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# Classed approaches to musical parenting in Norwegian schools of music and arts: findings from interviews with parents of music students

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores musical parenting in Norwegian schools of music and arts. These schools aim to provide extra-curricular activities in music and other art forms to *all* children and adolescents regardless of their social and economic background, but the schools reveal traits of social and cultural exclusion, serving mainly the children of the middle classes. Taking this into account, we set out to understand the parents' role in relation to music participation and explored different classed approaches to musical parenting in these schools, borrowing Lareau's (2011) notion of *concerted cultivation* and based on a Bourdieusian-inspired framework. Drawing on 14 qualitative interviews among parents of music students in schools of music and arts, we found that they invested time, energy, and money in their child(ren)'s musical activities in the schools, and as such, we also found traces of concerted cultivation, and some classed connections to different approaches to musical parenting.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Musical parenting;  
Concerted cultivation;  
Schools of music and arts;  
Inclusion and exclusion in music;  
Sociology of music education

## Introduction

This article explores classed musical parenting in Norwegian schools of music and arts. These schools are publicly financed institutions and are required to be run by every municipality (Education Act, 1998, §13–16). The schools aim to provide extra-curricular activities in music and other art forms to *all* children and adolescents, regardless of their social and economic background. This expectation of inclusion, irrespective of social class, family economy, parents' level of education, ethnicity, or gender, has recently also been emphasized by a parliamentary decision (Meld. St. 18, 2020–2021). Thus, school admission is not dependent on auditions, and schools have low fees as well as possibilities for free attendance. However, only a limited group of children and adolescents attend these schools (13% of all children between 6 and 15 years of age in 2019), and the schools also show indications of social and cultural exclusion, as they mainly serve the children of the middle classes (Berge et al., 2019). Furthermore, Berge et al. (2019) find that the parents' interest in music, art, and culture may be decisive for school attendance. Taking this into account, we set out to understand the parents' role in relation to musical participation in these schools.

Parents' role as facilitators in music activities is often made invisible in narratives of children's musical participation. Thus, Gruber et al. (2008) launched the concept of "persons in the shadows"

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to bring to the fore the crucial role parents as well as teachers and mentors play in designing a child's music activities, such as motivating children to engage in the activity and setting goals. The child's musical learning is situated within a social context in which "the presence (or absence) of the appropriate persons in the shadow" might influence whether the child engages in the activity (p. 239). As such, parents play an important role in not only guiding their child into musical activities, but also by accommodating a home environment where the child's music making is welcomed, given space, and valued, Lehmann and Kristiansen argue (2014, p. 63). However, it is important to note that these descriptions of the parents' significant role also presume a particular social and cultural context that may cater to some approaches to musical parenting and not others. Thus, within the context of the Norwegian schools of music and arts, and with the aim of exploring musical parenting, we ask the following overarching research question, followed by three sub-questions:

RQ: How are different approaches to musical parenting apparent among different classed groups in Norway?

- How do parents legitimate their children's participation in Norwegian schools of music and arts?
- What are the gains for the family in relation to such participation?
- What are the parents' approaches to musical parenting?

## Previous research and theoretical perspectives

In her research review of musical parenting in music education, Ilari (2018) concludes that although several studies have focused on the musical parenting of young performers/music students, there remains a need to explore the role of "important cultural and social markers on musical parenting" (p. 50). In examining the complex processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion in the musical upbringing of children and youth through a Bourdieusian-inspired framework, it is evident that music students gain from their parents' efforts as well as their social and cultural capital when engaging in the classical music world (e.g., Bull, 2019; Hall, 2018). Also, according to Bull (2019), "classical music's mode of pedagogy shares a logic with middle-class styles of parenting, and underpinning both is a shared form of selfhood" (p. 8), namely, a highly individualized self shaped by a particularly intensive form of parenting. The parenting-musical connection thus goes both ways: Middle-class students gain from having knowledgeable parents as home facilitators and are in this way better equipped to make use of the resources provided through their music education than students with other class backgrounds. The parents, in turn, have a chance to facilitate music-related leisure-time activities and practicing that resonate well with the ideals of parenting pertinent to their own social positioning. In her study on the upbringing of choirboys in Australia, Hall (2018) shows how this work of providing a musically nurturing environment may start very early in a child's life and is predominantly done by mothers, thus coining the concept of "musical mothering" (p. 68). Trulsson (2015) describes how parents with immigrant backgrounds enroll their children in classical music tutelage as part of their efforts to achieve class remobility, having faced patterns of downward social mobility after emigrating from their country of origin. Music is, in this connection, understood as a "commodity of exchange" (p. 38); the investments that parents make in their children's music education will hopefully have social and other forms of return that secure the children a better future in their new homeland.

While the connections between music education and parenting have been explored by music education and music sociology researchers, such research has predominantly concerned middle-class families and has not involved much discussion about how musical parenting might be performed differently in relation to children's musical participation. Wanting to explore this phenomenon more deeply, we delve into Laureau's (2011) concept of *concerted cultivation*<sup>1</sup> to explore the variety of practices of parenting that might exist among parents of students attending schools of music and arts.

According to Lareau (2011), who conducted ethnographic research on parenting among North American families, the logic of raising a child is classed, and consequently strategies and practices of parenting vary significantly between working-class and middle-class parents. This also applies to the role that leisure-time activities play in the child's life. While the working class and poor parents who participated in Lareau's study enrolled their children in activities "to provide a safe form of entertainment – 'something to do'" (p. 282), that is, merely a "diversion without long-lasting importance" (p. 283), for middle-class parents, leisure-time activities represented an educational arena with long-lasting value for the child's future. These parents "appeared to see organized activities as filled with 'teachable moments' that helped cultivate their children's talents" (p. 282), a view that their children also came to articulate as young adults looking back at what their leisure-time activities had afforded them.

The notion of concerted cultivation, though, reaches far beyond leisure-time activities and denotes the typical middle-class way of structuring the whole task of child rearing, including how language is used, around fostering "their children's talents and skills" (p. 110). While the working-class parents in Lareau's study tended to perceive a child's development as something that would, or at least should, happen through "natural growth" (p. 31) and without too much adult intervention, the middle-class parents engaged in a complex and often time-consuming orchestration of daily life, constantly educating their children, both inside the home and outside, not just in terms of developing skills and knowledge in a range of different areas, but also building "an individualized sense of self" (p. 241) in their children – "a sense that they are special" (p. 111) among other things – through teaching the children how to negotiate with adults and authorities, and to expect institutions, such as schools, "to accommodate their individual needs" (p. 245). In this light, it is not difficult to see how the rather intensive forms of musical mothering and parenting described above also represent a particular form of (middle-) *classed* parenting. Lareau's findings may not entirely or convincingly capture the upward mobility strategies of immigrant parents, mentioned above, or be unquestioningly transferred to Norwegian society, given that social class is composed and plays out somewhat differently in Norway than in the US. Still, the ample uptake of Lareau's work in Norwegian research shows that it is found both applicable and useful to illuminate various forms of classed parental practices also in this context (see e.g., Aarseth, 2018; Bæck, 2010; Eriksen, 2021; Stefansen & Farstad, 2010; Vestad & Dyndahl, 2021). With regard to our study, the question is whether musical parenting can be differentiated, and whether different, classed approaches to musical parenting might exist, some allowing for other connections than the middle-class one.

Adopting a Bourdieusian perspective, social class refers to differences in the amount and composition of various forms of capital accumulated in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Beyond *economic capital*, central forms of capital are *cultural capital* "which is convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications" and *social capital* "made up of social obligations (...), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 15). In line with this perspective, Hansen et al. (2009, 2014)<sup>2</sup> explored the distribution of economic and cultural capital in Norwegian society and distinguished between the elite, the middle-, and the working classes and primary industry<sup>3</sup> based on the amount of capital accumulated (p. 28) (see Figure 1). Furthermore, they divide each class into fractions based on the composition of capital, and as such, having large amounts of economic and cultural capital, in which, for example, the elite are constituted by the *culture* (having more

<sup>1</sup>Both Hall (2018) and Bull (2019) attend to the concept of concerted cultivation, but more to confirm it as a middle-class parenting strategy with relevance to the field of music than to use it as an analytical tool for exploring *differences* in music-related parenting.

<sup>2</sup>The Oslo Register Data Class Scheme (ORDC) (Hansen et al., 2009, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>The ORDC does not include the primary industries in the working classes in their analysis of the Norwegian society. This is because people in the primary industries (such as farmers, fishermen and forest workers) are a composite category that consists both of owners of small farms or workers in the primary industries, but also of owners of large land properties or very profitable businesses within, among other things, fish farming (Hansen & Ljunggren, 2021, p. 40).

+ Cultural capital	<b>Elite</b>			+ Economic capital
	<b>Culture</b> Professors, cultural leaders, musicians, directors, publishing editors  *	<b>Profession</b> Medical doctors, judges, dentists, politicians, civil engineers, psychologists  *	<b>Economy</b> Executives, managers in private sector, financial brokers, 10% top incomes in "Economy"-fraction  *	
	<b>Middle classes</b>			
	<b>Upper culture</b> Lecturers, librarians, journalists  **	<b>Upper profession</b> Consultants, engineers, specialist nurses, physiotherapists	<b>Upper economy</b> Same professions as in upper class economy. The next 40 percent in the income distribution in "Economy"-fraction  **	
	<b>Lower culture</b> Teachers, preschool teachers, social workers  ***	<b>Lower profession</b> Nurses, police officers, first secretaries, cooks  ****	<b>Lower economy</b> Same professions as in upper class economy. The lower 50 percent in the income distribution in "Economy"-fraction	
	<b>Working classes and primary industries</b>			
<b>Unskilled and semi-skilled workers</b> Assistants, cleaners, security guards, drivers			<b>Farmers, forest workers, fishermen</b> Larger income from primary industries than from wage- and capital income  *	
<b>Welfare transfers</b> Larger transfers than personal income				

**Figure 1.** Parents' social classes in the *Oslo Register Data Class Scheme* (ORCS) translated and adapted from Hansen et al. (2014). The green dots (\*) show the number of parents in each class (one parent worked both as a nurse and a farmer, and thus, the total number of dots is 15).

cultural than economic capital), the *profession* (having equal amounts of the two forms of capital), and the *economy* fractions (having more economic than cultural capital) (p. 28). Corresponding fractions also make up the middle classes, while this divide is not seen as essential among the working classes and primary industry (p. 28). In addition, Hansen et al. (2014) make a distinction between the lower- and the upper-middle classes. This view of social classes in Norwegian society may facilitate greater understanding of different classed connections to musical parenting.

## Methods

This study is part of a larger research project<sup>4</sup> that examines the complex processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion and social (im)mobility in the musical upbringing of children and youth

<sup>4</sup>The project *The Social Dynamics of Musical Upbringing and Schooling in the Norwegian Welfare State* (DYNAMUS) is supported by the Research Council of Norway (2018–2022; see DYNAMUS, n.d.). Earlier studies within the same research area include Jordhus-Lier (2021), Jordhus-Lier et al. (2021), Karlsen and Nielsen (2021) and Nielsen et al. (2022).

in the post-WWII era of Norwegian society, of which one sub-study focuses on music teaching in the municipal schools of music and arts.

### **Design and sample**

In this qualitative study, interviews were conducted with 14 parents (including one couple) of music students in schools of music and arts. The parents belonged to five strategically sampled schools situated in different parts of Norway. The schools were selected based on survey results in an earlier study (Jordhus-Lier et al., 2021) and were chosen according to variations in musical instruments and genres taught as well as geographic location. In addition, the selected schools differed with regard to their location in small, medium-sized, or large municipalities.<sup>5</sup> The interviewees were parents of students aged 6–19 years who played string instruments, wind band instruments, Norwegian folk music instruments, classical instruments outside the Western traditions, or band instruments as well as piano and voice. Lastly, the sample was predominantly female (11 women and 3 men) although we did not make gender a specific request. As such, the sample is in line with Hall's (2018) findings of the gendered nature of musical parenting – i.e., predominantly mothering rather than parenting.

In accordance with the Personal Data Act (GDPR) (2018) on privacy, we did not access lists of parents of music students in the schools, and thus, the parents were recruited based on suggestions from music teachers or rectors with whom we had conducted earlier interviews in particular schools. Further, also in accordance with GDPR, we did not ask for parents based on social class. Thus, our sample may have been limited by the teachers and rectors' unconscious classed biases as no working class parents were suggested nor recruited. There is evidence that working class families engage in the Norwegian school of music and performing arts, although they are not among the main users (Berge et al., 2019, p. 119).

### **The interviewed parents**

All the interviewed parents (11 women and 3 men) had formal education and employment in diverse occupations, and as such, they may also be seen as belonging to different social classes in Norwegian society. Based on the (general) examples of occupations that are seen as representing different social classes and fractions in the latest version of *The Oslo Register Data Class Schedule* (Hansen et al., 2014), we could categorize<sup>6</sup> most of the interviewed parents as belonging to the middle classes (11 parents including one couple), while some were also seen as definitely representing the elite (three parents) (see Figure 1). Within the middle classes, four parents belonged to upper-middle classes, while seven belonged to lower-middle classes. Finally, the three people in the elite category represented the cultural fraction, the profession fraction, and the economic fraction, one in each.

Regarding the parents' musical backgrounds, most of the parents had attended schools of music and arts (or similar education) and played instruments, such as the piano, guitar, voice, violin, or a wind band instruments, in musical genres including art music/classical music, popular music, folk music and wind band music. All but three parents were currently engaged in musical activities, such as playing in a group, singing in a choir, working as a professional musician, conductor or amateur audio engineer, arranging private music festivals, playing at home, or taking private lessons. When asked, the non-active parents answered that they considered becoming involved in musical activities in the future.

In addition, some parents were involved in other cultural activities than music, such as theater and art, or in other leisure-time activities such as sports. Overall, the parents' musical tastes could be

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<sup>5</sup>Municipalities are classified as small (less than 10,000 population), medium-sized (10,000–75,000), or large (over 75,000 population).

<sup>6</sup>Based on our available information on education and occupation from the interviews.

categorized as either eclectic or expressing a preference for rock, metal, jazz, country, opera, contemporary art music, or songs.

### ***The interview procedures***

The interview guide consisted of three topics: (a) the parents' background (musical, artistic, educational, occupational), musical preferences, and participation in musical/artistic activities; (b) the parents' legitimations of their child(ren)'s participation in the schools; and (c) the interaction between parents and the schools of music and arts/music teachers. The interviews were conducted in autumn 2020 and spring 2021. Due to the strict regulations caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, they were arranged as Zoom meetings.<sup>7</sup> Two digital voice recorders<sup>8</sup> were used simultaneously to record the interviews.

### ***Data analysis***

Using reflexive thematic analysis, the qualitative analysis conducted positioned the researchers as actively involved in the analytic process, aiming at interpreting and making sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 269). Interviews were transcribed, anonymized, and imported into NVivo<sup>9</sup> software for analysis. While keeping the three research questions in mind, the initial coding and categorization were "data-driven" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 228) performed by one of the researchers.<sup>10</sup> However, all three researchers were involved in discussions regarding the internal consistency of the categories to insure (interviewer) reliability.

### ***Ethical considerations and limitations***

The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data in Norway (NSD).<sup>11</sup> Before conducting the interviews, each parent was given written information about the study, assuring them of the anonymity of data collected from the interviews, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. They gave their written consent to participate in the study, and also consented to give information about their under-aged children who were students in the schools. If any information about music students above 15 years of age was given by the parents in the interview, the students gave their own written consent. In addition, due to ethical considerations and adherence to the rules of the national agency of research ethics, we chose not to use Zoom's recording component in the video meetings.

As this study reports the results from a small sample of school of music and arts parents, which was selected in accordance with suggestions by teachers and rectors, the results are generalizable only to a limited degree to the present population of parents of music students in the schools. Nevertheless, the level of detail in descriptions of the findings may provide opportunities for reasoned judgments on their applicability to other relevant cases and studies, as well as of the study's theorizations on musical parenting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 297).

### ***Findings***

The findings are presented in accordance with the three research questions asked above: (i) How do parents legitimize their children's participation in schools of music and arts; (ii) What are the gains

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<sup>7</sup>Developed by Zoom Video Communications.

<sup>8</sup>Olympus VP-10.

<sup>9</sup>Produced by QSR International.

<sup>10</sup>Both codes and categories were originally developed in Norwegian and then translated into English for the purpose of this article.

<sup>11</sup>From 1.1.2022, NSD changed to Sikt.no.

for the family in relation to such participation; and (iii) What are the parents' approaches to musical parenting?

### **Parents' legitimization of their child's participation**

Four themes emerged in the interviews that describe how parents legitimize their children's participation in schools of music and arts: (i) the child's emerging interest in music participation; (ii) such training is an important part of their child's *Bildung*,<sup>12</sup> (iii) parents (or grandparents) had positive experiences with music; and (iv) dissatisfaction with music education in primary and lower secondary school.

The first theme refers to their child having *shown an emerging interest in music participation* before starting in the school. The parents told us that the child had shown an early fascination with sound – whether the sound of a specific instrument or of music in general: “She was fascinated and thought the violin was a great instrument (...) she had not yet turned five years old.” Other parents had considered their child talented from an early age: “We heard that she was good at singing, and thus, felt she had talent,” while some – by introducing or presenting their child to music playing or a specific instrument at home – had seen an emerging interest arise:

The child and his nephew just sat down and played. Then he [the child] got hooked on it, and started playing. He wanted to try for himself.

However, the parents emphasized that it was very important that the children themselves showed motivation to get involved in music participation, and that this motivation could also be driven by the child's taste in music as well as the availability of specific instruments at home:

“What do you think yourself? What do you want to do? Oh, yes, but then we try it.” It's a bit like that. But, I probably think that as we have had instruments at home – because we have a pump organ, and we have a piano, and we have had a guitar. Only by having the instruments available ... And now the child and friends have played in that band for a while, and they are a bit inspired by Kaizers orchestra.<sup>13</sup> “Oh, we have a pump organ!” And now, he has started to play a little on the pump organ! And then he plays the piano a little. Just the fact that it is available, I think.

Second, the parents legitimated their child's participation by seeing it as *an important part of their child's Bildung*. Learning music is considered a meaningful and rewarding part of life for some of the parents, and as such, “a significant part of the parents' upbringing.” One parent pinpointed that when her child was learning an instrument, “... she learns part of our cultural heritage. It is a large portion of culture that unfolds over time and of which she understands that she is a part.” Further, to do something creative was important for the parents, as “the brain needs a bit of creativity too (...) because of the hectic everyday life the children are part of.”

The third theme is related to the two former ones and involves the *parents' (and sometimes grandparents') own positive experiences with music*. They themselves had experienced that playing an instrument “brings joy in life,” and that it had been an important factor in maintaining “good mental health” as adults. For several of the parents, it was also apparent that they themselves had experienced easier access to new social communities as students and in their adult life through being able to play an instrument or sing:

If you continue and want to study in higher education, then there are, for example, student wind bands and things like that on campus. Then, you have a kind of a small free ticket.

<sup>12</sup>The concept of *Bildung* focuses on personal development as a continual process “with no final goals and no absolute knowledge to reach ... between getting to know our cultural heritage on the one hand and creating new art on the other” (Varkøy, 2015, p. 19).

<sup>13</sup>A Norwegian popular music group in which the pump organ is a central feature of their distinctive sound.



There are many benefits to playing an instrument later. It opens some doors that do not open unless you play ... if only for fun. When you are going to be a student, you can join various theaters, bands, etc. Then, it's really valuable to be able to play an instrument.

However, playing or singing was also considered a valuable and important competence to “bring with you for the rest of your adult life.”

The fourth theme that emerged in the parent interviews was their *dissatisfaction with music education in primary and lower secondary school*, which legitimized seeking competent music education elsewhere for their child:

I am not very satisfied with the music lessons [in primary and lower secondary school], as there is a lot of sitting and listening to music or singing songs from a written text only. So, that's why I thought that I would like the children to go to the school of music and arts because they will be a little “richer” through attending, I think.

In line with this, some parents emphasized that reading music and learning to perform for other people are important skills for their child to develop in the school of music and arts in particular and not in the primary school. They also made a point that these skills can easily be transferred to music lessons in the primary school and benefit the child in getting better grades in music in lower secondary school (but also in other subjects). Others highlighted that the schools of music and arts represent a unique professional institution of instrumental and vocal music education in their municipality, ensuring that their children have access to “training by professionals.”

Overall, when referring to these themes – their child's emerging interest, the importance of music education, and their own positive experiences with music – parents reveal how they assign social significance to this legitimization in accordance with their own experiences, values, and attitudes,<sup>14</sup> and also how they act accordingly as competent parents in the social field by supporting and enrolling their child(ren) into music and arts schools to draw on the teachers' expertise.

### **Parents' views of the gains for the family from the child's participation**

All the parents were asked to reflect on the gains for themselves and the family from their child (ren)'s participation in schools of music and arts, and in the following, we present five emerging themes of gains and – as mentioned by a few parents – sacrifices. These five themes included: (i) being proud as a family; (ii) strengthening the family's relationships; (iii) becoming part of a social community of parents; (iv) prioritizing the main part of their resources; and (v) not necessarily any sense of cohesion in the family.

The first theme related to *being proud as a family* that their child had taken on and continued with an activity they themselves (and, in some cases, their parents) valued highly. In line with this, some parents emphasized the joy of just following their child's development on the instrument or voice: “It's been fun along the way, so if she doesn't become a professional, then that was fine enough, I think.” Others mentioned the joy of having their home filled with music: “When the concert is approaching, the last thing I hear before I fall asleep is the piano playing downstairs in the living room. It's kind of filled with music.” They also emphasized that having a child as a music student in the school contributes to the parents' (and grandparents') participation in various events and concerts that offer valuable musical and cultural experiences:

But it also gives us a lot through experiences. We are allowed to meet lots of great young people (...). We have many great cultural experiences through the schools of music and arts and through what the school is involved in.

<sup>14</sup>In other words, what Bourdieu terms *habitus* as the learned set of preferences or dispositions by which a person orients to the social world. It is a system of durable, transposable, cognitive structures of “thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions” (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 55).

The second theme that emerged in the parents' interviews was that their child(ren)'s participation also served to *strengthen the family's relationships* as they "get into an activity that the family can do as a team" regularly and also involves the rest of the family as audiences on special occasions:

I think it's really nice that I can bring the kids with me in the afternoon and do something together with them. And then, additionally, the rest of the family gets involved as audiences at concerts, whether they want to or not. You know, it's compulsory to be in the audience when we have our Christmas concert.

In addition, parents posited that taking on administrative tasks (such as being a chairman in the wind band or sitting on the board of the string ensemble) or doing other kinds of voluntary work related especially to the child's ensemble playing, signaled their interest and curiosity in the child's activity, and may not only strengthen the family as a team but also encourage their children to continue their musical activity.

Third, other relationships may develop as a positive result of the child's participation. Many parents highlighted that they themselves had *become part of a social community of parents* of children in a music and arts school where they had made friends among the other parents, and this nurtured a sense of belonging in the wider community.

I have made lots of good friends. It has become my circle of friends. You get a lot in return for it. During the summer course, it is also a lot of fun for us to meet the parents there again. So, we get a lot in return for that. Absolutely.

I think that it's also about belonging. You are part of a village that does something together. When all the parents gather and watch the children at these shows, there is something incredibly nice and unifying about it.

However, for one parent, becoming part of a social community of parents and joining the board of an ensemble at the school also fostered conflicts between parents on such issues as whether the ensemble's priorities should adhere to the school's vision, "Schools of music and arts for everybody" (Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts, n.d.). That is, by challenging this idea, which the parents reformulated as "Everyone should be included, and no one should be left out," she had apparently made a fuss on the board and received a great deal of negative criticism. This particular parent was dissatisfied with the strains this philosophy of 'inclusion' put on the scope of the ensemble's offer to the dedicated children, and thus, later on, she chose instead to organize private ensemble activities for her children.

In that regard, the fourth theme suggests that, for a few parents, involvement *entailed prioritizing the main part of their resources*—both financial and in terms of their own leisure time—into supporting their child's activity, indicating that this "all in" engagement also involves making some sacrifices in their family life:

To be completely honest: First of all, it's a lot of work. There will be a lot of driving; it costs quite a lot of money. They need these additional courses every now and then because it gives them a lot. I think that these courses may be necessary to develop further musically. Having four children in summer courses, and probably a seminar or two during the rest of the year, large parts of our vacation budget and time are spent on this. It has been something that we do together, but occasionally, we think that it might be at the expense of being able to visit the wider family. It has been prioritized above family.

Finally, others stated that there is *not necessarily any sense of cohesion in the family* resulting from their child being a student in the schools of music and arts. First and foremost, these were dedicated parents who support their children's musical (and other) activities, and this became so time-consuming that the time they otherwise would have spent together as a family was spent in follow-up on the student.

If a proposal to go for a family trip in the mountains had been uttered, then it goes without saying that it will not happen if there is any activity related to the girls' priorities.

Therefore, we observed that, in the case of parents who support and become involved in their children's participation in a music and arts school, the schools may be acting as arenas for the parents' (and the wider family's) investments of time, energy, and money, albeit to different degrees, and ending in various gains and sometimes sacrifices. In the next subsection, we will delve more into these gains and sacrifices as they relate to the varying approaches to parenting.

### **Parents' approaches to musical parenting**

In the following, we present three emerging approaches to musical parenting in schools of music and the arts today that we found in our data: (i) exceptionally attentive and engaged; (ii) highly attentive and engaged; and (iii) moderately attentive and engaged in musical parenting (Figure 2).

The three approaches to musical parenting found in our data differ with regard to whether the parents' level of attentiveness and engagement in their child(ren)'s musical activity was moderate, high, or exceptional. These levels highlight: (i) whether the parents' attentiveness and engagement toward their child's musical activity is preferably acted out within the domestic arena (the family) based on the skills the parents already possess; (ii) whether their attentiveness and engagement in the child's activity go beyond the domestic arena to the institutional arena (orchestras/ensembles) and also involve increasing the parents' own musical competencies; and (iii) whether the parents' attentiveness and engagement transcend the borders of the local school of music and arts and involve establishing alternative (private) activities, up to and including family relocation into a new community with better teaching competencies available. Further, these levels of attentiveness and engagement point to the degree to which parents involve themselves in the main learning activity itself at home within the present framework (as defined by the schools' teaching activity and seen in levels (i) and (ii)), or if this framework does not govern the parents' involvement (as seen in level (iii)).

Of the three approaches thus defined, the lowest extent of musical parenting was classified as *moderately attentive and engaged musical parenting* and included seven parents.<sup>15</sup> This level entailed being available as listeners for the child's playing or singing in the domestic arena/at home, but otherwise not being very much engaged in the main learning (music) activity itself. However, it does include showing interest in the child's activity and encouraging the child's practice time with reminders.

It is a bit like being the engaged parent who could sit down and listen a bit: "Let me hear." Ask to listen to what they have been practicing rather than helping them.

I try to ask them to unpack the instrument and have the music stand ready in place so that they can practice a bit. I haven't been very strict nor pushed them a lot. I try to remind them to go practice a bit. If they are bored, then I tell them to go and practice the instrument a bit. There are often instruments available in the living room, on the sofa, and everywhere, and it just has to be that way, I think, because then they may be used.

The parents also provide instruments at home and take care of practical issues such as driving to school and concerts, as well as picking up equipment.

I have provided equipment at concerts, etc. I think I also probably have waited outside the school for a good many hundreds of hours.

Conducting *highly attentive and engaged parenting* included six of the parents, and involved updating their own skills and knowledge in music by, for example, attending specially designed courses in music for parents or learning to use an app to tune the child's fiddle, as one of the parents told us the child's father had done:

He eventually taught himself to tune the violin. He learned it a little in parallel with her and helped with it.

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<sup>15</sup>One couple was among the seven.

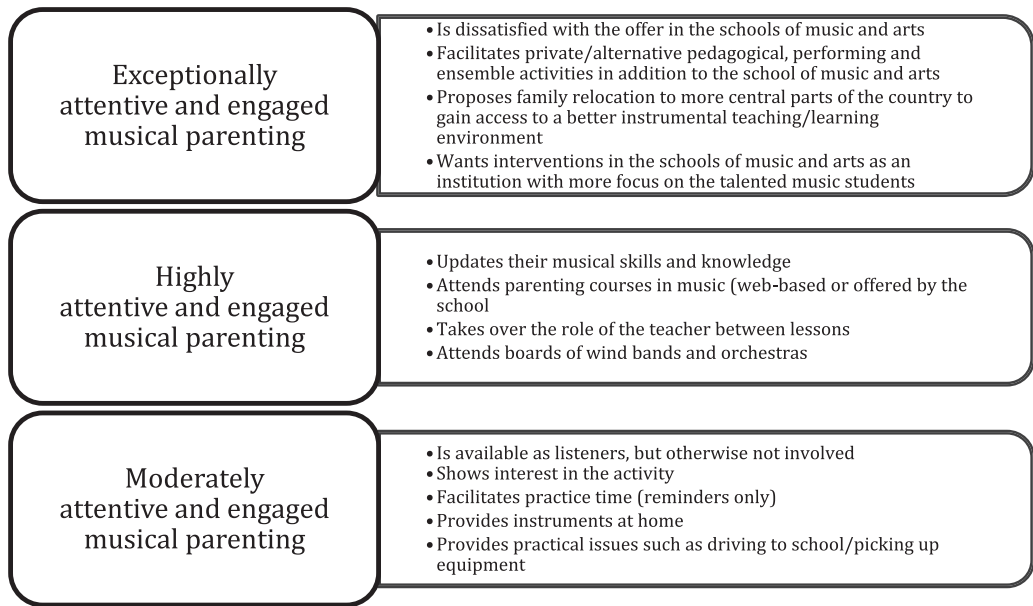


Figure 2. Approaches to musical parenting.

We had a Suzuki orchestra, and the parents were supposed to be there. We took part in the courses, and so on. We don't have any hobbies of our own apart from that. That's what our hobby is. If the children are to be allowed to live out the things they choose, then that is exactly what is required of the parents.

This approach to parenting entails taking on responsibilities, such as attending boards of wind bands and orchestras, and thus facilitating the child's ensemble activities. Parents also take over the role of teacher between lessons.

Before, we were happy to join the lessons, if we could, but as a passive party. First and foremost, to be able to assist in the practice during the week.

We sit and practice, and then I tell my child, "Remember that now we have to take and point the bow ..." Then, I sort of sit and teach.

When there are some challenging parts in the music, I help her rehearse. I use an app<sup>16</sup> (...) so we can see, "Here there is something wrong with the pitch." Then we practice increasing the speed and increasing the length of segments. And I think it's really nice that we do it together.

Being dissatisfied with the offer in the schools of music and arts, *exceptionally attentive and engaged parenting* included one parent and encompassed facilitating private and/or alternative pedagogy, and performing and ensemble activities in addition to those in the school of music and arts.

We've actually carried out a bit of "parallel playing," in which the two children have prepared pieces in addition to the usual repertoire, and then we've hired a pianist to accompany them. This coming Sunday, the pianist comes (...) so that they are well prepared for the summer course. It's a private initiative.

This particular parent also wanted interventions in the schools of music and arts as an institution with more focus on talented students as, "Unfortunately, you don't become good just through the schools of music and arts." Besides suggesting more time for teaching and group playing as necessary changes, this parent also criticized the school's vision:

<sup>16</sup>The name of the app is anonymized.

I'm getting fed up with the equality mentality. Everything should be so equal, it should be free for everyone. (...) If it's about the finances, then raise the fee. Let it be possible to buy more teaching. Or try to find other possibilities and allow non-professionals at the beginners' level as teachers to get the masses in.

To enact change, this parent also considered relocating the family to a more central part of the country to gain access to a better instrumental teaching/learning environment for the children's musical activities.

## Discussion

In this study, we found that parents legitimize their child's participation in music and arts schools by pointing to their child's emerging interest in music activity, that music activity is an important part of their child's *Bildung*, their own positive experiences with music, and their dissatisfaction with music education in primary and lower secondary schools. They also view the gains of participation as attaching positive values to their child taking on an activity they themselves value highly, and experiencing the family's relationships as strengthened while they themselves become part of a social community of parents. A few parents also pointed out that their child's participation entails prioritizing the main part of their resources (economy and time) in this activity, although it does not necessarily contribute to any sense of cohesion in the family. Lastly, the three approaches to musical parenting found in the data could be defined as moderately attentive and engaged, highly attentive and engaged, or exceptionally attentive and engaged.

Overall, the parents made investments of time, energy, and money in their child's musical activities in the schools, and as such, we found traces of concerted cultivation, albeit the demands they made on professionals (e.g., having a dialogue on teaching and ensemble playing or institutional settings to suit their preferences) were seen first and foremost in the high and exceptionally high levels of parenting. For example, being dissatisfied with the schools and facilitating alternative activities were found in the exceptionally attentive and engaged level of musical parenting. Lareau (2011, p. 165) found that this mediating back and forth between home and institutions, making the boundaries fluid, was typical of middle-class parents' interventions in their children's lives in developing their sense of entitlement. Using this understanding of concerted cultivation as an analytical lens, and looking into more differentiated (middle-) *classed* connections to musical parenting, *moderately attentive and engaged musical parenting* was performed mainly by parents representing the lower-middle classes' fractions of culture and profession, but also by the couple representing the upper economy fraction of the middle classes. Further, the parent that approached parenting by being *exceptionally attentive and engaged* was seen as belonging to the economic fraction of the elite, while in the inter-level position called *highly attentive and engaged parenting*, the parents represented the culture and profession fractions of both the elite and the lower- and upper-middle classes. As such, it could be understood as certain connections toward the highest levels of attentiveness and engagement in musical parenting being first and foremost carried out by the upper-middle classes and the elite. However, while the typology of different approaches to musical parenting was visible in our data, the links to class fractions are still tentative in this study.

As expected from Bull's findings (2019) on the shared logics between style of parenting and classical music's mode of pedagogy, the child being parented by the exceptionally attentive and engaged mother played the violin mainly within the art music/classical music genre. More surprisingly, however, the children being parented by *highly attentive and engaged* or *moderately attentive and engaged* parents played various instruments in diverse musical genres, including folk music, popular music, and a non-academized musical genre, in the Norwegian context—heavy metal (Dyndahl et al., 2017). Thus, it seems that such levels of attentiveness and engagement in the child's musical participation were irrespective of which instruments or musical genres were taught, and represented a common logic of musical parenting among the investigated sample.

These approaches to musical parenting residing in the cultural repertoire of the elite and middle classes' concerted cultivation may also be seen as a cultural logic being maintained by the schools, as well as the teachers themselves. For example, if schools and teachers mostly emphasize *individualized investments* at home by attentive and engaged parents as an important cultural and social marker or the logic of musical parenting in their schools, they make the schools, first and foremost, familiar and more attractive to the middle and elite classes of parents, and additionally, to those parents who want to reinforce their class mobility, as pointed out by Trulsson (2015). Although our study included a small sample of parents of music students – who were selected from the suggestions of teachers and rectors – these middle and elite classes of parents are definitely present in the schools, as demonstrated by Berge et al. (2019).

Meanwhile, other parents (and children) may feel alienated when they encounter the schools and experience a cultural logic related to musical activities and parenting with which they are unfamiliar. If more students, regardless of their social and economic background, are to be included in the schools – which is indeed a stated goal and justifies public funding (Education Act, 1998, §13–16) – the schools may have to facilitate and accept the consequences of other ways of parental involvement – at least for the music students – as exemplified by possible categories such as *low attentive and engaged parenting* or *non-attentive and disengaged parenting* (categories that do not exist in our material but are possible to imagine). In this respect, integrating the schools' music activities as part of an after-school program in primary and lower secondary school with the possibilities of peer practicing and practicing facilities in the schools, as well as establishing an arrangement for lending instruments for free, *may* prove to be fruitful inclusive measures (Väkevä et al., 2022). However, and more importantly, recognizing the governing logic of musical parenting may be essential for change and for moving beyond the “hidden elitism” in maintaining certain social structures in these schools (Väkevä et al., 2022). Thus, offering such apparently relevant solutions, as mentioned above, in which children may attend the schools without depending on parental involvement in the child's *musical* activities, may not change the governing logics of parenting in the schools, and thus, these children and their families may still experience alienation. Instead, the schools need to acknowledge that some parents may want to enroll their children in musical activities just for them to have something safe to do, as Lareau (2011, p. 282) describes. Consequently, it may also prove necessary to cater to other forms of parental involvement as inclusive measures. As such, it is a limitation of the present study that it did not involve working-class parents and that it thereby compounds the existing research gap relating to their parental involvement. This limitation represents a possible weakness of this study's results, and as such, further research should emphasize access to working-class parents to strengthen and develop the typology of different approaches to musical parenting.

## Conclusion

Regardless of which instruments or musical genres were studied, we found approaches to musical parenting in the schools of music and the arts that seem to involve a common logic of the necessity to make *individual* investment in their children's musical participation and their future. Thus, we find it pertinent to challenge the schools to make radical changes in how they facilitate parental involvement. Why not also cater to more *collective approaches* to engagement in the schools on a general level, such as contributing to the social milieu in the schools by arranging diverse social activities for the students and helping out with the practicalities for concerts and arrangements, accommodations routinely provided for in some team sports? As mentioned above, catering to other forms of parental involvement may be worthwhile in order to become more welcoming and socially and culturally inclusive institutions.

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