

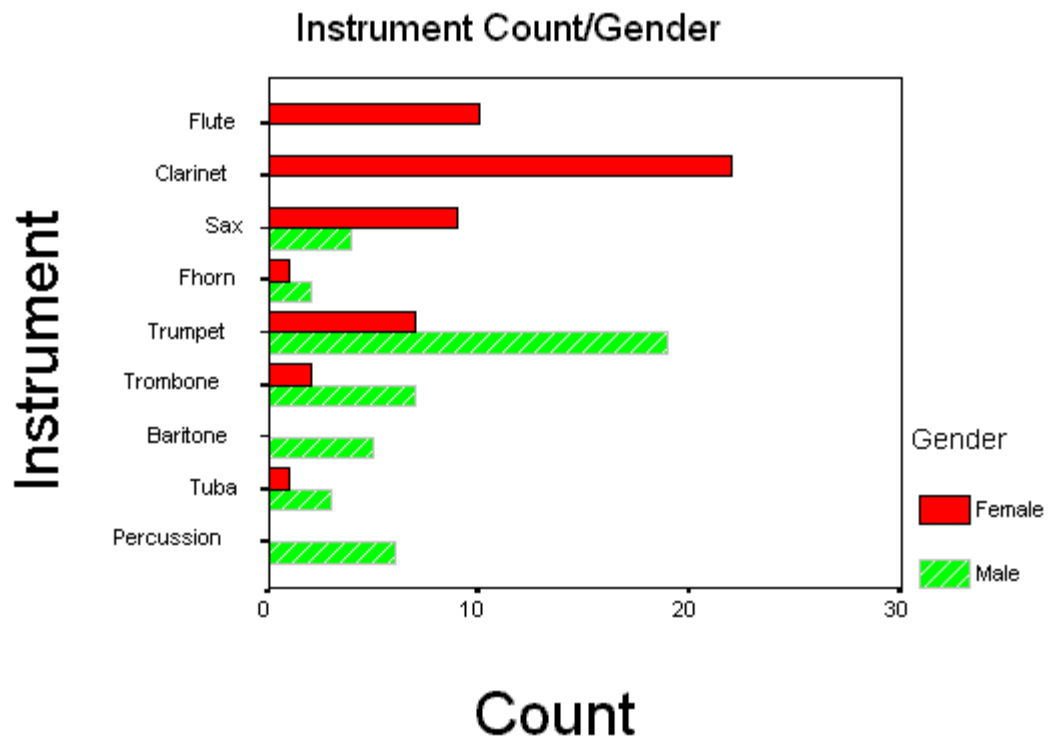
August 1997 - Published by NAPBIRT, All rights reserved.

Occasionally instruments show up at the repair shop that make you wonder "What are our directors teaching these students about maintenance?" or "Who told her that she could clean her horn with a Brillo pad?" With those questions in mind, I decided to survey students to determine the sources for their instrument care information and whether any of these sources of information have any correlation with the number of times the instrument visits the repair shop. A 17-item survey was administered to the 108 members of the marching band at a local university summer band in July of 1996. My heartfelt thanks go to Paschal Ward, band director at Bainbridge H.S. in Georgia, and camp coordinator Ralph Ford for allowing me to conduct this survey. The completed surveys then were placed in a box in my office for 9 months until I found time to tabulate them. So here we are, slightly a year later, and I'm finally submitting my findings for your comments.

In reviewing the surveys, only 98 were used in the actual analysis because of missing answers. Of the students attending, 27% were from band programs in Alabama; 8% were from Florida, 59% were from Georgia, and 6% were from Louisiana. Most were in grades 9-12 (94%) and 52 were females, compared with 46 males. Now here's the first significant item for this sample; in terms of instrument choice, males clearly favored brasswinds and percussion while females favored woodwinds (see Chart 1). We see some females playing brasswinds but no females in this sample played percussion. With the exception of saxophone, no males in this sample are playing woodwinds. This gender preference for certain families of instruments will become important in later analysis.

Chart 1.

The source of student instrument in this sample may be of interest to instrument dealers, especially if you are experienced competitors from mail-order music dealers. Although mail-



order purchases and rental were possible choices, no students reported owning a mail-order instrument. Approximately one-half of the instruments were obtained from retail music stores. Almost one quarter of the instruments were school-owned. Students who couldn't find a category that best described their instrument source were asked to write-in a description. In all cases, these responses indicated family

members or neighbors had loaned or given used instruments (See responses coded "other" in Chart 2). Eight percent of students indicated that the source of their instrument was unknown. Forty-two percent responded that their instrument was under some sort of service/maintenance agreement.

Instrument Source

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	music store	47	48.0
	music store rental	2	2.0
	individual	11	11.2
	other store	3	3.1
	school owned	19	19.4
	school rental	3	3.1
	don't know	8	8.2
	other	5	5.1
	Total	98	100.0
Total		98	100.0

Chart 2.

Where are students learning to take care of their horns? The band director was the number one source of horn care knowledge (see [Chart 3](#)). Some students reported having received no instruction (6%). The other sources, music store personnel, section leaders, method books, and relatives (other), accounted for 22% of student responses. Two students failed to answer the question. Most felt that they had received above average instruction in horn care. Of the 96 students responding to this question, 93% reported the quality of their instruction was "very good" or "good".

Despite the instruction, about two out of three students (68%) indicated that their horns had visited a repair shop within the previous year (see [Chart 4](#)). Most students reported two or fewer visits to the shop (88%). The average time the horn remained in the shop was a little over 3 days (see [Chart 5](#)). Of students having horn repairs in the previous year, 73% reported that they were pleased with the quality of the repair. When asked if any students experienced problems with shop repairs, 22% responded that their horns were not repaired properly on the first repair shop visit.

Care Information Source

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	band director	75	78.1
	music store rep	7	7.3
	section leader	2	2.1
	other	4	4.2
	book	2	2.1
	no instruction	6	6.3
	Total	96	100.0
Missing	System Missing	2	
	Total	2	
Total		98	

Chart 3.**times repaired past year**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	.00	30	32.3
	1.00	31	33.3
	2.00	21	22.6
	3.00	6	6.5
	4.00	2	2.2
	5.00	2	2.2
	10.00	1	1.1
	Total	93	100.0
Missing	System Missing	5	
	Total	5	
Total		98	

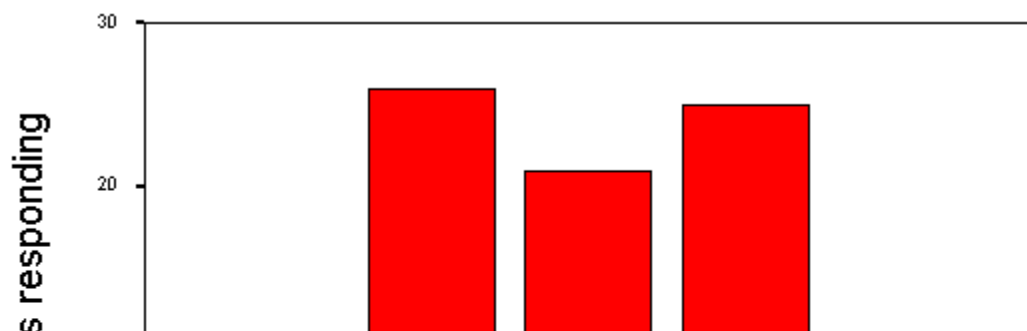
Chart 4.

Chart 5.

Does the source of horn care instruction or the student's gender make any difference in repair shop visits? A two-way ANOVA procedure examined the average differences in horn repairs between males and females depending on the source of instruction. No significant effects were discovered, suggesting that neither gender nor source of horn care instruction has any effect on repair shop visits (alpha level set to .05).

**Chart 6.**

Looking at whether a service contract makes a difference in shop visits (see Chart 6) , a one-way

ANOVA revealed that service contract horns visited the shop significantly fewer times ($F(2,85) = 3.499$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = .076$, $\alpha = .05$). Average visits for each category indicated that horns not under contract visited the shop almost twice as often as those that were (1.73 visits per year versus .93 for horns not under contract). The survey did not examine possible reasons for this, but I suspect that instruments eligible for service agreements tend to be newer and need fewer routine repairs. The data also suggests that dealers in this region are savvy enough to know what instruments to exclude from extended maintenance contracts.

Organizing instrument source into three categories, store, school, and family/individual (pawnshops were included in this category), the relationship between source, gender and frequency of instrument repairs was examined. Replies by students who didn't know instrument source were not used. A two-way ANOVA indicated instrument source was a significant factor in repair frequency ($F(2,79) = 3.238$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = .076$, $\alpha = .05$). Males and females differed among categories of instrument source ($F(2,79) = 4.048$, $p = .021$, $\eta^2 = .093$, $\alpha = .05$) meaning that in at least one category, either males or females were more apt to have more horn problems.

Follow-up analyses was performed to determine the relationships between categories.

Remembering the gender preferences indicated in [Chart 1](#), because females generally chose (or were given) woodwinds, those females who received horns from family/individuals had significantly higher average horn problems ($F(1,79) = 7.017$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = .082$, $\alpha = .0167$ (Bonferroni). The simple main effects of instrument source showed that students obtaining horns from family/individuals experienced greater horn problems than either school-owned or store-purchased horns (LSD post hoc test, $p = .007$, $\alpha = .05$) It should be noted that a couple of extreme cases in this category really pushed the group averages up (see [Chart 7](#)). The average times repaired in a year for all categories are: (1) store = 1.0, (2) school = 1.4, and (3) family/individual = 2.1.

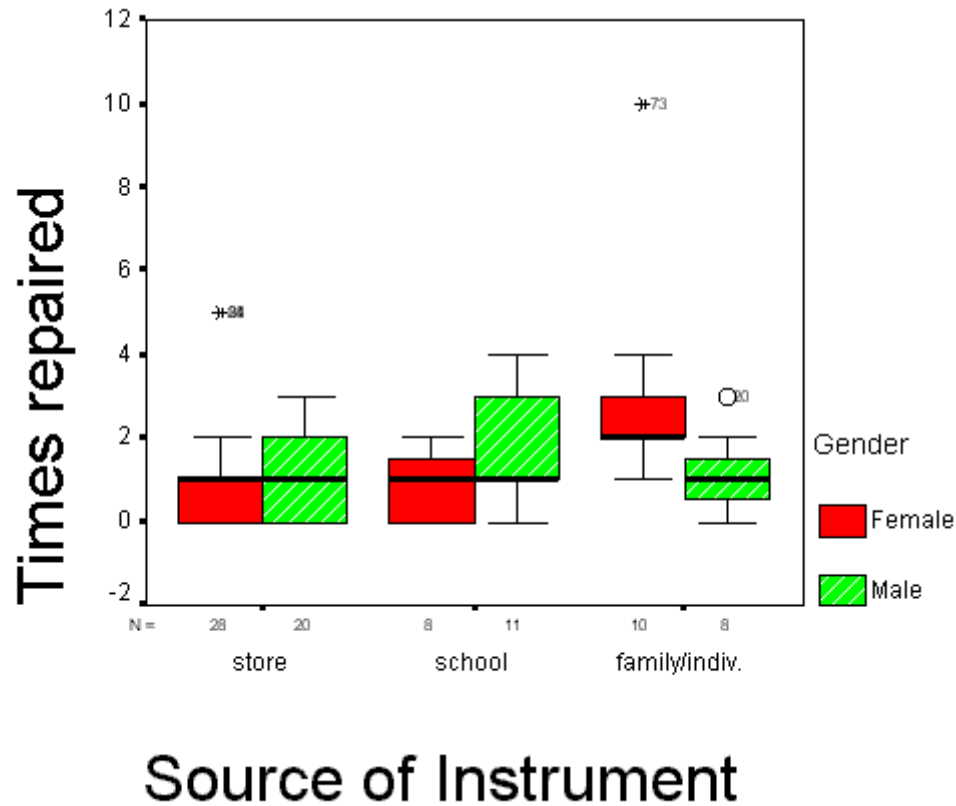


Chart 7.

Conclusions:

Does excellent instruction in horn care reduce the number of repairs? Relying on student reports of instruction quality is risky; and the survey makes no distinctions between problems caused by neglect, accidents, or routine maintenance needs. There's no easy way to ask students if their ignorance or neglect caused the horn problem, so the question was ignored. The results of this survey suggest that regardless of instruction horns will need repairs, but this conflicts with what I believe from experience; good responsible players tend to take better care of their horns. A better-designed survey could probably show a relationship between quality instruction and fewer repairs.

Several students indicated that they had received repair tips from the director or technician when the repair was completed. My suggestion is to take every opportunity you can to build teaching relationships with directors and students. At the stores I've worked for, the repair shops were at the "heart and soul" of good customer relations. Although we grumble when called away from the bench, I think most of us relish the opportunity to "get out front" and talk with customers about their horn problems.

The service/maintenance contracts are another excellent way of encouraging customer loyalty. Most of the contracts I'm familiar with extend over the lifetime of the finance contract. Perhaps readers who own retail stores have information you could share concerning the scope and profitability of the "average" contract. Examining costs/benefits over time could help us recommend an average life for such agreements.

Finally, this survey provides some support for stating that used instruments purchased from sources other than music stores have more repair problems. In this sample, those horns experienced twice the repair shop visits as horns purchased from music dealers. Of more interest, perhaps, are the choices of instruments by males in this sample. As indicated in the first chart, brasswinds and percussion were preferred by males. This may explain some of the differences in repair visits observed between males and females when using horns obtained from family or individuals.

Hope this project was of interest to you!

John Jinright is a former band instrument repair technician who teaches music at Troy State University. He is also a doctoral student at Auburn University. Although he doesn't pick up the pliers very often now, he did perform a 'playing-condition' on a student's piccolo on the date this article was being completed and says he misses it!