



A Closer Look at the Socio-Environment on the Gender Orientation of Martial Arts and Dance as a Leisure Activity

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Abstract

A review of the five year enrolment of both martial arts and dance classes was done to establish a trend. The study sought: 1) to determine whether gender gap existed, 2) evaluate students' motivation in their leisure preferences, and 3) to establish whether gender orientation was salient in students' choice. A face to face survey was done to currently enrolled students in martial arts and dance classes. In addition, an in-depth interview was also conducted to randomly selected students among the enrollees. With regard to motive in their preferences, results showed that 'challenge of their body' and 'self protection' ranked first for the male and female enrollees in martial arts respectively. On the other hand, the dance enrollees noted that 'self expression' for the female and 'trying a different field' by the male students were reasons in their leisure choice. In addition, the interview notes revealed that the idea of femininity and masculinity were almost identical such as compassion and having bubbly character for women while strong and competitive for men. The trend in the enrolment of the two leisure areas were examined using the concept of androgyny. Now that students enrol a leisure course because they want to, it would pave the way to better learning which would benefit the physical body and lead to wellness and quality life.

Keywords: Dance, feminine, gender orientation, martial arts, masculine.

Introduction

"The state shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instil health consciousness among them," is the essence of the law, written in Article II, Section 16 of the Philippine Constitution¹. The provision of this law mandates the inclusion of physical education (PE) activities at all levels of education. At the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), the Department of Human Kinetics (DHK) offers varied physical activities in order to address the fitness and wellness components of education. Moreover, the choices of leisure activities of the younger generation for their current consumption and future use are enhanced by giving them a wide variety of alternatives to decide upon.

A mixture of sports, dance and leisure activities are offered to answer the call for the 'sports for all' agenda of the government. Offering then a smorgasbord of activities will not inhibit them to one thereby allowing them to experience at least four of its kind. This would assist the young students, hopefully, realize what activities to choose from in order to relax, enjoy and promote quality life while in the university and in their future workplace.

The department has continuously offered sports, dance and fitness and leisure and fitness activities. In the sports cluster this includes team, dual and individual sports. Dance and fitness cluster includes ballroom dancing, folk dancing, street dancing to belly, line and tap dancing. Aerodance and Aero boxing take also its place in the dance and fitness cluster. While the leisure

and fitness cluster offers chess, card games, Philippine traditional games, to outdoor recreation and a lot of body conditioning just like pilates and yoga. Almost 80% of the activities in the sports cluster are offered exclusively, for male or female only. Only 20% allows both male and female together in one class. The dance and fitness cluster has bellydancing for women only while the rest of its offering is accepting both male and female. On the other hand, leisure and fitness cluster has not delineated gender in the acceptance of students. Even activities in martial arts such as taekwondo, aikido and the like allows both male and female together in one class.

Dancing is a challenge doing it without the proper dance partners. Since dancing is usually categorized as feminine, the stereotype threat goes with it if one enrolls in a dance class². It has been the perennial problem in dancing from ballet to social dancing that male dancers are very few and sometimes none to be found because of stereotypes. Clarke and Crisp³ were worried that dance specifically social dance has been limited due to misunderstandings of its meanings brought by norms.

Kark et al⁴ described the development of a new sex-role inventory that treats masculinity and femininity as "two independent dimensions, thereby making it possible to characterize a person as masculine, feminine, or "androgynous" as a function of the difference between his or her endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics." Previous studies found out that dimensions of masculinity and femininity

were independent and the author strongly proposed that the concept of androgyny is reliable⁵.

Sex role division is seen both as natural and functional. This has been sustained in the study of Zeleznyet al.⁶ which found out that women socialize because of strong ethic of care while men socialize to compete and rule the civil society. In the university setting, men and women are being trained as leaders. In order to become an effective leaders, Kark et al., suggested that women and men may be well advised to blend 'feminine' and 'masculine' behaviors, and more so when they are in situations of "non-congruency where women take on leadership roles and who are leading in cross-sex relationships"⁴.

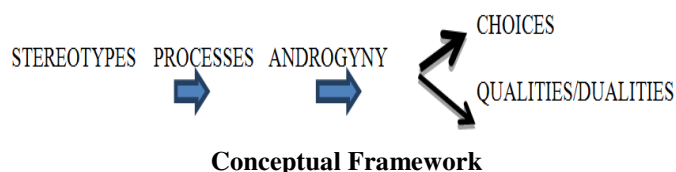
In sport and exercise, sex stereotypes are also prevalent. Studies showed that stereotypes are internalized into the self during the socialization process⁷. Furthermore, two approaches were presented; i. the situational approach, which reflects that the mere idea of stereotypes in the environment is valid enough to affect individuals, ii. the content of stereotypes approach which includes that stereotypes about a particular group may be uncertain, and that this uncertainty may serve to put more weight on the stereotypes thus makes it real. The main focus of the approach is that "social reality is produced by social beliefs"⁸. In sports and other related activities, oftentimes the status quo of stereotypes persist because people believe it so. Take dance for example, although the audience won't judge one as different but the mere fact of dancing convinces one to believe the stereotypes because the idea is ever present in his mind already.

Males have advantage in physical education classes because of the stereotypes that males are strong. Flintoff and Scraton⁹ demonstrated in their study that females were put into disadvantage because males were thought to be strong and have higher capacities thereby males getting the good grades. The women in the study made conscious choices about their physical activity involvement. Data showed that although, there were qualitative differences between the individual choices of different female, many of these were made within a negotiation of gender relations. In addition these women were positively influenced by contemporary discourses about the health benefits of exercise⁹.

Significance of the Study: Asian martial arts is believed to originate in China. History books and even popular films depicting Chinese history continuously portrayed male warriors. Nowhere can a woman be seen in the battle field. Through the records of history, a big gender gap existed. The dance world is not a different story. A wide disparity between male and female dancers' numbers joining in. Women are the principal actors when it comes to dancing. At present times, especially in the academe setting, understanding the issues of gender gap would lead to framing up of new policies in order to give equal opportunities to all.

The enrolment trend in martial arts and dance classes would show whether gender gap existed and whether it was significant. The different texts of the informants would tell the relationship between gender and the choice of activity. Androgyny model was used to explore the dichotomies of gender.

The goal of this study was to look at the trend of enrolment vis a vis enrolment in martial arts and dance activities. Specifically, the objectives of the study were i. to determine whether gender gap existed in chosen leisure activities, ii. to evaluate students' motivation in their leisure preferences, and iii. to establish whether gender orientation was salient in students' choice.



Methodology

Mixed methods were followed in the study. A face to face survey was conducted to 135 martial arts and 42 dance students who were currently enrolled in the first semester 2013-2014. In-depth interviews were done to randomly selected students in each class. Fictitious names were used to protect the identity of the respondents. Secondary data from the Office of the University Registrar was used in the trend analysis. The five year total enrolment at UPLB was used to analyze the actual enrolment in specific martial arts and dance activities.

Martial arts activities were aikido, arnis, judo, taekwondo, and self-defense while dance activities included were Philippine folk and ballroom dances. These dance activities were social dances in nature which require a dance partner.

Results and Discussion

Gender Gap in Leisure activities: Gender Socialization Theory illustrates that behaviour is influenced at a young age⁶: The child copies from what he/she sees in the family and from his/her immediate environment. Traditional sex roles are assigned to each one from birth. Most of the times the traditional roles limit the choices in leisure activities. Such as martial arts as a male dominated activities, females were not expected to join in the activity. On the other hand, dance has always been assigned to females as seen as expressive competence. But problems crop up when the activity requires a dance partner just like in social dancing.

Figure-1 presented the total enrolment at UPLB in five years showing a higher percentage of female enrollees than the male enrollees. It clearly indicated that more females were enrolled at UPLB although a slight decrease was observed through the five years for the female enrollees. The male enrollees on the other hand, slowly increased every year. Comparing the percentages

between male and female enrollees, more than 20% difference occurred between the two genders. Figure-2 showed the trend in the secondary graduates as the basis of comparison having only a 12% difference between gender, a bigger decrease of males

who pursued university education was implied. The result agreed with Meinen-Dick et al.¹⁰ study showing the divergent opportunity cost of adolescents' education, health, food, etc. were allocated by parents.

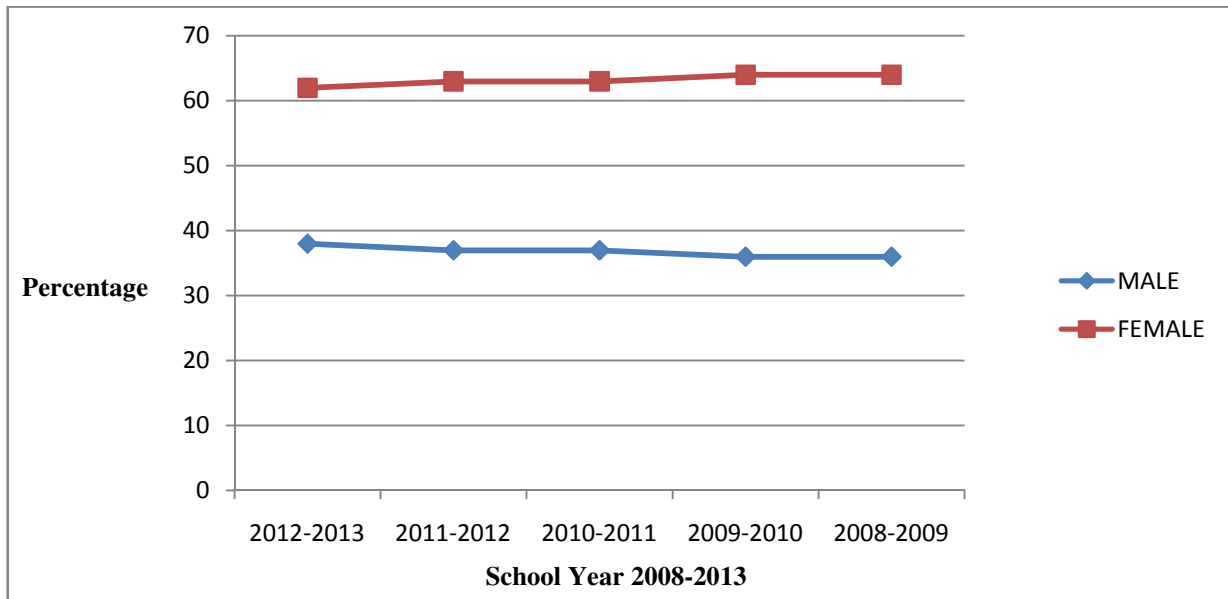


Figure 1
 The five year (2008-2013) trend of the total enrolment at UPLB

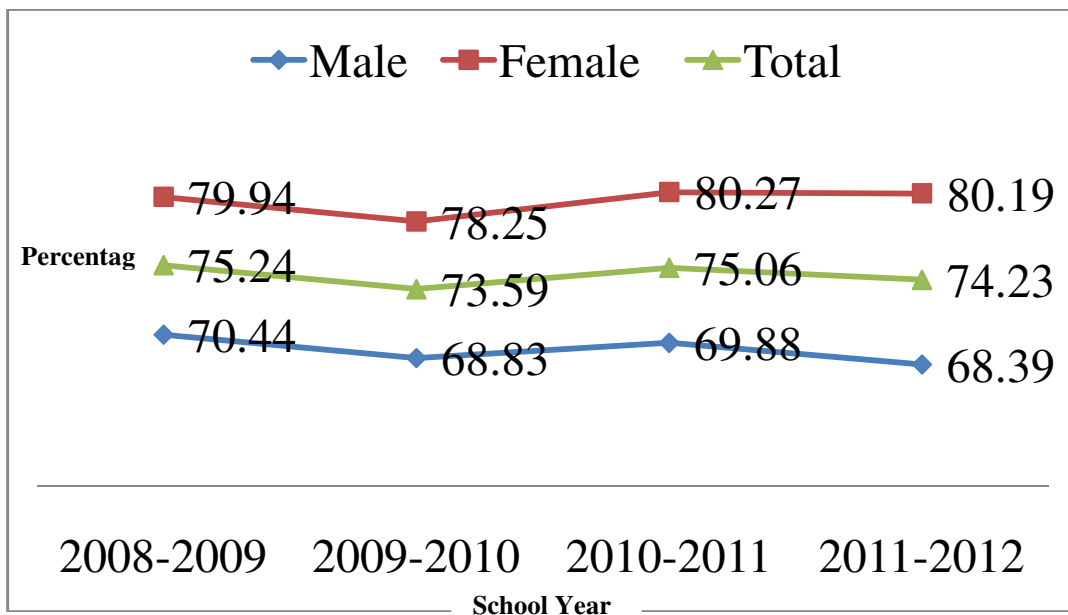


Figure-2
 Secondary cohort survival rate in Secondary Education (DepEd 2012)

(BESRA Progress Report for 10th Joint NPSBE/SPHERE Support Mission Implementation. DepED-AusAid).

differently by gender. In case of poverty, parents decide which children can go to school by looking at the expressed desire of the children and those with the mental capacity. In rural Philippines, girls somewhat received more education than boys¹⁰.

Figure-3 showed the trend of five years between male and female enrollees at the UPLB.

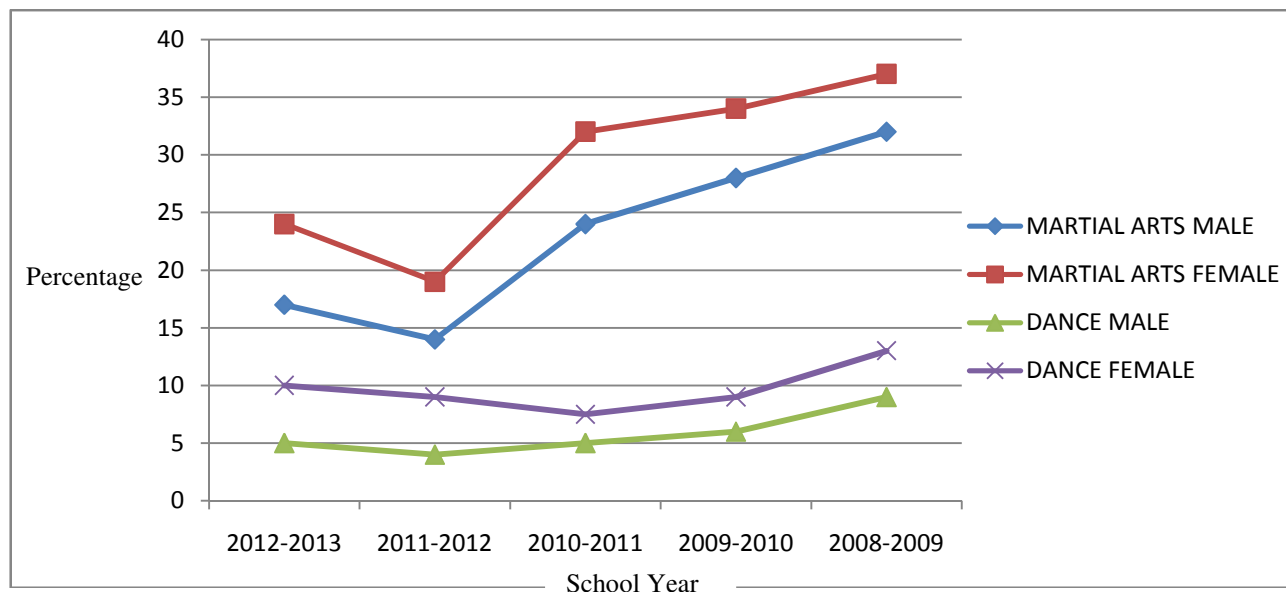


Figure-3
Male and female enrollees in martial arts and dance activities, 2008-2012

Surprisingly, more females enrolled in martial arts specifically in taekwondo, aikido, self defense and martial arts. The stereotypes regarding martial arts for male only dominance has been debunked. Chalabaevet al.⁷ mentioned that girls received more positive feedback than boys in physical education classes. Furthermore, difficulty in comparing performances between male and female was suggested because they were assessed differently using the gender lens. Being a woman in a class might give another impression thus lead to a diminished standard of martial arts movements' execution during partner exercise. Looking at the figures, one would say that females were dominating the activities at UPLB case. Although when it comes to social dancing specifically Philippine folkdance and ballroom dance, males were significantly non-existent. Only very few males took social dancing compared with the female counterparts.

2) Students' Motivation in their Leisure Preferences

Wigfield and Eccles¹¹ noted that expectancy-value theory explained the different motivation that drove students to their choices. Peers became the most important person to them because they were more real and compelling. Of the source informants, almost 50% of them considered their friends as their primary reason why they have chosen the activity. A bigger percentage also narrated that some personalities from their younger days were key persons for them such as their previous coach, a teacher and a movie personality. Martial arts and dance cohorts were not different.

Vis-a-vis all the environmental causes that have been blooming, gender roles were being re-defined. Women have been considered to be responsible in protecting and sustaining nature⁶. The WED (Women, Environment and Development) approach attempted to define the idea that women should assume the caretaker role of the natural resources¹². Although men were less in number as shown in Figure- 1, 2 and 3 but its nature to compete was still evident in the interview¹³. Males in martial arts still wished to have male also as their sparring partner because of the challenge. Ralph from arnis class narrated that " am ok with anyone as a sparring partner, but if am partnered with a woman, I would only take the defensive side". There was this assumption to be defensive only and not offensive so as not to hurt the women.

Hively and El-Alayli¹⁴ proposed that when female athletes tried to think about their gender, societal stereotypes regarding lower female athleticism had led to low performance. Performance was affected by confidence¹⁵. This is known as "stereotype threat" clearly showing that people can underperform at tasks when thinking about the negative performance expectations from their peers and other group. Although teachers gave more encouragement feedback to female than to male but when it comes to evaluation, males received the better mark⁷⁻⁸. Always people thought of masculinity rather than femininity when issues of athleticism is being discussed. Martial arts being identified with strength was easily equated with masculinity. "Sex differences exist because people believe they exist." ⁷In 2008, another study with women soccer players, concluded that technical ability was affected once stereotypes were activated⁸.

Table 1 showed the different reasons that motivated the source informants to choose the activity they have enrolled in.

Table-1

Motivations of male and female in choosing the activity

Martial Arts		Dance	
Male	Female	Male	Female
Self protection	Self protection	Trying a different field	Self expression
Challenge my body	Challenge my body	Self expression	Challenge my body
Self expression	Trying a different field	Challenge my body	Trying a different field

Aside from friends and other personalities that convinced them, martial arts students' primary reason was for self-protection thus the need of a well-conditioned body¹⁶. These college students especially the women have surpassed the stereotypes of their gender roles and have come to the point of transcendence of gender. The concept of androgyny helped understand the trend of more females taking martial arts. One big factor for women to learn the basics of martial arts was the threat from the sociocultural environment. Diana and Jean both from self defense class recognized the threat outside the room therefore preparing themselves would help them. Jean said: *I need to learn to protect myself so that my confidence level would improve. Anytime there might be a confrontation, then I would be ready*".

Men in the martial arts classes have accepted the female dominance. For women, having a man as a sparring partner was a challenge. Jean added: *"kapaglalagi..gagalinganko pa, perokahitsinopwde..."(if my sparring partner is male, I have to be better, although anybody would do)*.

In dance classes, males were frank that they preferred a female partner in order to lead properly. Stereotyping was still very strong with the males in the dance classes. Partnering with another male was not acceptable to them. While with female dance respondents, half of them preferred to have the opposite sex as dance partner while the other half would accept the same sex dance partner.

Ralph from the Philippine folkdance remarked about having the same sex dance partner as okay and agreeable: *"Yes, because it may suggest symbolisms that describes our society today. Dances should be flexible. The elements of dance should not be dictated by the social norms and old traditions anymore. Instead, dances should describe our dynamic society"* .

Men martial arts respondents mentioned that the activity meant expressing the art in it. Keith from Aikido said: *"expressing my arts in martial arts because Aikido is a redirection of*

*strength...not merely to punch."*He was therefore accepting the fact that he might have female sparring partners and it would not matter because his intention was to express art and not to hurt them.

Gender orientation regarding Masculine and Feminine: We are generally shaped by social norms. Gender role is always a manifestation and a product of social norms. Universalism as a myth formed by white, male, supremacy- thinking, giving rise to the patriarchal order that excludes "others."¹⁷⁻¹⁸For Derrida¹⁷, "the text" is not limited to the written. "The world is always 'mediated', always-already textualized. Other authors opined that text did not give vantage point external to text or discourse that would give us an "unmediated access to truth, ethics, being, etc."¹⁹ The next section would examine the students' notion of being masculine and being feminine while in their respective choices of leisure activity.

"A woman is someone people should respect in the society. Naturally, women are loving, sensitive, emotional and soft-hearted. However, they should be treated equally in the community since at present, women are already capable of many things that men are capable of," Karla shared. She also added what is a man: *"A man is someone highly respected in the society. Men already achieved that respect since they were born and raised as they are now. They are naturally strong, capable and somehow insensitive unlike women."*

Karla equated feminine here as emotional but capable of challenges while masculine as a strong leader but somehow lacks some feeling.

Bryan summed up feminine as: *"A woman - a well informed individual, ready to make a decision and to fight for it. She must have her own stand even if it's against a patriarchal society. She's brave. She's confident. She's elegant, but fierce"* . On the other hand, he described man as: *"- a true man, is broad minded. he acknowledges, upholds the equality of man and woman. he's strong. he's well-informed, he must be willing to change, especially in perspective if proven wrong. He must not be proud and boastful."*

Bryan was portraying a woman who has the right education and has the character and a man who respects all as equal. Bryan ended with reminding the man to stay humble.

Two themes consistently showed up in the interview texts when the source informants were asked to identify the present qualities attributed to a man and woman. Compassion and bubbly character were identified with women while strong and competitive for the men. The gender socialization theory which defines women who are concerns with the "others" was still distinct in the qualities given by the source informants⁶. Compassion which includes kindness, thoughtful, nurturing, gentle, described the present woman now which coincided with the idea of ElmhirstandResurreccion¹²as the caretaker of the

natural resources. But women were not left alone to that role anymore as men were considered co-equal in the nurture of the environment.

The bubbly character of the woman identified in the interview reflecting the unrestrained emotion of females thus the elimination of fear in the decision of choosing the activities. Men who stayed in the dance activities are not only strong physically but also strong emotionally. Norm activation model illustrated that development of man depends on the situation. Man socializes because he is competitive and knows that he has to take his part in the society²⁰.

Conclusion

The gender gap analysis showed that equal opportunities were available to students. Females were not marginalized in the martial arts activities. While males were very few in the dance activities but nevertheless their skills did not suffer. Stereotypes and its threat might have caused the men to distance themselves from dances that require dance partners. The male ballroom respondents would like to have female dance partners so that they can lead properly in dancing although the female counterpart did not share the same idea. To them, same-sex dance partner was alright.

Women were usually recipients of positive feedback from physical education teachers but disadvantaged when it comes to grades received. In martial arts classes, although students accepted both sexes but almost 70% would like to do sparring practice with same sex with them so that inhibitions would be eliminated. Furthermore, males were forced to lower down the energy level so as to accommodate the female strength.

Having co-ed activities in martial arts, which was traditionally a male-dominated activity can now be fully understood by the concept of androgyny. Several texts and narratives shared in the interview led to understanding regarding concepts of dualities in being masculine and being feminine. Gender socialization theory expounded the qualities identified with the women while the norm activation model described the process of the helping behavior which most likely to occur when individuals are aware of harmful consequences.

Recommendation: In order to eliminate the situations where female get low grades because of comparison with the male who is powerful during the performances, it would be better to offer all martial arts exclusively, a section for male and another for female. The male will only get a male sparring partner so do with the female. In the dance activities, I would recommend a dance that will not require an opposite gender partner but which is still a social dance just like line dancing. Community dances used by our traditional tribes can also be a very good alternative social dance without the pressure of having an opposite gender dance partner.

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