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Sexuality and Choice of Musical Instrument: Beyond Gender Stereotyping

ABSTRACT. Choice of musical instrument is among the most important factors in determining the course of a student's music education. The selection of a musical instrument in secondary education can be a lengthy process due to various factors. The paper seeks to establish why gender stereotyping on certain musical instruments has affected musical performances in selected southwestern Nigeria schools. Enquiries would also be made into why females choose to play certain masculine musical instruments. Participant observation, oral and interactive questions with 1 students in thirteen purposively selected Federal Government Unity Colleges in Southwestern Nigeria using a descriptive method for data analyses of findings, further information was collected via libraries, archives and the internet. Findings show that associating a particular gender to particular musical instruments has significantly influenced student's choice of a musical instrument, thereby resulting in numerous negative consequences, these include fewer musical instrument choices, limited ensemble participation, and peer disapproval. The paper concludes that the challenges of choice of a musical instrument based on gender stereotyping has been achieved because both males and females pick up any musical instrument of their choice and that females do well in their chosen musical instruments which are fundamentally taken to be masculine in nature and practice.

KEYWORDS: sexuality, musical instruments, gender, choice, stereotypes

Introduction

Gender stereotypes continue to persist at all levels, in politics, economics, science, technology, commerce, trade and particularly, regarding male and female participation in music and musicianship. Indeed, stereotyping is evident in all ramifications of human endeavors; research has shown sex-stereotyping of choice of musical instruments to exist, often unconsciously, in both males and females. There are classified musical instruments that are both culturally and professionally attached to sexes; usually, trombone, drums, tubas, guitar and saxophone are viewed as being overtly masculine instruments while the flute, clarinet, violin, viola

and oboe are viewed as feminine instruments. The masculine and feminine characteristics placed on these musical instruments are often transferred to the individual that plays them. These stereotypes are created by and from various sources, including popular media, parents, cultural traits, instructors and learners. However, stereotyping can effectively be reduced by the manner of presentation of instruments to the learners for the first time, for example, at a meeting of learners and guardians who are interested in one musical instrument or the other where a female learner demonstrates on the trombone or tuba while a male learner demonstrates on the clarinet or oboe. This act alone does a great deal in breaking the jinx of musical instruments and those who play them and negates the concept of gender stereotyping thereof.

Abeles and Porter (1978, p. 78) and Griswold and Crookback (1981, p. 60) submit that 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. Indeed, playing a musical instrument according to Byo (1991, p. 28), needs a careful process before putting a particular learner in a particular musical instrument. Other scholars such as Zervoudakes and Tanur (1994, p. 65), Bruce and Kemp (1993, p. 215), Hanley (1998, p. 42), Tarnowski and Barrett (1997, p. 3), Sinsel, Dixon and Blades-Zeller (1997, p. 392), Delzell and Leppla (1992, p. 58), have written on gender perception and 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 by Comber, Hargreaves and Colley (1993, p. 3) as well as studies on gender with description on psychological sex types of children and their propensities for different musical instruments by Kemp (1982, p. 179) and Sinsel, Dixon and Blades-Zeller (1999, p. 390).

Home Consideration

In an interesting descriptive study, Simons (1964, p. 218) observes 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 conclude that family influence generally 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 desired chosen musical instrument. Attempts to explain musical ability in terms of creativity have been very unsuccessful (Simons, 1964, p. 220). 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 instrument. 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 the musical instrument also depends on the existing innate creative ability which differs from one another. Guilford (1957, p. 112) stresses that creativity is not uniform. It requires a number of factors, as does intelligence. Moore (1966) concluded that creativity requires above average intelligence but is not synonymous with intelligence.

Biological Consideration

Herndon and Ziegler (1990) notes that it is important to distinguish between sex and gender. Put another way, sex is biological while gender is a cultural or sociological construction. 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, p. 41) 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, p. 176), 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, p. 40) 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. The greater part of individuals will in general, draw in with music in any event either social academic, festival or political at point during their lives. Yet, what attracts individuals to music particularly when it comes to active or passive musical participation in the main occasion. Hargreaves, Marshall and North (2003, p. 160) opine that evidence points to a human biological predisposition to musicality that is shaped by other people, groups, situations and social institutions during the maturational process of an individual within a certain culture. Notwithstanding the arrangement that the collaboration between natural/hereditary and ecological variables is liable for advancing and creating commitment with music, how precisely each has an influence and how much is the subject of a captivating discussion.

Gender Stereotypes and Choice of Instrument

Abeles and Porter (1978, p. 67). undertook the first major study on sex-stereotyping of musical instruments. They wrote that children found the drums to be the most masculine and the flute to be the most feminine. Griswold and Crookback (1981, p. 57) 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". Drawing an inference from the above puts it that violin, flute and clarinet are considered feminine; drums, trombone, and trumpet are considered masculine; saxophone and cello are rated relatively neutral.

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 instrument more so than whether males or female should play it. The results of the Delzell and Leppla (1992, p. 60) study have an interesting implication since the evidence was found that gender stereotyping might decrease as children grow older. For example, the drum, which is rated as the most masculine musical instrument, was still highly favored by males. However, among females, it is the second most popular instrument, relating this to this study, it may be taken as being correct where both male and female instrumentalists are collectively grouped but drums are perfectly played where females are singularly grouped as found out in the study areas with females playing virtually all the available musical instruments in female based school and band. 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, p. 23) study that found out that musical factors highly influenced junior high band students' preferences for performance literature much more than environmental or referential factors. In addition, no significant differences were found in any of the factors by gender.

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 (flute, guitar, trap set drums, trumpet, violin, and saxophone) 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 fascinating the sound of such musical appeals to the feelings of individuals. Females indicated that the biggest reason they did not want to play a particular instrument was not because of the difficult technicalities involved in learning and playing such musical instruments but because of the non-availability and non-accessibility to the musical instruments.

Simones (2011, p. 34) asks a question whether males or females should not play a particular musical instrument. The argument here centers around the investigation of mentalities towards instrumental music learning and the effects of culture-explicit settings in molding interest in instrumental music learning, commitment to and the value put on music in regular daily existence, trying to discover commonsense setting-based techniques for musical identity and long-term commitment to musical performances. Table 1 reflects the responses of students (females and males) interviewed in the thirteen purposively selected Federal Government Unity Colleges in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 1. Choice of Musical Instrument per School and Instrument in Percentage Ratings

Name of School	Musical Instrument	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage	Students
Federal Government Girls College, Ipetumodu. Osun State	Flute	0	100	100	243
	Guitar	0	100	100	243
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	243
	Trumpet	0	100	100	243
	Violin	0	100	100	243
	Saxophone	0	100	100	243
Federal Government College, Ikirun. Osun State	Flute	10	90	100	208
	Guitar	60	40	100	208
	Trap Set Drums	65	35	100	208
	Trumpet	69	31	100	208
	Violin	15	85	100	208
	Saxophone	55	45	100	208
Federal Government Technical College, Ilesa. Osun State	Flute	27	63	100	185
	Guitar	65	35	100	185
	Trap Set Drums	80	20	100	185
	Trumpet	78	22	100	185
	Violin	34	66	100	185
	Saxophone	59	41	100	185
Federal Government Girls College, Oyo. Oyo State	Flute	0	100	100	225
	Guitar	0	100	100	225
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	225
	Trumpet	0	100	100	225
	Violin	0	100	100	225
	Saxophone	0	100	100	225
Federal Government College, Ogbomosho. Oyo State	Flute	11	89	100	217
	Guitar	68	42	100	217
	Trap Set Drums	65	35	100	217
	Trumpet	75	25	100	217
	Violin	36	64	100	217
	Saxophone	56	44	100	217
Federal Government Girls College, Sagamu. Ogun State	Flute	0	100	100	243
	Guitar	0	100	100	243
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	243
	Trumpet	0	100	100	243
	Violin	0	100	100	243
	Saxophone	0	100	100	243
Federal Government College, Odogbolu. Ogun State	Flute	21	79	100	219
	Guitar	54	46	100	219
	Trap Set Drums	68	32	100	219
	Trumpet	72	28	100	219
	Violin	25	75	100	219
	Saxophone	52	48	100	219

Federal Government Girls College, Akure. Ondo State	Flute	0	100	100	201
	Guitar	0	100	100	201
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	201
	Trumpet	0	100	100	201
	Violin	0	100	100	201
	Saxophone	0	100	100	201
Federal Government College, Ikole-Ekiti. Ekiti State	Flute	9	91	100	202
	Guitar	76	34	100	202
	Trap Set Drums	80	20	100	202
	Trumpet	78	22	100	202
	Violin	12	88	100	202
	Saxophone	60	40	100	202
Federal Government Girls College, Efon-Alaaye. Ekiti State	Flute	0	100	100	205
	Guitar	0	100	100	205
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	205
	Trumpet	0	100	100	205
	Violin	0	100	100	205
	Saxophone	0	100	100	205
Kings College, Lagos. Lagos State	Flute	100	0	100	258
	Guitar	100	0	100	258
	Trap Set Drums	100	0	100	258
	Trumpet	100	0	100	258
	Violin	100	0	100	258
	Saxophone	100	0	100	258
Queens College, Lagos. Lagos State	Flute	0	100	100	262
	Guitar	0	100	100	262
	Trap Set Drums	0	100	100	262
	Trumpet	0	100	100	262
	Violin	0	100	100	262
	Saxophone	0	100	100	262
Federal Government Technical College, Ijankin. Lagos State	Flute	43	57	100	254
	Guitar	76	34	100	254
	Trap Set Drums	88	22	100	254
	Trumpet	82	18	100	254
	Violin	65	35	100	254
	Saxophone	56	44	100	254

Analysis of Findings

Table 1 reflects the responses from students in the thirteen purposively selected study centers in Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun states. Six (6) colleges are girls only oriented while seven (7) are co-educational oriented, each state has a minimum of two unity colleges and a maximum of

three colleges. Federal Government Girls College, Ipetumodu. Osun State is a female gender-based college with 243 students and has young girls play virtually all musical instruments. On the Flute, 100% of the girls play in the College Orchestra Band, and the same goes for all other available musical instruments in the college band, these include the guitar with 100%, Trap Set Drums with 100%, Trumpet, 100%, Violin and Saxophone are 100% respectively. Federal Government College, Ikirun. Osun State is a co-educational based college with 208 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute, female band members take 90% while male members have 10%, the guitar has 40% females and 60% males, trap set drums takes 65% males against 35% females, trumpet has 31% females to 69% males, the violin has 85% females to 15% males and Saxophone 45% females to 55% males.

Federal Government Technical College, Ilesa Osun State is a co-educational based college with 185 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute, female band members take 63% while male members have 27%, the guitar has 35% females and 22% males, trap set drums takes 80% males against 20% females, the trumpet has 78% females to 69% males, violin has 66% females to 34% males and Saxophone 41% females to 59% males. Federal Government Girls College, Oyo. Oyo State is a female gender-based college with 225 students. Findings show that only female students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments, including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone.

Federal Government Girls College, Oyo. Oyo State is a female gender based college with 225 students. Findings show that only female students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone. Federal Government College, Ogbomoso. Oyo State is a co-educational college with 217 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute, female band members take 89% while male members have 11%, the guitar has 42% females and 68% males, trap set drums takes 35% males against 65% females, the trumpet has 75% females to 25% males, the violin has 64% females to 36% males and Saxophone 44% females to 56% males.

Federal Government Girls College, Sagamu. Ogun State is a female gender-based college with 243 students. Findings show that only female stu-

dents are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone. Federal Government College, Odogbolu. Ogun State is a co-educational college with 219 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the flute, female band members take 79% while male members have 21%, guitar has 46% females and 54% males, trap set drums takes 32% males against 68% females, the trumpet has 28% females to 72% males, the violin has 75% females to 25% males and Saxophone 48% females to 52% males.

Federal Government Girls College, Akure. Ondo State is a female gender based college with 201 students. Findings show that only female students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone. Federal Government College, Ikole-Ekiti. Ekiti State is a co-educational college with 202 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the flute, female band members take 91% while male members have 09%, the guitar has 34% females and 76% males, trap set drums takes 80% males against 20% females, the trumpet has 22% females to 78% males, the violin has 88% females to 12% males and Saxophone 60% females to 40% males.

Federal Government Girls College, Efon-Alaaye. Ekiti State is a female gender-based college with 205 students. Findings show that only female students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone. Kings College, Lagos. Lagos State is a male gender-based college with 258 students. Findings show that only male students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone.

Queens College, Lagos. Lagos State is a female gender-based college with 262 students. Findings show that only female students are involved in the college orchestra band. On the Flute is 100% females and this applies to all other available musical instruments including guitar trap set drums, trumpet, violin and Saxophone. Federal Government Technical College, Ijanikin. Lagos State is a co-educational college with 254 students. Findings show that both female and male students are involved in the col-

lege orchestra band. On the flute, female band members take 57% while male members have 43%, the guitar has 34% females and 76% males, trap set drums takes 88% males against 22% females, the trumpet has 18% females to 82% males, the violin has 65% females to 35% males and Saxophone 44% females to 56% males.

The biggest reason for choosing of a musical instrument as expressed by members of the opposite sex is that they have never observed a male or female play such an instrument. In 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 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 ideas about which instrument is more appropriate for 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 instruments 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, but they are also 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. The 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.

Table 2. Cumulative results on Choice of Music Musical Instruments in percentile ratings

Musical instrument	Sex				Total no. of students
	Female		Male		
	No.	%	No.	%	
Flute	2372	81	550	19	2922
Guitar	1880	64	1042	36	2922
Trap set drums	1708	58	1214	42	2922
Trumpet	1689	57	1233	43	2922
Violin	2247	79	675	21	2922
Saxophone	1988	68	934	32	2922
Cumulative total in percentage	Female: 67		Male: 33		

Table 2 reflects the analysis of the responses of students from the thirteen selected study centers. The table states the ratio of gender participation in musical performances and the instruments played in percentile ratio. On the Flute, the ratio of females at 81% to males at 19%, Guitar reflects females at 64% to males at 36%, Trap Set Drums results to females at 58% and males at 42%, and Trumpet at 57% for females and males at 43%, Violin stands for female at 79% to males at 21% and Saxophone for females at 68% to 32% for males.

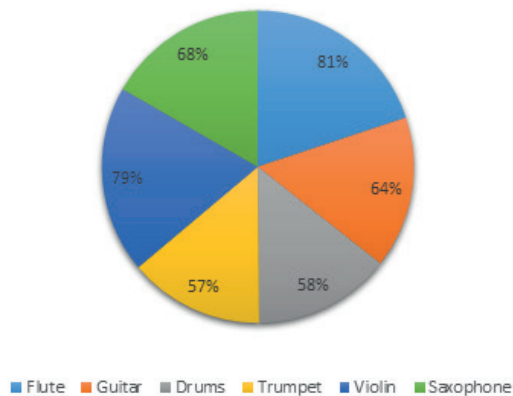


Figure 1. Female participation in Musical Activities in all the Study Centers

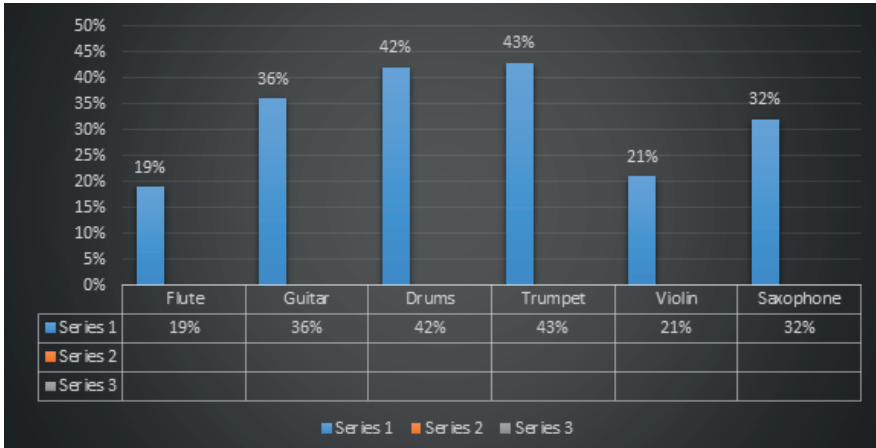


Figure 2. Male participation in Musical Activities in all the Study Centers

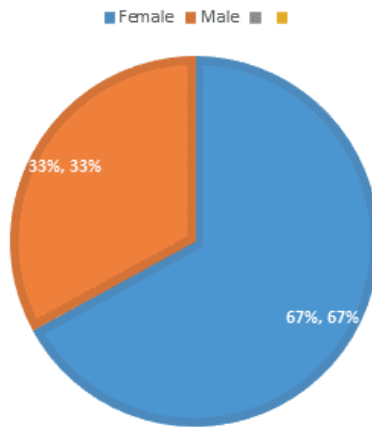


Figure 3. Cumulative percentage of participants in Musical Activities in all the Study Centers

Conclusion

Every year, band directors in schools and colleges in Nigeria recruit new students to populate the beginning band classes using various 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 demonstrates on the trombone and a male demonstrate on the flute or oboe so that students considering to join the college band will understand what it takes to join and that indeed, it is fundamental to pick up a particular musical instrument to play even, if without previous knowledge on such musical instrument. Resulting from interview with the music directors of the study centers, males do play the flute and females do play the trombone where there is the need to do so. This paper has opened the eyes of several people with the concept that some particular musical instruments cannot be played by particular sex or gender, this has been proved wrong because, in all the girls-oriented colleges in this study, girls have played all the musical instruments that are masculine based, like the drums and guitar.

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 tolerance and understanding for their students' gender, ability, race and cultural differences in order to be successful as directors of college band orchestras. This holds true for band director who is training the next generation of wind, brass, string and percussion musicians especially at the early stage of secondary school education. Band directors should make more efforts to encourage more males and females to go into learning any musical instruments of their choice without gender barriers or cultural considerations and attachments.

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Appendix



Picture of Federal Government Girls' College, Ipetumodu after a performance



Picture of Federal Government Girls' College, Ipetumodu after a performance



Picture of Federal Government Girls' College, Ipetumodu during a performance