Examining Differences of Gender, Experience and Style on Motivation of Participants in Chinese Martial Arts

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Motivation theory has been broadly applied to various research of sport participation (e.g., Gill, 1992). In recent years, Chinese martial arts have attracted more participants in North America and resulted in approximately 13,950 commercial martial arts schools in the United States (info-USA, 2007). Previous studies in participants of martial arts have focused primarily on the application of the movement (e.g., Neto, 2011), or the benefits of practicing Chinese ancient martial arts (Song et al., 2007). To date, there is a dearth of studies concerning motivation of participants in martial arts. What caused their participative behavior in practicing Chinese martial arts (Kungfu)? Are female participants same as male counterparts for their motivation of participation? Do experience and type of martial arts make differences in terms of reasons to participate in Chinese martial arts? The purpose of this study was three folds: (a) exploring whether there is gender difference for the motivation of participation in martial arts; (b) testing if experience of practice affects participants' motivation; and (c) examining whether styles of Chinese martial arts make differences among the participants.

A regional on-site survey of participation motivation was conducted across four states in eastern coast of America. The survey package contains a demographic information sheet and the 18-item Motivation Inventory for Chinese Martial Arts (MIC). MIC containing four factors (Competence, Health, socialization, Utilitarian) with acceptable validity and reliability was used in the survey. A total of 310 participants (female = 95, male = 215) voluntarily took part in this study. All participants have had learning and practice experience of Chinese martial arts including novice group (less than two years, n = 75), intermediate group (two to five years, n = 96) and advanced group (more than five years, n = 139). Their practiced styles of martial arts were Self-defense (n = 65), Modern style (n = 48), and Traditional style (n = 197).

The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) in SPSS 17.0 was used to test significant mean difference. First MANOVA was applied to gender variable and the result indicated a significant mean difference (Lambda = .961, p < .05). Follow-up Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed significant differences on the factors of Health (F = 4.67, p < .05) and Utilitarian (F = 5.77, p < .05). Female participants scored higher than male counterparts on Health (M = 6.05 vs. M = 5.81) and on Utilitarian (M = 3.68 vs. M = 3.17). Second MANOVA revealed a significant mean difference (Lambda = .928, p < .01) for the experience variable. Follow-up ANOVA (F = 3.28, p < .05) and Post hoc Scheffe test explored significant difference on Utilitarian. Novice group scored higher than advanced group (M = 3.65 vs. M = 3.05). Third MANOVA also showed a significant (Lambda = .937, p < .05) mean difference. Follow-up ANOVAs and Post hoc Scheffe tests showed significant differences on Health (F = 3.65, p < .05) and Utilitarian (F = 4.26, p < .05). Self-defense group scored higher than Modern style group on Health (M = 6.13 vs. M = 5.67) and Utilitarian (M = 3.75 vs. M = 2.75).

The researchers concluded that female participants in martial arts programs are highly motivated by health benefits and tangible outcomes than the male participants. However, less experience participants responded higher than more experience participants on Utilitarian. Perhaps this was caused by financial incentives given by the managers in martial arts industry for recruiting more new members. The finding also indicated that the participants of self-defense rated Health and Utilitarian higher than ones of modern style of martial arts. This could be attributed to that self-defense has been perceived for more health and fitness benefits and more economic values compared to other
styles of martial arts. The study supported conceptual framework in which the individuals participated in various forms of sports could be motivated by discrepant factors and affected by their characteristics.