227 | | | |

**Table 11**

*Topics Ranked by Interest for Average Ability Male Students (N = 81)*

| Topic | Student $\bar{x}$* | Female Teacher** $\bar{x}$ (p) | Male Teacher $\bar{x}$ (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | 1.4 | 2.1 (.038) | 2.2 (.010) |
| Sports | 1.8 | — | — |
| Pop Music | 1.9 | — | — |
| Sex | 1.9 | — | — |
| Love | 2.0 | 3.7 (.005) | 3.2 (.020) |
| Cars | 2.0 | — | — |
| Life | 2.1 | 3.3 (.022) | — |
| Animals | 2.6 | 4.0 (.025) | — |
| God | 2.9 | 4.8 (.006) | — |
| People | 3.2 | — | — |
| Voting Age | 3.3 | — | — |
| Motorcycles | 3.5 | — | — |
| Movies | 3.6 | — | — |
| Travel | 3.8 | — | — |
| Hippies | 3.9 | — | — |
| Countries | 4.0 | — | — |
| Vietnam | 4.0 | — | — |
| Death | 4.0 | — | — |
| Drugs | 4.1 | 2.3 (.030) | 2.2 (.022) |
| Generation Gap | 4.8 | 3.3 (.023) | 3.0 (.006) |
| Teachers | 4.9 | — | 2.8 (.005) |
| War | 5.0 | 2.6 (.001) | 3.1 (.012) |
| School | 5.1 | — | 3.6 (.021) |
| Wild West | 5.2 | — | 3.8 (.016) |

*Low x denotes high interest

**Teachers x's listed when significantly different from Student x's

**Table 12**
*Topics Ranked by Interest for Average Ability Female Students (N = 67)*

| Topic | Student $\bar{x}$* | Female Teacher** $\bar{x}$ (p) | Male Teacher $\bar{x}$ (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Life | 1.18 | 3.00 (.000) | 2.33 (.000) |
| Love | 1.24 | 2.67 (.001) | ____ |
| Peace | 1.40 | 3.00 (.001) | ____ |
| Boys | 1.67 | ____ | ____ |
| God | 2.03 | 4.00 (.004) | ____ |
| People | 2.12 | ____ | ____ |
| Drugs | 2.15 | ____ | ____ |
| Sex | 2.30 | ____ | ____ |
| Pop Music | 2.37 | ____ | ____ |
| Generation Gap | 2.49 | ____ | ____ |
| Animals | 2.62 | ____ | ____ |
| Hippies | 3.00 | ____ | ____ |
| Sports | 3.39 | ____ | ____ |
| Cooking | 3.51 | ____ | ____ |
| Death | 4.46 | ____ | ____ |
| War | 4.59 | ____ | ____ |
| Communism | 4.79 | ____ | ____ |
| School | 5.01 | 3.44 (.021) | 3.56 (.037) |

*Low $\bar{x}$ denotes high interest

**Teachers $\bar{x}$'s listed when significantly different from Student $\bar{x}$'s.

**Table 13**

*Correlations Between Male Student, Male Teacher and Female Teacher Means on Twenty-Four Interest Ratings*

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Male Student | | .61* | .46* |
| 2. | Male Teacher | | | .68* |
| 3. | Female Teacher | | | |

* $P < .01$

**Table 14**

*Correlations Between Female Student, Female Teacher and Male Teacher Means on Eighteen Interest Ratings*

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Female Student | | .85* | .70* |
| 2. | Female Teacher | | | .74* |
| 3. | Male Teacher | | | |

* $P < .01$

Though each correlation was significant, the relationship between mean performance of female teachers and male students was noticeably low (.46). The highest correlation (.85) was between female teachers and female students.

Attention was next given to a comparison of ability groups by sex. Rather large differences between ability groups for both sexes are shown in Figures 3 and 4.

The mean performance of the middle ability group was often found between the means of the two extreme groups. This was most evident with females. The low and middle ability males were very similar in their interest ratings on Factors II, III and V.

Males were in close agreement on only four of the twenty-four topics, each ability group showing high positive writing interests for *Sex*, *Girls*, and *Sports* with low interest for the *Wild West*. Girls were in close agreement on five of their eighteen topics, indicating high positive interest for *Peace*, *Love*, *Life* and *People*, and negative interest for *School*.

Analyses of variance for main effects produced significant F's for ability groups, topics, and interaction for both sexes (Tables 15 and 16).

Correlation analysis between ability groups showed no directional relationship between high and medium ability males or between extreme groups for either sex (Tables 17 and 18).

Strong positive relationships were found between both male and female groups of low and average ability.

Differences in writing interests due to sex were investigated by comparing topics common to both male and female scales (Figure 5).

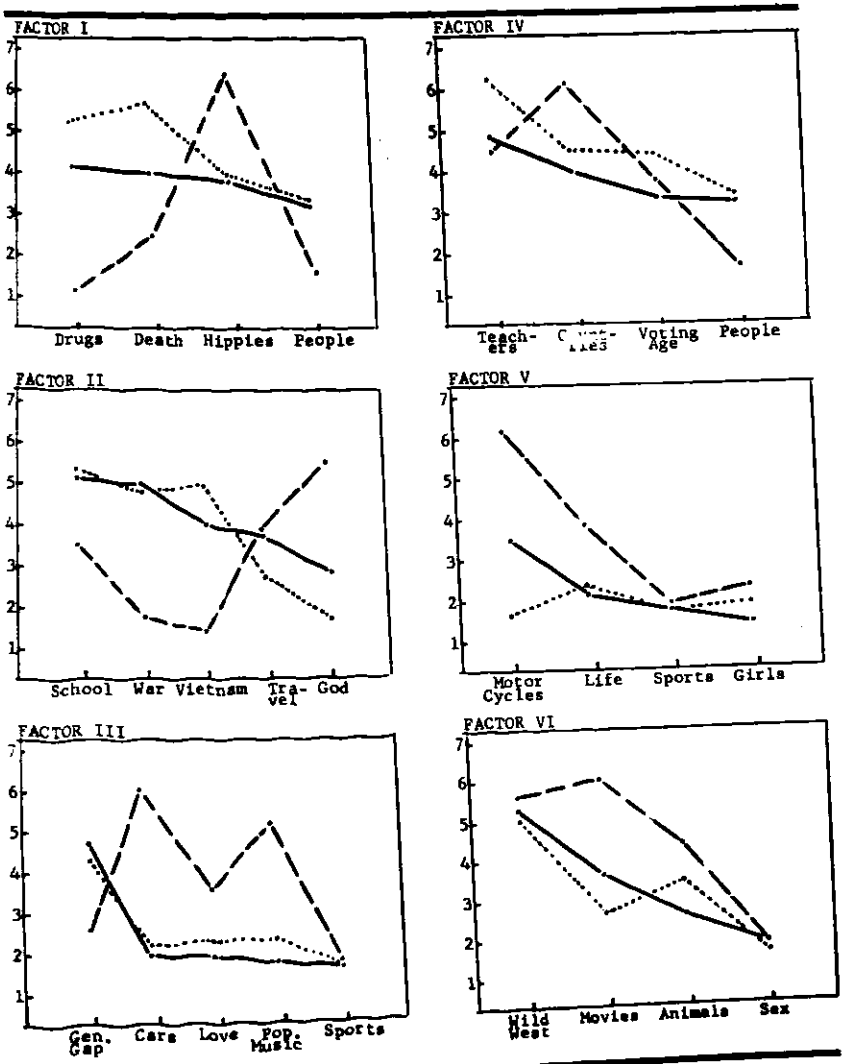



**Fig. 3** *Means by Factor for High Average, and Low Ability Male Students*

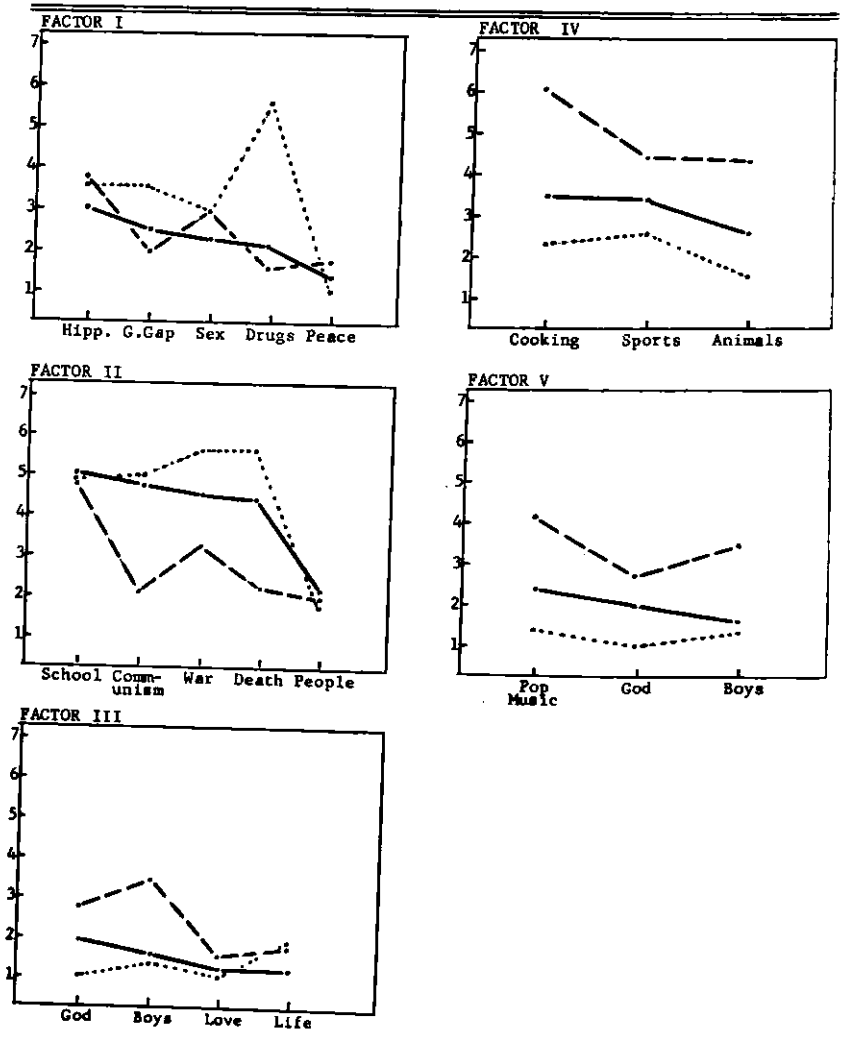



**Fig. 4** *Means by Factor for High, Average, and Low Ability Female Students*

**Table 15**

*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for High, Average and Low Ability Male Students (N = 127)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 136.97 | 2 | 68.49 | 15.70 | .000 |
| | Topics | 166.26 | 3 | 55 42 | 12.71 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 365.31 | 6 | 60 89 | 13.96 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 2163.55 | 496 | 4.36 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2832.10 | 507 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 61.94 | 2 | 30.97 | 7.21 | .001 |
| | Topics | 75.64 | 4 | 18.91 | 4.40 | .002 |
| | Interaction | 552.01 | 8 | 69.00 | 16.07 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 2662.28 | 620 | 4.29 | | |
| | TOTAL | 3351.86 | 634 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 153.89 | 2 | 76.94 | 33.26 | .000 |
| | Topics | 185.16 | 4 | 46.29 | 20.01 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 374.97 | 8 | 46.87 | 20.26 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 1434.06 | 620 | 2.31 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2148.07 | 634 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 65.20 | 2 | 32.60 | 8.96 | .000 |
| | Topics | 257.94 | 3 | 85.98 | 23.64 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 176.75 | 6 | 29.46 | 8.10 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 1803.95 | 496 | 3.64 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2303.85 | 507 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 145.10 | 2 | 72.55 | 34.08 | .000 |
| | Topics | 192.50 | 3 | 64.17 | 30.14 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 160.94 | 6 | 26.82 | 12.60 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 1055.98 | 496 | 2.13 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1554.52 | 507 | | | |
| Factor VI: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 98.81 | 2 | 49.41 | 17.90 | .000 |
| | Topics | 484.95 | 3 | 161.65 | 58.55 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 92.38 | 6 | 15.40 | 5.58 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 1369.46 | 496 | 2.76 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2045.60 | 507 | | | |

**Table 16**
*Analyses of Variance of Topic Ratings by Factor for High, Average and Low Ability Female Students (N = 118)*

| | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor I: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 46.51 | 2 | 23.25 | 7.09 | .001 |
| | Topics | 132.32 | 4 | 33.08 | 10.08 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 149.69 | 8 | 18.71 | 5.70 | .000 |
| | Within Cells | 1887.15 | 575 | 3.28 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2215.67 | 589 | | | |
| Factor II: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 136.82 | 2 | 68.41 | 18.55 | .000 |
| | Topics | 251.39 | 4 | 62.85 | 17.04 | .000 |
| | Interaction | 102.45 | 8 | 12.81 | 3.47 | .001 |
| | Within Cells | 2121.18 | 575 | 3.69 | | |
| | TOTAL | 2611.84 | 589 | | | |
| Factor III: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 44.31 | 2 | 22.16 | 11.70 | .000 |
| | Topics | 24.13 | 3 | 8.04 | 4.25 | .006 |
| | Interaction | 31.13 | 6 | 5.19 | 2.74 | .013 |
| | Within Cells | 870.78 | 460 | 1.89 | | |
| | TOTAL | 970.35 | 471 | | | |
| Factor IV: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 182.05 | 2 | 91.03 | 27.03 | .000 |
| | Topics | 26.68 | 2 | 13.34 | 3.96 | .020 |
| | Interaction | 18.14 | 4 | 4.54 | 1.35 | .251 |
| | Within Cells | 1161.96 | 345 | 3.37 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1388.83 | 353 | | | |
| Factor V: | Between Cells | | | | | |
| | Student-Teach. | 120.32 | 2 | 60.16 | 19.18 | .000 |
| | Topics | 12.37 | 2 | 6.19 | 1.97 | .139 |
| | Interaction | 8.22 | 4 | 2.05 | .66 | .627 |
| | Within Cells | 1082.27 | 345 | 3.14 | | |
| | TOTAL | 1223.17 | 353 | | | |

**Table 17**

*Correlations Between High, Average and Low Female Student Means on Eighteen Interest Ratings*

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | High | | .41* | -.04 |
| 2. | Average | | | .75* |
| 3. | Low | | | |

*P < .01

**Table 18**

*Correlations Between High, Average and Low Male Student Means on Twenty-Four Interest Ratings*

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | High | | .03 | -.17 |
| 2. | Average | | | .82* |
| 3. | Low | | | |

*P < .01

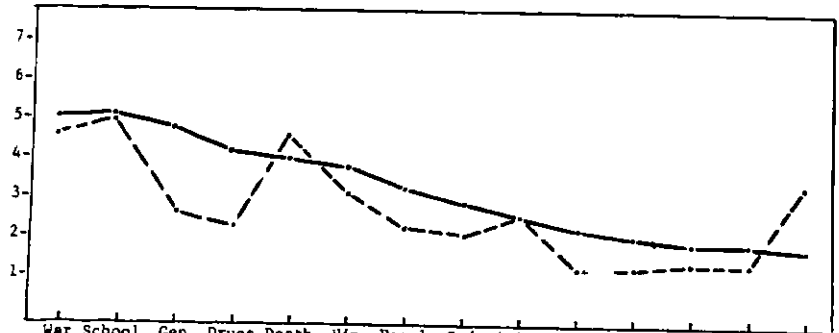
Of this average ability group, females demonstrated greater interest for more topics than did males. Analyses of variance indicated sex differences in topic interest (Table 16).

Interaction and differences between topics also contributed significantly to total variance.

**Table 19**

*Analyses of Variance for Average Student Across Fourteen Topics Held in Common and Sex (N = 151)*

| Source | Sum of Squares | df | Variance Est. | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eight Topics: | | | | | |
| Between Cells | | | | | |
| Sex | 88.83 | 1 | 88.83 | 28.95 | .000 |
| Topics | 440.44 | 7 | 62.93 | 20.51 | .000 |
| Interaction | 165.34 | 7 | 23.62 | 7.70 | .000 |
| Within Cells | 3647.52 | 1192 | 3.07 | | |
| TOTAL | 4342.13 | 1207 | | | |
| Six Topics: | | | | | |
| Between Cells | | | | | |
| Sex | 22.48 | 1 | 22.48 | 6.30 | .012 |
| Topics | 806.45 | 5 | 161.29 | 45.19 | .000 |
| Interaction | 324.55 | 5 | 64.92 | 18.19 | .000 |
| Within Cells | 3182.55 | 894 | 3.57 | | |
| TOTAL | 4336.12 | 905 | | | |




NOTE: Higher number on scale denotes less interest; lower number, more interest.

**Fig. 5** *Means on Variables for Average Ability Student on Fourteen Variables by Sex*

## Discussion and Conclusions

The topics selected by the students were not entirely supportive of the literature. *Action, adventure, outdoor life* and *science fiction* have been mentioned as popular reading subjects for boys (Stanchfield, 1962; Squire, 1969). This study indicates that such conclusions may require qualification. Student interest for *action* topics seemed to depend more upon what was involved (Table 11). For example, they were much more interested in *cars* than *motorcycles* or *travel;* and very disinterested in *war.* Research on the reading interests of males has typically found such topics as *romance, music* and *pets* to be unpopular with this group. This was not the case, however, for writing interests. The five most preferred writing topics for ninth grade males of average ability were *Girls, Pop Music, Sex* and *Love.* The popular notion that topics related to *science, science fiction* and *outdoor life* have great appeal to the young received absolutely no support from this study (Tables 11 and 12.

Reading interests for girls as found by other investigators does seem to parallel their writing interests. *Romance* as a popular reading topic for girls (Squire, 1969) bears obvious similarity to the four most preferred writing topics, *Life, Love, Peace* and *Boys* (Table 12). Also of interest was the relatively fewer number of topics for girls, a conclusion somewhat contrary to the notion that female interests cover a wider spectrum (Jackson, 1968). In conclusion, any similarity between reading and writing interests would seem to depend upon both the sex of the student and the topic being considered.

The fact that ninth grade teachers performed as well as they did in predicting the interests of the average ability student was encouraging; however, the question remains, could they have done as well with the low and high ability student? This question has particular significance due to the extreme differences in interests found between ability groups (Tables 15 and 16). Another interesting finding concerning the teacher-student dimension was that despite the high correlation between the performance of teachers and students of the same sex (Tables 13 and 14), perceptions of student interests were often more accurate when made by teachers of opposite sex (Table 12). Most interesting was the tendency for teachers to misjudge student interests for the more popular and least popular topics. This would seem to say that ninth grade teachers generally know the topics children will accept without resistance, but are relatively unaware of those topics having the greatest effect on intrinsic motivation or, as the case may be, frustration. Differences in interests due to sex for the student of average ability has been supported by other investigators, and consequently was expected; however, the extreme differences in writing interests between ability groups was surprising (Stanchfield, 1962; Squire, 1969).

In conclusion, the topics selected and evaluated by the students should be of interest to those involved with this age group, particularly as teachers frequently misjudge the interest of the average student for selected topics. The findings further seem to indicate that writing interests are somewhat different from other modes of interest, such as reading; and that sex and academic ability are factors affecting these interests. The extreme variances between ability groups clearly indicates the direction for future research and the need for continued appreciation of the reality of individual differences in the classroom.

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