

**CHOICE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND GENDER STEREOTYPES:
A STUDY OF SELECTED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNITY COLLEGES IN
SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Choice of musical instrument is among the most important factors in determining the course of a student's music education. Instrument selection can be a lengthy process accomplished through a variety of factors. The stereotyping of instruments by gender can, unfortunately, be one of those factors. The association of gender with particular instruments can significantly influence a student in choosing a musical instrument, thereby resulting in numerous negative consequences— including fewer instrument choices, limited ensemble participation, and peer disapproval. The purpose of this paper is to examine the causes of this gender stereotyping as applicable to choice of selected musical instruments among students in the purposively selected thirteen Federal Government Unity Colleges in Southwestern Nigeria and make recommendations for future investigation and possible interventions. Participant observation and descriptive methods were applied for data collections and analyses of findings, further information were collected via libraries, archives and the internet. The paper concludes that choice of musical instrument is no longer limited to gender stereotyping as both male and female can pick up any musical instrument of their choice; and that female students can do well in musical instruments which are fundamentally believed to be masculine in nature.

Keywords: - Musical Instruments; Gender; Choice; Stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes continue to persist at all levels regarding male and female participation in music. Indeed, stereotypes are evident in ramifications of human endeavours; research has shown sex-stereotyping of choice of musical instruments to exist, often unconsciously, in both males and females. There are classified musical instruments which are both culturally and professionally attached to sexes, usually, trombone, drums, tubas are viewed as being overtly masculine instruments while the flute clarinet and oboe are viewed as feminine instruments. These masculine and feminine characteristics that are placed on these instruments are often transferred to the individual that plays them. These stereotypes are created from a variety of sources, including popular media, parents, teachers and students. However stereotypes can effectively be reduced by the manner of presentation of instruments to the students for the first time, for example, at a meeting of students and parents who are interested in one musical instruments or the other where a female student demonstrates the trombone or tuba while a male demonstrates clarinet or oboe. This act alone does a great deal in breaking the jinx of musical instruments and those who play them.

Gender issues have an effect on the musical education of children. For example, the sex-stereotyping of musical instruments can be a factor in reducing musical opportunities and experiences of children, as access to these experiences and the possible profession of these individuals (Abeles and Porter 1978; Crookback and Griswold, 1981). Indeed, instruments, as has been shown (Byo, 1991; Zevondake and Tanur, 1994; Bruce and Kemp, 1991; Hanley, 1998; O'Neil and Bolton, 1996; Griswold and Crookback, 1981; Tarnowski, 1997; Porter and Abeles, 1979; Sinsel, Dixson and Blade-Zella, 1997; Dalzell and Leppa, 1992 and Elliot and Yoder-White, 1997) by all these scholars are not necessarily perceived as gender neutral.

In addition to the sex-stereotyping of choice of musical instruments, research has been conducted on issues of gender in technology as it relates to music education (Comber, Hargreaves and Colley, 1993). Pegley, (2000) as well described psychological sex types of children and their propensities for different musical instruments (Kemp, 1982; Sinsel, Dixon and Blade-Zeller (1999).

Home Consideration

In an interesting descriptive study, Simons (1964) observed gross responses to musical stimuli, pitch and rhythm imitation, and free play activities of twelve pairs of same sex twins (five males and five females) of the same age group (10-15 years). In this study, it was also observed that the choice of what musical instrument to play depended so much on the musical instrument each sex has been used to in connection with the available musical instrument consented to by the child's or children parents. Evidently, it will be very unwise to generally conclude that family influence on, and age proximity of the children will actually influence their musical ability on any chosen musical instrument.

Creativity and Intelligence Consideration

Musical ability obviously requires creativity, in the sense to perform excellently on the chosen musical instrument. Attempts to explain musical ability in terms of creativity have been very unsuccessful (Simons: 1964). In an often-cited study, Getzels and Jackson (1962) identified six Chicago area private school students who scored in the top 20% on the researcher's creativity measure on the different choice of musical instruments. Of what interest is Getzels and Jackson's finding to this paper? It was found out that creativity ability also affects choice of musical instrument of students in the purposively selected unity schools visited. Students' choice of musical instrument also depends on the existing innate creative ability which differs from one another. Guilford (1957) stressed that creativity is not uniform. It requires a number of factors, as does intelligent. Moore (1966) concluded that creativity requires above average intelligence but is not synonymous with intelligence.

Biological Consideration

“It is important to distinguish between sex and gender. Put another way, sex is biological while gender is a cultural or sociological construction” (Herdon, 1990). When a child is conceived in the womb the initial sex is female. If the Y chromosome is to be activated by the already present male hormones, thereby creating a male embryo, it is not until the fifth week of gestation that the embryo is female.

Cultural Consideration

Cultural or sociological consideration begins immediately after a child is born. A female child may be wrapped in pink blankets while a male child may be wrapped in blue blankets. Even if the viewers cannot read the small print but can discern colors, he or she will know if the newborn is a male (blue balloons, etc) or a female (pink balloons, etc). It has been shown that while children are young, they are tending to segregate themselves in groups according to sex. Archer (1992) asserts that 'same sex play preferences have been found to occur as early as 2 years of age'. This phenomenon takes place across cultures, although to varying degrees of intensity and length of segregation. In fact, Bruce and Kemp (1993), found that one feature of children's instrument preferences is the identification of members of their own sex. This identification could be construed as a form of sex segregation. There may be many reasons for this, both biological and cultural. It was also reported in Archer (1992) that the biological reason for this segregation may be due to the fact that males tend to use more space in their play, more disorganized and louder while females play quieter and in a more organized way.

Gender Stereotypes and Choice of Instrument

Abeles and Porter undertook the first major study on sex-stereotyping of musical instruments in 1978. They wrote that children found the drums to be the most masculine and the flute to be the most feminine. Griswold and Crookback (1981) found in their study that; answers by adults to hypothetical selection suggest (of instruments for children to play) that:

The sex of the child, rather than the sex of the adult or past musical experience, influenced the adult's preferences. Violin, flute and clarinet were considered feminine; drums, trombone, and trumpet were masculine; saxophone and cello were rated neutral (p. 57).

Females tend to choose a wide variety of instruments than do males. However, the quality of sound was given as the primary reason for choosing a particular instruments more so than whether males or female should play it. Dalzell and Leppal (1992); Fortney, Malele and DeCarbo (1993); O'Neil and Boulton (1996). The results of the Dalzell and Leppal (1992) study have interesting implication since evidence was found that gender stereotypes might decrease as children grow older. For example, the drum, which is rated as the most masculine musical instrument, was still highly favoured by males, but among females, it is the second most popular instrument. Likewise, while the flute is still rated as the most feminine of instruments, it is ranked fourth in preference for males. These findings dovetail with Teachout's (1993) study that found out that musical factor highly influenced junior high band students' preferences for performance literature much more than environmental or preferential factors. In addition "no significant differences were found in any of the factors by gender" (Teachout: 1993). However, LeBlanc, Young, Stamou and McCarry (1999) found that a person's age and gender may have some effects on their listening preferences.

Within this study, thirteen unity colleges in Southwestern Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States) where males and females were asked to state whether any of the six musical instruments (piano, guitar, flute, violin, drums and trumpet) should not be played by females and which of these males should play. They justified this question because both

males and females indicated that playing an instrument depended on how fascinating the sound of such musical instrument appeals to the feelings of individuals. Females indicated that the biggest reason they did not want to play a particular instrument was because of the difficult technicalities involved in the learning and playing of such musical instrument.

O'Neil and Boulton (1996) asked a question whether males or females should not play a particular musical instrument. The table below reflected the responses of students (females and males) interviewed in the thirteen selected Federal Government Unity Colleges in the Southwestern Nigeria.

Choice of Musical Instrument per School and per Instrument in Percentage Ratings

Name of School	Musical Instrument	Sex(Male/Female)	Percentage	Students
Federal Government Girls College, Ipetumodu. Osun State.	Flute	38%/62%	100%	243
	Guitar	82.7%/17.3%	100%	243
	Trap Set Drums	96%/04%	100%	243
	Trumpet	99%/01%	100%	243
	Violin	85%/15%	100%	243
	Saxophone.	56%/44%	100%	243
Federal Government College, Ikirun. Osun State.	Flute	10%/90%	100%	208
	Guitar	82%/18%	100%	208
	Trap Set Drums	95%/05%	100%	208
	Trumpet	97%/03%	100%	208
	Violin	35%/65%	100%	208
	Saxophone	46%/54%	100%	208
Federal Government Technical College, Ilesa. Osun State.	Flute	27%/63%	100%	185
	Guitar	88%/12%	100%	185
	Trap Set Drums	98%/02%	100%	185
	Trumpet	98%/02%	100%	185
	Violin	48%/52%	100%	185
	Saxophone	58%/42%	100%	185
Federal Government Girls College, Oyo. Oyo State.	Flute	19%/79%	100%	225
	Guitar	86%/14%	100%	225
	Trap Set Drums	97%/03%	100%	225
	Trumpet	98%/02%	100%	225
	Violin	35%/65%	100%	225
	Saxophone	63%/37%	100%	225

Federal Government College, Ogbomosho. Oyo State.	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	11%/89% 96%/04% 96%/04% 98%/02% 36%/69% 76%/24%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	217 217 217 217 217 217
Federal Government Girls College, Sagamu. Ogun State.	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	23%/77% 85%/15% 88%/12% 79%/03% 45%/55% 58%/42%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	243 243 243 243 243 243
Federal Government College, Odogbolu. Ogun State.	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	21%/79% 89%/19% 86%/14% 92%/08% 35%/65% 55%/45%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	219 219 219 219 219 219
Federal Government Girls College, Akure. Ondo State	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	11%/89% 94%/06% 93%/07% 97%/03% 15%/85% 65%/35%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	201 201 201 201 201 201
Federal Government College, Ikole-Ekiti. Ekiti State.	Flute Guitar, Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	09%/91% 96%/04% 98%/02% 98%/02% 12%/88% 69%/31%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	202 202 202 202 202 202
Federal Government Girls College, Efon-Alaaye. Ekiti State.	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums Trumpet Violin Saxophone	No Response 97%/03% 98%/02% 99%/01% 07%/93% 76%/34%	100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%	205 205 205 205 205 205
Kings College, Lagos. Lagos State.	Flute Guitar Trap Set Drums	38%/62% 86%/14% 58%/42%	100% 100% 100%	258 258 258

	Trumpet	87%/13%	100%	258
	Violin	54%/46%	100%	258
	Saxophone	52%/48%	100%	258
Queens College, Lagos. Lagos State.	Flute	46%/44%	100%	262
	Guitar	68%/32%	100%	262
	Trap Set Drums,	58%/42%	100%	262
	Trumpet	87%/13%	100%	262
	Violin	55%/45%	100%	262
	Saxophone	56%/44%	100%	262
Federal Government Technical College, Ijanikin. Lagos State.	Flute	43%/57%	100%	254
	Guitar	76%/34%	100%	254
	Trap Set Drums	88%/22%	100%	254
	Trumpet	92%/08%	100%	254
	Violin	65%/35%	100%	254
	Saxophone	56%/44%	100%	254

Cumulative Results on Choice of Music Musical Instruments in percentage Ratings Table B

Instrument	Sex	Percentage
Flute	Male/Female	38.8 %/61.2%
Guitar	Male/Female	82.7%/17.3%
Trap Set Drums	Male/Female	97.8%/2.2%
Trumpet	Male/Female	98.9%/1.1%
Violin	Male/Female	34.7%/65.3%
Saxophone	Male/Female	83.3% 16.7%

The above table reflected the analysis of the responses of the interviewed students, on Flute, the ratio of males to females stood at 38.8% to 61.2%, Guitar 82.7% to 17.3%, Trap Set Drums 97.8% to 2.2%, Trumpet 98.9% to 1.1%, Violin 34.7% to 65.3% and Saxophone at 83.3% to 16.7%. The above table also reflected sex preferences to certain musical instruments; this showed that flute and violin are peculiar to females than males while guitar, trap set drums, trumpet and saxophone to males.

The biggest reason for choice of musical instrument as expressed by members of the opposite sex is that they have never observed a male or female play such instrument. Put another way, the male in this study indicated that females should not play the drums because they have never seen a female actually play the drums: females said that males should not play the flute because they have never seen a male play the flute. In addition, males were not more inclined to gender stereotyping than were females. It remains a fundamental fact that males and females have similar idea about which instrument is more appropriate for members of the opposite sex.

Current Development: Beyond Gender Stereotyping

It has been observed that gender stereotyping in the choice of musical instruments is taking on a new dimension. Females are getting well involved in playing those musical instruments that are initially considered to be males' while males are equally getting well involved in those musical instrument considered to be females'. For example, T-Mac, (male) a popular Nigerian musician is a renowned flutist. Tope-Sticks (female) play the drum. It has been observed that more males are playing the violin in the orchestra even than females now so, the gender stereotyping in the choice of musical instruments has reduced drastically to near minimal. It was also discovered that in all the female oriented Federal Government Unity Colleges in Southwestern Nigeria, where the school band is predominantly dominated by females who virtually play all the musical instruments which include the bass drum, recorder, crash cymbals and a host of others which are known to be peculiar to males. Moreover, it has been established that females are moving into the supposed musical instruments which are peculiar to males, not only that, they are doing well and becoming famous in these musical instruments. Most famous female guitarists in the world today include Joan Jett, Juliana Hatfield, Kathleen Hanna and Emma Anderson. Most famous Trap Set Drummer in the world today includes Adrienne Davies and Athena Kottak while Candy Dufer is the most famous female Saxophonist in the world today.

Conclusion and Suggestion for Professional Practice

Every year, band directors in schools and colleges in Nigeria recruit new students to populate the beginning band classes using a variety of methods and materials. It would be a worthwhile goal for band directors. The most effective way to this, perhaps, is during the recruiting period, having understood that students identify with members of their own sex, a band director might have a female demonstrate the trombone and a male demonstrate the flute or oboe so that the students considering beginning band will see that, indeed males do play the flute and females do play the trombone. In any event, care should always be taken in the introduction of musical instruments to students since the attitude of children or students can be changed depending on the method with which the instruments are first presented and demonstrated to them.

Educators in today's pluralistic society need to be aware and have a tolerance and understanding for their students' gender, ability, race and cultural differences in order to be successful in the classroom and in the orchestra. This holds true for band director who is training the next generation of wind, brass, string and percussion musicians. More efforts should be made by band directors to encourage more males and females to go into learning any musical instruments of their choice without gender or cultural consideration and attachments.

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