

Body self-awareness and locomotion preferences of dance practitioners

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Abstract: This study identifies the differences between genders related to body and locomotion, analyzing body self-awareness and locomotion preferences of dancers. The Body Identity Questionnaire was applied to dancers of hip-hop, ballet, jazz, contemporary, ballroom dancing, axé and belly dancing. Data show that men touch and are familiar with their bodies more than women, whereby they have greater functional and aesthetic body self-awareness than women. Men prefer competitive and aggressive activities, while women prefer individual ones. The traditional gender roles still have impact on the gender identity of dancers.

Keywords: Awareness. Behavior. Sexuality. Gender Identity. Dance.

1 INTRODUCTION

There are a great number of studies carried out in the Physical Education field addressing body self-awareness associated with self-concept, self-esteem and self-image

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(CARDOSO, 2009; BOWKER; GADBOIS; COR- NOCK, 2003; STEWART *et al.*, 2003; TIGGEMANN; WILLIAMSON, 2000). Self-concept is defined as how the individual perceives himself/herself without judgment or making comparisons to other individuals. Self-esteem is the value given to their peculiar characteristics, attributes and limitations (GALLAHUE; OZMUN, 2005). Finally, self-image, which is another important concept, represents overall awareness level, the mindset and the way how individuals behave in relation to their bodies (GILLEN; LEFKOWITZ; SHEARER, 2006).

It is a known fact that having a positive awareness of one's body or being happy with one's self-image are two of the many factors associated with enjoying life with friends, a significant other and even oneself. (KOFF; BAUMAN, 1997; KOFF; RIERDAN; STUBBS, 1990; TUKCER, 1985).

However, when human motricity is mentioned, reference works for our field address motricity test results related to child development (BATISTELLA, 2001; RODRIGUES, 2000; GAYA, 1997). There are only a few studies addressing locomotion preferences or orientation based on biological and social markers (CARDOSO, 2008, CARDOSO; FELIPE; HEDEGAARD, 2005; CARDOSO, 2005). That leads to a significant gap in studies that focus on body-related, motricity or sports-related issues in Physical Education.

Given these factors, the purpose of this study is to analyze via self-assessment body awareness and locomotion preferences of men and women that practice different dance styles. This target audience was chosen because it encompasses great gender diversity and the presence of many taboos related to them, as well as poor quantitative and explicative scientific studies on corporeality and motor orientation in the dance milieu (STINSON, 1998; LEITÃO; SOUSA, 1995, CARDOSO, 2008).

2 METHODOLOGY

This study addresses self-assessment via the Body Identity Questionnaire that included sexuality, corporeality and motricity, as well as overall aspects and social issues. The beginning of the questionnaire asks for general details and social issues related to the subject. The questionnaire addresses nine items, namely body intimacy, body awareness, body satisfaction, childhood identity, sexual predisposition, sexual behavior, sexual orientation, locomotion experience and orientation. However, sexuality-related questions have been reserved for future studies. Each answer is measured by a six-level Likert Scale, e.g. (Strongly disagree – Disagree – Neither agree nor disagree – Strongly agree, which are ranked 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6.

All subjects were older than sixteen years of age, where men were practitioners of the following dance styles: hip-hop, ballet, contemporary, ballroom dancing and *axé*, and women practiced all the aforementioned styles in addition to jazz and belly dancing, totaling 336 subjects. Non-probability data collection used ‘snow ball’ and ‘focus group’ techniques with practitioners of different dance styles of both genders. Table 1 shows this data.

Parameters	Men (N=157)		Women (N=145)		<i>t test</i>	<i>p</i>		
	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Height	1.76	.07	1.64	.06	15.60	.001		
Age	24.84	9.09	25.31	8.23	-.47	n.s		
Weight	72.01	9.87	56.47	7.65	15.82	.001		
IMC	23.25	2.72	20.93	2.44	7.90	.001		
Age of first sexual intercourse	15.90	3.16	17.21	2.33	-4.05	.001		
Gender	1.14	1.21	5.30	.94	-34.87	.001		
Sexual orientation	1.24	1.96	.46	.95	4.90	.001		
Durable goods	3.97	1.46	4.56	1.16	-4.01	.001		
Education	4.38	1.04	4.88	.97	-4.42	.001		
Parameters	Men (N=157)			Women (N=145)			χ^2	<i>P</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%		
Married or in a relationship	117	50	42.73	218	140	64.22	21.70 ^a	.001

Table 1. Socioanthropometric profile of men and women.

Notes: Sig. (2-tailed) = .05

The socioanthropometric analysis was used to characterize the subjects via the independent t-test and the Chi-square to verify differences between men and women. Further in the analysis the independent t-test revealed differences between both genders regarding body self-esteem, childhood identity and motor orientation.

Finally, dance styles were characterized by the Anova variance analysis of one hand in order to compare the socioanthropometric aspects of both genders.

3 ANALYSIS

Significant differences were observed in different aspects between men and women dancers in relation to the socioanthropometric profile. Results show that male participants formed a more heterogeneous group than women as results for the former group had a higher rate of standard deviation (SD) in all significant variables.

In terms of sexual orientation, it was observed that despite the average of heterosexuality for men and women according to the Likert Scale, for men the value was higher than for women, revealing that there is greater sexual orientation diversity among men. However, results from the group of female subjects revealed that they have greater purchasing power than men; both groups revealed significantly high education average in that they finished high-school. Furthermore, there was a greater number of married women or in a relationship than men.

Variables	Men		Women		<i>t test</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
	Average	SD	Average	SD		
Knows his/her genitalia	5.08	1.18	4.43	1.40	4.25	.001
Touches his/her genitalia	4.55	1.32	3.05	1.57	8.72	.001
Masturbates	3.54	1.53	1.92	1.61	8.81	.001

Looks at his/her whole body in the mirror	3.78	1.67	4.45	1.45	-3.81	.001
Notices that other people find him/her sexy	3.07	1.33	3.46	1.24	-2.64	.001
Would like to be more muscular	3.16	1.31	2.24	1.52	5.50	.001
Would like to be thinner	1.72	1.85	2.91	2.17	-4.99	.001
Likes his/her genitalia	4.41	1.45	3.89	1.63	2.86	.001
Likes his/her hair	3.79	1.70	4.49	1.41	-4.03	.001

Table 2. Body self-esteem profile of men and women.

Notes: Sig. (2-tailed) = .05

There were also significant differences between men and women dancers in relation to the body self-esteem profile. Results show that men touch their bodies more than women and for this reason are more familiar with it. According to literature, men have a more functional outlook than women; greater aesthetic perception of their bodies than women despite stating they would like to be more muscular and women would like to be thinner.

There were also significant differences between female dancers in terms of childhood identity and motor orientation. Despite the relatively low arithmetic means in relation to the Likert Scale applied, it was noted that even among dancers, men showed childhood characteristics and as adults they tended to prefer more competitive and aggressive activities compared to women. Of all the activities, only yoga and gymnastics were more preferred by women than men, as both are individual activities that require less physical contact.

Variables	Men		Women		<i>t test</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Averag	SD	Averag	SD		
Was a shy child	3.38	1.87	2.89	1.72	2.41	.02
Enjoyed playing with girls toys and games	4.67	1.52	3.08	1.51	9.18	.001
Played with girls	3.38	1.47	4.65	1.25	-8.30	.001
Liked to pretend he/she was in a fight	3.45	2.19	1.93	1.79	6.80	.001
Liked videogames	4.25	2.03	2.40	1.86	8.33	.001
Liked to engage in physical confrontation	1.56	1.72	.84	1.30	4.26	.001
Liked to engage in verbal confrontation	2.03	1.76	1.44	1.58	3.12	.001
Enjoyed breaking rules	2.62	1.86	2.03	1.68	2.95	.001
Wanted to be a sports champion	3.57	2.11	3.06	2.22	2.05	.04
Wanted to be a ballet dancer	2.17	2.29	4.60	1.80	-10.64	.001
Engages in more complex activities	3.03	2.21	2.37	2.14	2.62	.01
Engages in individual physical activities	3.84	1.75	3.41	1.86	2.06	.04

Plays soccer	1.80	2.13	.80	1.33	5.28	.001
Plays basketball	1.06	1.68	.69	1.37	2.13	.03
Engages in martial arts	1.00	1.71	.60	1.28	2.55	.01
Plays volleyball	1.26	1.76	.80	1.44	1.98	.05
Does body-building	2.24	2.08	1.76	2.12	3.33	.001
Does ballroom dancing	2.95	2.52	2.03	2.31	-2.01	.04
Does fitness classes	1.96	1.86	2.30	2.12	2.40	.02
Does yoga	.57	1.38	.93	1.62	2.23	.03
Enjoys more complex physical activities	3.11	2.18	2.56	2.10	2.31	.02
Enjoys individual physical activities	3.50	1.66	3.05	1.75	2.34	.02
Likes extreme sports	3.25	2.01	2.71	1.99	2.85	.001
Likes adventure sports	3.40	2.01	2.74	2.02	5.20	.001
Enjoys playing soccer	2.45	2.37	1.29	1.66	2.22	.03
Enjoys playing basketball	1.65	2.03	1.19	1.66	2.09	.04
Enjoys playing volleyball	2.28	2.17	1.79	1.94	-3.10	.001
Enjoys practicing martial arts	2.05	2.25	1.28	1.72	2.51	.01
Enjoys doing <i>capoeira</i>	1.85	2.19	1.29	1.74	2.61	.01
Enjoys body-building	2.78	1.99	2.16	2.06	-4.09	.001
Enjoys doing gymnastics	2.23	1.95	2.94	1.94	3.41	.001
Enjoys doing yoga	1.26	1.89	2.25	2.20	2.41	.02

Table 3. Childhood identity and motor orientation profile of men and women. Notes: Sig. (2-tailed) = .05

There were significant differences in the socioanthropometric profile of women that practice different dance styles. The age of the subjects was a relevant factor under this study due to the great difference between arithmetic means of the dance styles, where hip-hop dancers were the youngest and belly dancers the oldest. Both groups presented the most significant differences in all aspects, e.g. age when subjects had their first sexual intercourse, where hip-hop dancers were the youngest and belly dancers were the oldest. On the other hand, in relation to other aspects, belly dancers were the most liberal-minded and hip-hop dancers the most conservative. In terms of purchasing power, belly dancers showed a higher average.

Male hip-hop dancers were the youngest and ballroom dancers the oldest. This factor is strongly related to the self-awareness in terms of a demanding physical activity, where hip-hop dancers and ballet dancers consider themselves the most active, while ballroom dancers the less active. In terms of

gender, the contemporary dancers had an average result based on the Likert Scale arithmetic means compared to other dance styles, perceiving themselves manlier. However, in terms of sexual orientation, ballet and contemporary dancers were more prone to being bisexual compared to other styles where heterosexuality trends are higher.

Women																
Parameters	Hip-hop		Ballet		Jazz		Contemp.		Ballroom dancing		Axé		Bellydancing		F ANOVA	R
	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD		
N	30		30		30		32		31		31		34			
Age ¹	19.06 ^a	3.45	24.60 ^b	7.12	25.16 ^b	7.64	27.31 ^b	9.15	25.16 ^b	8.27	23.54 ^b	4.77	31.23 ^c	9.89	7.43	.00
Peso ²	51.90 ^a	6.56	57.5 ^b	9.00	56.44 ^b	6.49	56.21 ^b	7.53	58.51 ^b	8.91	55.03	6.02	59.02 ^b	6.87	3.08	.00
IMC ³	19.65 ^a	2.17	21.37 ^b	2.58	21.26 ^b	1.72	20.88	2.28	21.43 ^b	3.30	20.39	1.59	21.37 ^b	2.64	2.24	0.04
Age first time had intercourse ⁴	a	1.53	17.90	3.21	16.92	2.26	16.42	1.95	17.34	1.94	16.53	1.47	b	2.54	3.18	.00
How he/she perceives their sex life ⁵	a	1.43	3.33	1.32	3.30	1.20	3.43	1.24	2.96	1.27	3.16	1.20	b	1.26	2.97	.00
What is her/his religious denomination ⁶	a	1.44	3.90	1.68	3.93	1.33	b	1.38	a	1.35	3.67	1.07	b	1.50	2.94	.00
Consumer goods ⁷	4.43	.85	4.36	1.21	4.80 ^b	.80	4.06 ^a	1.26	4.67	1.19	4.54	1.50	5.00 ^b	.98	2.33	.03
Education ⁸	4.16 ^a	1.23	5.17 ^b	.65	4.96 ^b	.80	4.93 ^b	.87	4.83 ^b	.86	4.77 ^b	.92	5.29 ^b	1.00	4.73	.00
Men																
Parameters	Hip-hop		Ballet		Contemp.		Ballroom dancing		Axé		F ANOVA	R				
	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD	Avrg.	SD						
N	22		16		30		30		20							
Age	21.22 ^a	3.85	24.06	7.14	24.07	7.97	29.20 ^b	13.63	23.95	4.54	2.89	.02				
IMC	21.76 ^a	2.18	22.64	3.06	22.98	2.20	24.07	2.98	24.55 ^a	2.51	4.11	0.00				
Gender ⁹	.86 ^a	1.48	1.18 ^a	.75	2.00 ^b	1.36	.82 ^a	.84	.55 ^a	.60	6.93	.00				
Sexual orientation ¹⁰	.63 ^a	1.61	2.81 ^b	2.58	2.20 ^b	2.24	.30 ^a	.53	.65 ^a	1.34	8.93	.00				
How active is considered in terms of physical activity ¹¹	b	1.22	b	.84	4.93	1.16	a	1.25	4.35	1.18	4.95	.00				

Table 4. Socioanthropometric profile of women in different dance styles.

Notes: Sig. (2-tailed) = .05

4 DISCUSSION

This study observed a consistent trend in the dance milieu, where the number of female dancers is greater. Some dance styles are less sought out by men, such as jazz and belly dancing. For this reason, the study addressed a smaller number of men compared to women.

In this case, dance is different from sports in that the latter is predominantly practiced by men. Sports are strongly associated with the idea of masculinity and virility (DANIELS; LEAPER, 2006), while dance is stereotyped as a typically feminine activity (LEITÃO; SOUSA, 1995). For this reason, both male dancers and sportswomen are judged by the yardstick of gender stereotypes. On the other hand, it was observed that male dancers under this study consider themselves masculine regardless of the dance style.

In terms of the subjects' self-esteem, there are significant differences between men and women. Men are more functional or instrumental (SMITH, 2004; ADAMS; SARGENT; THOMPSON; RICHTER; CORWIN; ROGAN, 2000; MARTIN, 1996; BIBER, 1989). This idea corroborates the studies by Kiefer *et al.* (2000), where men and women perceive their bodies differently, the latter being more influenced by the ideal of thinness than men.

When subjects were asked if they would like to be thinner, it was noted that this is typically a female concern. Dissatisfaction with the body and weight concerns have been consistently confirmed by women (VOTRE; VIGNE; LACERDA, 2008; SMITH, 2004; ANDRADE, 2003; ADAMS *et al.*, 2000; MARTIN, 1996; BIBER, 1989). These findings are consistent with other studies showing that a thinner body is part of the dance milieu and the absence of which has a negative impact on the body image of dancers, especially ballet, where being thin sometimes exceeds the parameters of normality and health, often leading to eating

disorders that are common within this environment (DAMICO, 2007; SIMAS; GUIMARÃES, 2002).

Costa *et al.* (2007) agree with this idea and includes men's awareness of their body, who wish to be more muscular to the point of muscle dysmorphia that is typical of this group. Despite their visible muscle hypertrophy they perceive themselves as small and weak (ASSUNÇÃO, 2002). Even among dancers, men aspire to a more muscular body than women, according to Hansen and Vaz (2006).

In terms of childhood identity, gender issues and their differences are gradually introduced via mechanisms ensuing from social interaction. This factor determines from the early childhood the distinction between female and male roles, both in relation to material and subjective issues, helping build gender identity based on the stereotype established by each society. Children's preference for playing with same-gender friends is an important way to build gender identity (SAYÃO, 2002). This behavior strengthens normalcy standards determined by society, involving conflicts of values, power and behavior (DAMICO, 2003). This phenomenon is evident under this study, where men answered they preferred activities typical to boys in their childhood and women activities 'typical' of girls.

Our findings revealed differences between the genders in relation to motor orientation. Many sports were created respecting the biological differences between men and women or gender stereotypes that follow the tradition and for this reason are perceived as eminently male or female. Despite these barriers that are being overcome by the opportunities given by society to both genders, there are still differences between both in terms of preferences and skills in sports or recreational activities (CARDOSO, 2008; DAMICO, 2007).

Interesting disparities between hip-hop and belly dancing were presented in the results yielded by women when analyzing differences in dance styles, where the former were more traditional and the latter more forward thinking (in

sexual and religious terms). Studies show that belly dancing is a thousand-year old art that helps lower the complexity of female sexuality (PETO; BUENO, 1999), and also helps them at the emotional level by fostering femininity and confidence, to mention but a few benefits (NAHID; TAKUSI, 2000). To this end, the fact that belly dancers were the most forward-thinking was not surprising. On the other hand, the result whereby hip-hop dancers were shown as more conservative minded was unexpected, despite the great number of studies classifying hip-hop as a cultural movement that infringes the paradigms imposed by society, which caused them so many deprivations and gives practitioners greater freedom (ALVES, 2007; FLEURY, 2007; RECKZIEGEL; STIGGER, 2005; ALVES; DIAS, 2004).

In terms of different styles, the factors that stand out in relation to men were gender and sexual orientation. It was noted that some styles are considered more or less manly and that this variable does not depend on sexual orientation. Furthermore, it was noted that some styles tend to have a higher number of bisexual or homosexual dancers than others, as in the studies by Strong, Singh and Randall (2000).

As anticipated, even in an environment considered feminine, men consider themselves more masculine and women more feminine. And when this study addressed sexual orientation, it was noted that there was a greater number of bisexual and homosexual men than women, which reinforces the idea that many men with this orientation identify themselves with dance rather than with collective sports or fighting. However, data is being collected showing that athlete girls that had boys as playmates perceive themselves as more masculine and involved in collective sports in general, although they do not consider themselves homosexual (GIULIANO; POPP; KNIGHT, 2000; HARRISON; LYNCH, 2005; KOCA; ASÇL; KIRAZÇL; 2005).

Men were more familiar with their body, which could be a consequence of the culture whereby women cannot touch

themselves nor masturbate, thus neglecting their body and sexuality. Furthermore, female dancers would like to be thinner.

It was noted that each dance style has its own peculiarities, and that men and women had different profiles. The conservative or liberal-minded profile of hip-hop and belly dancers respectively should be further studied to verify if age could influence the results. The gender of contemporary dancers, ballet dancers and practitioners of other styles and their sexual orientation are open-end issues in order to understand why these dance styles attract a greater number of bisexual and homosexual men.

In spite of the many aspects discussed under this context, data is not yet conducive to study some issues in depth, which could not be addressed in this study, but are relevant for further studies in this field. Dance is a very important component of Physical Education that often times is not discussed; hence important contexts are not disseminated and are dealt with practically or as an informal subject matter.

Autopercepção corporal e preferências motoras de praticantes de dança

Resumo: Homens e mulheres foram estudados em relação à corporeidade e à orientação motora na dança. O objetivo foi analisar a percepção corporal e preferências motoras entre praticantes. Utilizou-se o Questionário de Identidade Corporal, com praticantes de hip-hop, clássico, contemporâneo, dança de salão, axé, jazz e dança do ventre. Verificou-se que os homens tocam e conhecem mais seus corpos do que as mulheres, levando-os a uma visão funcional e as mulheres, a uma visão estética. Eles preferem atividades competitivas e agressivas e elas, atividades individualizadas. Percebe-se que os tradicionais papéis sexuais também são impactantes na identidade de gênero dos praticantes de dança.

Palavras-chave: Percepção. Comportamento. Sexualidade. Identidade de gênero. Dança.

Percepción corporal y preferencias motoras de profesionales de danza

Resumen: Este estudio muestra las diferencias entre los sexos relacionados con la corporalidad y la orientación, analizados pela

percepção corporal e lãs preferencias motoras entre danzarines. El Cuestionario de la Identidad Corporal fuera utilizado con bailarines de hip-hop, danza clãtica, jazz, contemporãneo, danza del pasillo, axé y danza del vientre. Los hombres si tacto y saben mãs de sus cuerpos que las mujeres, tomãndole una visiãon mas funcional mientras las mujeres una visiãon mas estãtica. Los hombres prefriãn lãs actividades competitivas y agresivas y las mujeres lãs individuales. Los tradicionales funciones sexuales tienen impacto en la identidad de gãnero de los danzarines.

Palabras clave: Percepçiãon. Conducta. Sexualidad. Identidad del gãnero. Baile.

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