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Poster of a Kizomba couple, used in a promotion of a Kizomba party

# FEEL ME, TOUCH ME, DANCE WITH ME

*Revising the balance between feeling and reason in Western society through  
the social dance Kizomba*

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*Dance is a basic force of human live and [...] can regenerate social life while enabling people to recover the ownership of their senses*  
John Blacking (1982)

*Dance can affirm intimacy as the foundation of social connectedness*  
Kathy Davis (1997)

*Lose yourself to dance*  
Daft Punk feat. Pharrell Williams (2014)

## Introduction

*“It’s about having fun together. While dancing I am having fun and am relaxing. I started to dance because I liked how it looked. Now, I can tell you that dancing saved my life. I am a technically minded person who worked more hours than I should per week but since I started to dance, I had to stop working on time on several evenings, since otherwise I would miss the dance class or the dancing itself would go terribly wrong when I would still be occupied by my mind.”*

[TQ during an interview by Z.Y. van Hamburg on 10/02/2014]

This experience of Kizomba dancer TQ shows how, for him, Kizomba is an activity with which he can ‘get out of his mind’ and connect to his feelings while relaxing and having fun. TQ is not unique in his desire to reconnect to his feelings. Articles in newspapers and magazines show that the popularity of practices like yoga and mindfulness is rising in the West (Gregoire, 2013; Begg, 2013; Jenkin, 2014; Knapton, 2014). People feel the need to get away from their computer screens and their mobile phones, and to reduce their stress levels and get more in touch with their feelings – in short, people living in Western society want to live in the ‘now’ (Touber, 2001). Practices like yoga and mindfulness establish this by making participants focus on the sensations of their own bodies. Research shows, again and again, that these practices in yoga and mindfulness have a positive effect on the mental and physical health of participants, significantly reducing stress levels and reportedly making people with and without depression feel better – happier and more in touch with their feeling (Ross and Thomas, 2010; Bower et.al., 2005; Woolery et.al., 2004; West et.al., 2004; Shapiro et.al., 1998; amongst others).

Getting more ‘in touch’ with feeling trumps the traditional Western idea that feeling and reason form a dualism, in which reason is more valued than feeling. In Enlightened Europe ‘reason’ has ruled for centuries (Hart, 1995) . According to psychiatrist Dirk de Wachter, reason still rules the dominant idea that ‘happiness’ is the main goal in life, and that everyone should focus on being happy (Vanheste, 2013). He proposes to take better care of each other, since happiness is relational instead of trying to be happy on our own. For the past century ‘being’ has been connected to reason (Buys, 2006). Trying to be happy thus reflects how rationalism is still the focus in the Western society; Western society is in basis a goal oriented and thus rational society. However, according to de Wachter, the problem is that

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people try to be and appear happy towards others, instead of experiencing feelings of happiness with each other. The pressure this goal puts on people seems to result in increased depression and burnouts amongst young professionals (NOS, 2013). However, people - especially young adults - are trying to get back in touch with their feelings, which shows that these people are aware of an imbalance between reason and feeling in their society. This exposes a societal problem in the Western world, caused by the disconnection of embodied feeling from the thinking self. This project aims to show that a larger understanding is needed about the imbalance between rationality and emotionality, which has a large influence on the psychological and physical health of people in Western societies.<sup>1</sup>

We argue that dancing Kizomba can positively influence people to get back in touch with their feelings. The popularity of Kizomba is growing rapidly in the Western world. Nowadays Kizomba can be found in the UK, France, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, USA as well as in some Eastern European countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Serbia (Kabir, 2014). Kizomba means ‘party’ and it is a couple dance, traditionally danced by a man and a woman. Kizomba is characterized by a smooth sensual style of dancing, influenced by Tango elements. The first chapter gives an in-depth background of Kizomba as a social dance.

The difference between getting ‘in touch with feeling’ while dancing Kizomba or doing yoga, is the social difference. While yoga is usually done in group formation, it is a method focused on the individual. Kizomba on the other hand is fully a social activity in which feelings are interpersonally produced: without a dance partner nothing happens. More and more people try to distance themselves from individualism, in search of the feeling to belong to a group. This reflects the intrinsically social aspect of human beings (Hanna, 2010), as de Wachter explains, is something people forget when in search for happiness (Touber, 2001). In other words people living in the Western world are in search of reconnecting with others and their own feelings. That is why we explore the following question:

*How can dancing Kizomba affect the individualistic rationalism in Western society?*

Although there are several disciplines, like psychology, kinesiology, artificial intelligence studies and educational sciences, that could provide valuable insights on this topic, especially concerning the dualism of body –mind, we have chosen to keep our focus on the cultural,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.skb.nl/werkvermogen-jongeren.html>, viewed on 21/06/2014.

rather than the clinical side of the question. We use the frameworks of cultural anthropology and gender studies, focusing on the discussion on the body-mind dualism and how dance is connected to feeling, outlined in chapter two. In chapter three we use the common ground created with the insights of the two disciplines to approach the social dance Kizomba, staying within the ethnographical boundaries of Yara's anthropological research and challenging the impact of our research on notions of masculinity and femininity as theorized by feminist philosophy.

Cultural anthropology, and more specifically, anthropology of the senses, is invaluable to answer this research question, because it studies the way the dance is adopted into the social-cultural context of the Netherlands. The framework of this discipline is to try to understand the meaning of all significant aspects of human life from the perspectives of the people in a society themselves. Ethnographical accounts are therefore necessary to understand how individuals (the Kizomba dancers) in their socio-cultural perspective experience their being-in-the-world, as, their feelings, thoughts and actions.

The importance of gender studies, specifically feminist philosophy, to this interdisciplinary research, lies in its critical approach to the social constructions of gender in connection to embodiment, intimacy, and touch in the Western world. One of the important standards of feminist philosophy is the idea that the personal is political, and this is reflected by this project as it shows through theories from feminist philosophy how Kizomba is both personal and political. Combining these two disciplines allows us to get a more comprehensive understanding of the problem of rationalism in the individualistic Western society and how Kizomba, as a social dance from Angola, can have a positive influence.

Clearly, this problem is built up from various complex aspects, e.g. the Western construction of a dualism between feeling and reason, the connection of dance to feeling, the gendered following and leading. To find a comprehensive answer to the research question Allen F. Repko (2012) states that an interdisciplinary approach is needed. While trying to find answers, new knowledge is gained about this upcoming social dance Kizomba and new insight about how Western people experience the dualism between mind and body and at the same time maintain it. Additionally, we aim to emphasize social dances as a interesting field for study, as we noticed while doing literature research, that the context of social dance is highly undervalued in dance research.

We reckon that other disciplines might see no reason in doing research in rationalism in the light of the division of body and mind, since in their framework this dualism might already be transcended. However, the dualism between body and mind still appears to be

present in society, as Jansen (2001) also shows in his analysis of the debates surrounding the European Union. Similarly, Yara encountered that many dancers whom she had interviewed during her fieldwork still seem to see the mind separately from feeling. Therefore, we approach the problem by starting at the traditional body-mind dualism of Western society, and use this dualism furthermore in our approach to the problem.

## 1) Why Kizomba?

*“Afro-diasporic partner dances have, since the 1920s, brought men and women together in demotic spaces to generate the sense of feeling alive.”*

**Kabir (2014:113)**

This quote of Kabir refers to embodied expression of couple dances that arose out of a cultural crossing between Africa and Europe, and that were danced by slaves to feel in control of their own bodies instead of being controlled by their masters. This is in line with the argument of that dance allows people to salvage their humanity during hard times (Cooper in Hanna, 2010).

In this project we use the Afro-diasporic dance Kizomba as a case study to argue that social dances such as Kizomba can affect the Western individualistic rationalism.

Individualism is a Western value strongly connected to reason, and its focus on the individual has been a common ground for the majority of Western philosophers, however much they disagreed in their other ideas (Lukes, 2006). Individualism has not just inspired political movements such as liberalism and anarchism, but has also found its way to the dance floor. Modern dance trends such as electronic dance music culture serve both as spiritual rituals as well as expressions of individualism: as a way for the individual to lose themselves in a large mass of people as well as a way to create new subjectivities and assert their individualism, and their subsequent ‘uniqueness’ – an important value in the context of individualism (St John, 2006). Kizomba can affect this Western focus on individualism, because firstly the whole foundation of the dance is based on an embodied feeling, and secondly this dance has become increasingly popular in European Latin-dance hubs (Kabir, 2014), which might be related to the problem of the imbalance between ratio and feeling in the Western society.

From a cultural anthropological perspective Kizomba is a non-Western dance that is localized in the West by the results of globalization and is now danced widely in the Western world. Ananya Jahanara Kabir is one of the few authors who studies Afro-diasporic social dances and it is therefore her framework on which Yara heavily relies to explain how Kizomba nowadays is a popular social dance in the Western world. First she outlines what kind of

dance Kizomba is and how it came into existence, according to the José N'dongala from the KizombaLove foundation.

Kizomba describes both a music style and a dance style. In this project we only refer to the dance style Kizomba. The word itself means in Angolan Kimbundu language “party”. The Angolan expression “Kizombadas” in the 50’s referred to a big party, however, at that time there was no link with the dance nor with the music as we know it today. Traditional Angolan dances like Semba, Kabetula, Kasukuta, Maringa, Caduque, Rebita, Cidralia, Dizanda, were predominant at that time. The majority of these dances are primarily Carnival dances and still promote the Angolan culture today. Kizomba evolved from the traditional dance Semba, which Angolan dancers started dancing in the 50’s. In the 80’s the groupe Kassav from the French Caribbean Island Guadeloupe came to perform Zouk music in Angola, and Angolans started to adapt their traditional Semba movements to the tempo and flavor of the Zouk music. This, in the 90’s, evolved in Kizomba dance as it is today (N’dongala, 2006). Due to the Cuban presence in Angola during the civil war (1975 – 2002), Cuban culture and especially dance culture strongly influenced Kizomba. Hence, Cuban elements can be found in the Kizomba dance (Kabir, 2014). Milonga and Tango were also influential dances, due to globalization. Some people even describe Kizomba as “African Tango” (N’dongala, 2006). The style of Kizomba dance emphasizes a smooth way of dancing with influences of Tango steps, but there is one main difference: the lower body and the hips are going forward/backwards and are making circle movements. The dance is reliant on a couple who hold each other in a ‘hugging’ position and move together smoothly and slowly without prior choreography. One person, mostly men, ‘leads’ and the second one, mostly women, ‘follows’ (Kabir, 2013). In the next chapter Els reflects on how this division of ‘roles’ is based on historically founded arguments. A rather large degree of flexibility in the knees is required, owing to the frequent requirement that dancers bob up and down. What is important to note is that, although Zouk influences from Guadeloupe and Martinique came to Angola, the dance Kizomba has no Zouk influences, only Latin. Kizomba music has.

In order to come back to how globalization played a major role in the evolution of Kizomba, Els refers to the research of Kabir (2014) in Afro-diasporic populations. She states that the transnationalization of Afro-diasporic rhythms is the result of consequent cultural communication upon people, who enjoy shared pleasures dancing in social spaces and in this process transcend inherited prejudices and boundaries. According to Kabir (2014) Kizomba, as an Afro-diasporic rhythm dance, is an example of how multiculturalism brings people together opposed to how it normally is associated with distancing people. She argues that in

the context of globalization, the study between pleasure and the body (embodied pleasures) is again set in motion as. She also explains that the dance scene which derived from different regions of Africa, of which some are tied to diasporic conditions, is connected to the opposition of the enslaved, dehumanized body and the embodied joy of the slaves through dancing. In this, it is de performance of the body which offers a route of resistance through music. Because of globalization the combination of music and dance were more and more a mix of different cultural backgrounds. The influence of Zouk music on the foundations of Kizomba is an example of what Kabir calls the 'trans-postcolonial', which "opens up new approaches to transoceanic questions constellated around Afro-diasporic rhythm cultures, particularly their propensity, in the guise of specific dances at specific moments, and through specific cultural players" (2014:117). She means that European colonialism caused transnational mobility of various peoples, among them African slaves, and their music and dance to spread and mix across imperial frontiers, creating mixed-rhythm cultures in a trans-colonial process. In the postcolonial era, these mixed rhythm cultures crossed around the world by present day performers through globalization. This trans-postcolonial process results in a creolized cultural encounter: postcolonial linguistic zones of English, Portuguese, French and Spanish connect across Africa, Europe and America.

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For the past two months, Yara did participant observation for her anthropological research at a Dutch dance school. She interviewed dancers of Afro Latin social dances like Kizomba. One of the many anthropological methods to be able to re-experience the feeling of the dance scene, is by making ethnographical texts. To give an example and to experience how important the senses are in Kizomba, we included the following ethnographical story (which also shows the gendered context present in Kizomba dancing):

*I stand at the side of the dance floor, watching my teacher. I'm completely floating in the way she dances. The passion splashes from her and her partner's body, her hips rocking to the beat of the music and her hair follows the body movements of her partner in a smooth way, her hands are moving gracefully around and she has a big smile on her face. Then suddenly there is a fine muscled man standing next to me. I noticed him because he tapped me on my shoulder. The first thing I saw was that both his arms were covered with tattoos and that he showed me a wide white smile. I woke up disturbed from my dreaming gaze and he says: "Wooh, you look very angry, but do you might want to dance?" I start laughing and nod yes. He holds me in his firm frame and then says that he can't actually dance that well. He tells me*

*that he never followed dance lessons, only a few workshops. I say with a smile: "That does not matter, we'll see how it goes."*

*The music has a hard beat and I'm thinking that his leading ship isn't really that bad, only sometimes I feel like I'm being crushed in his frame. But I'll be alright. I can feel his heart pounding, because he has put my hand on his chest right near his heart. This makes me feel funny for just a second, than I try to concentrate again to feel and follow his movements. Then suddenly, in the middle of our dancing he starts talking to me. He says: "I saw you dancing with a girl, are you with her?" I start laughing and say: "No, I am not with her. But why do you think that?". His reply was as following: "You were dancing so sexy, and don't get me wrong, it looked very nice, but I thought maybe you were with her, like in a relationship." This reaction actually made me feel funny. " No, " I say, "dance is just dance for me. So if I feel like dancing sensual, I will do so, even if I am dancing with a woman. There doesn't have to be any underlying reason for me to dance sensual." "No, okay, I get it now," says the man with a skewed smile to his left cheek. He stops talking and starts dancing with even a more tight frame than before after putting my hand behind his head. He moves his hands to left and right in a circled movements while squeezing his fists, just in the area between my hips and lower back. While following his movements my buttocks makes an 'eight' in the air. This feels right, and I close my eyes while feeling the music and the movements we are creating together.*

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**[Z.Y. van Hamburg, Copa Cobana Party at the dance school on 28/2/2014]**

Kizomba, as illustrated above, is a 'dance of embodied senses', which in our opinion can, just as other current popular methods such as mindfulness, help people to reinstate their ability to listen to their feelings instead of only to their thoughts.

## 2) Feeling in dance

When we talk about the balance between feeling and reason, it is important to consider this perception of difference between feeling and reason is traditionally anchored in Western thought. In this chapter we outline the contemporary debate on the Western idea of a dualism of reason and feeling, from the perspective of feminist philosophy and the anthropology of the senses. The debate on reason and feeling serves as a starting point for an exploration of the ways dance can contribute to feeling.

First, Els gives an overview of the philosophical discussion on reason and the passions, showing how feminist theorists have argued that this dualism was gendered. Then she shows how postmodern feminist philosophers have attempted to deconstruct the negative binary thinking of Western philosophy, focusing on how dance – social dance in particular – can be used to think past these boundaries, about the sensing subject.

Then, Yara provides an account of theories from the anthropology of the senses, and explain how this framework is important in the context of dance. First, she explains that the senses are aspects of cultures. Then she discusses the relational characteristic of the senses. She states the significance of the sense of motion and finally makes the connection between culture and feeling clear in the context of dance as a social bodily activity.

The chapter concludes with a (sub)-conclusion, which combines the insights from feminist philosophy and anthropology of the senses through Repko's (2012) method of acquiring a common ground.

### *Feminist Philosophy and the senses*

Robert C. Solomon describes the history of Western thought as a search for the meaning of human existence “in the calm reflections of rationality” (Solomon, 1993:9). Western thought over the centuries follows Aristotle's reasoning that “reason, more than anything, *is man*” (Aristotle as cited by Solomon, 1993:9). In the Western philosophical tradition, reason is seen as “that part of the soul that is most our own” (Solomon, 1993:11), the part of the soul that linked us to the gods, whereas it was our inability to control our passion that “tied us to the beasts and kept us from divine wisdom” (Solomon, 1993:11). The passions have always been treated as “dangerous and disruptive forces” that would lead us astray and interrupt the clarity of reason. Aristotle allowed the passions a place subservient to reason, but in the Christian philosophical tradition the passions were considered a distraction from faith, “temptations of the flesh”, that only encouraged sin, and as such passions were not even allowed a subservient

place – apart from certain passions such as faith and love, which were argued by for example Kant to be a species of “practical reason” (10). The distinction between reason and passion was that reason was considered the only part of the soul that was completely under our control, whereas the passions belong to the part of the soul we inherited from the animals, an “inferior” faculty that must be mastered. As such, reason and the passions were believed to be “firmly opposed” (12).

This view of reason and the passions as being two completely distinct, unique substances is called dualism. One of the most explicitly dualist philosophers of the Western philosophical tradition was Descartes, whose substance dualism has had a significant impact on science, rationality, and our perceptions of the connection between body and mind (Hart, 1995:265-65). The Cartesian dualism can be summarized as Descartes’ conviction that mind and body are made of a different matter, mind being made of “incorporeal substance” and body of “corporeal substance” (Soccio, 2010:267). The mind, Descartes theorized, was free and followed the laws of reason, whereas the body was no freer than any material thing, and thus followed the laws of physics and the rule of cause and effect. Descartes saw the human as the *res cogito*, the thing which thinks: the human is a “thinking substance” rather than solely corporeal. This signified the primacy of the soul, or the mind, over the body, and allowed the idea that the soul continues to exist after the death of the body – an idea important for the devoutly Catholic Descartes (Soccio, 2010).

Feminist cultural philosopher Susan Bordo critiques the “masculinization of thought” that reached a watershed at the beginning of the modern period. As Genevieve Lloyd shows in her book *The Man of Reason*, the early Greeks already valued objectivity and emotional detachment in the development of rational skills, and these valued qualities were associated with masculinity. However, Bordo points out that Cartesian modernity is linked to the repression of nature and women. This repression is linked to the revulsion and uneasiness modernity traditionally associates with the daily lives of women: women’s lives, as they are tied to menstruation, pregnancy, labor, caring for others, are embodied experiences that are not easily reduced to and divided into mental and physical substances. As such, women’s daily lives do not reflect Cartesian dualism (Bordo, 1986).

Bordo sees Cartesian rationalism as the severance of ties between the person – subject – and nature – object – centralizing objectivity, rather than meaning. Guided by reason alone nature became seen as a “complex machine”: “Nature became *defined* by its lack of affiliation with divinity, with spirit. All that which is God-like or spiritual – freedom, will, and sentience – belongs entirely and exclusively to *res cogitans*. All else – the earth, the heavens, animals,

the human body – is merely mechanically interacting matter” (Bordo, 1987:102). Bordo sees this masculinization of science not just as the historical fact of male dominance in the sciences, but also as the rational, emotionally detached attitude that is expected of both man and woman in the sciences today (Bordo, 1987).

In her book *The Man of Reason* (1993) Genevieve Lloyd uncovers how this opposition between reason and the passions in Western philosophy have been gendered. Lloyd shows how the male-female distinction has been used “to symbolize the distinction between reason and its opposite” (x). From the beginnings of Western philosophical thought maleness has been associated with a “clear, determinate mode of thought” and, constructed as superior to its opposite, femaleness, associated with vagueness and passivity (3). Many past philosophers believed women to be less rational than men, and Lloyd shows that they formulated their ideas of rationality with “male paradigms in mind” (103). Their ideas of maleness and femaleness were formed within structures of dominance, and the distinction was operating as an “expression of values”, and that which was valued is identified as maleness (103). Lloyd writes: “Rationality has been conceived as a transcendence of the ‘feminine’, and the ‘feminine’ itself has been partly constituted by its occurrence within this structure” (104). Thus, this structure constructs the notions of femininity, while simultaneously confirming it. Thus, past ideals of Reason, which saw Reason as the expression of the “real nature of the mind” in which there “is no sex” have not been without sexual difference, nor transcended it, but rather have helped constitute it (xviii). That ideas of maleness were developed under supposedly neutral ideas of Reason is not surprising: a large majority of philosophers has been male.

From its conception, feminist philosophy has rejected philosophy’s “dualistic modes of thought” (Braidotti, 2003:198). Instead of thinking in oppositional terms of male-female, mind-body, reason-feeling, feminist theory emphasizes differences among, but also within women (Braidotti, 1994). The most radical critique of dualistic thinking comes from feminist postmodernism. Where older feminist theories such as feminist empiricism aimed for equality between men and women, and argued that gender bias and discrimination against women were a failure of scientific rationality, feminist postmodernism is characterized by its more deconstructive approach. For one, feminist postmodernism questions whether scientific knowledge can be universal, and emphasizes the way science has been embedded in a “network of power relations aimed at disciplining nature, its resources and the many ‘others’ that are different from an implicit norm of scientific subjectivity. This norm equates science with masculinity and both with white, eurocentric premises” (Braidotti, 2003:203).

Postmodern feminist theory seeks to deconstruct all binary systems, and as a strategy, feminist postmodernism tends to emphasize differences among women, affirming the many axes of intersectionality, which include gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and class (Braidotti, 2003:203; Crenshaw, 1991). Their critique on dualistic oppositions also includes a critique on traditional mind-body dualism. Postmodern feminist theorists refuse to reduce the body to either nature or social construction, but instead situate the body at “the intersection of nature and culture, in a zone of high turbulence of power” (Braidotti, 2003:205). Similarly, they resist the Cartesian attitude towards the embodied structure of subjectivity that even influential thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir have used. Instead, feminist postmodernist philosophers theorize on the embodied roots of subjectivity to think about “what a body actually can do and of how it incorporates modes of thinking and knowing which extend beyond dualistic oppositions to the mind” (Braidotti, 2003:206).

The question of what a body can do is one that Erin Manning attempts to answer in her book *The Politics of Touch* (2007). According to her, the question of “what a body can do is a question of engendering” (85). In her book, Manning experiments with the sensing body through an exploration of the politics of touch in tango, to exemplify a politics of invention. She emphasizes that bodies do not move in a pre-constituted, fixed space, but rather create time and space as they move. As such, there is never a still, fixed moment of touch, but touch is always an act of “reaching toward, of creating space-time through the worlding that occurs when bodies move” (Manning, 2007:xiv).

Jacques Derrida noted that “[t]ouch signifies ‘being in the world’ for a finite being” (Derrida as cited in Manning, 2007:xiv), and Manning shows that indeed there is no world without you: “It is through touching you that my body is a body, for my body cannot be otherwise than singular and plural” (Manning, 2007:10). This “reaching-toward” of touch “initiates the creation of both my becoming-body and my becoming-world” (13). In other words, touch makes one aware of the roles of self and other, yet thinking of bodies as relational rather than individual shows that in the moment of touch “[w]e share our surface (...), we interrupt our-selves” (Manning, 2007:13). As such, touch is not just the act of, for example, laying your hand on someone’s shoulder, but it includes the other’s response to your touch. To touch, thus, is to invent.

Manning uses the example of tango to explore the potentiality of reaching-toward, of this invention. She shows that with the act of reaching-toward, bodies both support and challenge the politics that shape and limit the body – critiquing Butler’s notion that signification (for example language) ‘contours’ the body, and that bodies follow signification,

rather than the conventional assumption that signification is based on what bodies can do. Manning argues that “[w]hat a body can do exceeds linguistic signification” (86). Bodies touch at language’s essential limits, and thus can create things, feelings, for which no words exist: bodies, as such, exists *before* language.

Tango is a gendered dance, in which traditionally the man leads and the woman follows. However, as Manning shows, when two people are dancing together “the leader is also following the follower” (88). An important aspect of tango is that the dance is improvised, and because of that the dancers are not only dancing together, but also listening intently to each other’s bodies. Manning writes: “Touch functions here as a medium of open-ended exchange: I respond not to your touch *as such* but to the potentiality your movement incites within my body. I respond to our reciprocal reaching-toward” (88). If both people approach dancing like this, like a medium of exchange and creation between two individuals, they will dance really well together, and even be able to create a unity, a one-ness within the dualism of two gendered bodies. In other words, within the politics of touch bodies can resist normative politics – in Western society being the body politics that construct a dualism of male and female bodies and their gendered connotations – through reaching across boundaries imposed by body-politic: this opens up the *possibility* for new (conceptions of) bodies. Touching, thus, has the potential to be revolutionary, to invent new relations and confirm existing ones. The latter, Manning notes, will happen more often, as the governing body-politics firmly impose their norms (including norms that dictate gendered behavior, with women behaving a certain way that is deemed ‘feminine’ and men behaving another way that is deemed ‘masculine’) on the body.

### *Anthropology of the senses*

Paul Stoller was one of the first within cultural anthropology to argue that the senses should play a more important role within research, as the senses trigger cultural memories (1997). He believed that anthropologist should do analysis and sensory description by themselves. Constance Classen, David Howes and Kathryn Linn Geurts formed a different approach as they placed an emphasis on cross-cultural comparison in their sensory ethnographic material and left the description of sensory experience to the native members. A key aspect of the anthropology of the senses has always been that the senses are conditioned by culture: the way people perceive the world can vary as many as cultures vary.

Yara has much to thank Geurts (2002) for her theoretical frame regarding the senses in the study of cultural anthropology. It is in her framework and with help of Elisabeth Hsu’s

arguments and Caroline Potter's theory of *kinaesthesia*, Yara explains how the senses play a major role in human society and dance. First she briefly discuss the connection between culture and the senses. Geurts (2002) explains that in Western cultures, talking about the 'senses' normally refers to sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. She argues that this is a folk ideology, which means that the structure of five modalities could be different in other cultural groups. On top of that she suggests that culture changes the body, as culture affects "the seemingly basic domain of sensation through the organization and elaboration of categories through which immediate sensations are perceived." (Geurts, 2002:230). It is 'seemingly' because the sensory order is embodied which makes it feel 'natural', however according to Geurts (2002) this is not natural but inscribed by culture. It is largely through this embodied sensorium people experience others and themselves, which means that sensory perception plays a intrinsic role in the development of the self, psychological well-being and the reproduction of cultural identity (Geurts, 2002). During life people are guided through their cultural sensory order, which mirrors essential values and categories which the cultural group has produced and reproduced over time (Geurts, 2002).

This can be linked to cultural stereotyped values, as Classen (1997) explains: early anthropological researchers connected the Western society with the 'higher' senses such as sight and hearing and the non-Western society with the 'lower' senses such as smell, taste and touch. Howes (2003) adds to this that sight and hearing were associated to reason and mind because they were seen as the least subjective of the senses and thus suitable for scientific research, while the others senses were connected to body and feeling. This is called the 'Cartesian dualism' (Potter 2008), and is connected to a gender dichotomy as explained in more detail in the philosophical part of this chapter. We can conclude for now that studying the senses reveals the social hierarchies on which certain cultural values and morals are based on.

Reason, often seen as a Western cultural value (Howes, 2003), influences how Western people experience the world together because through culture and shared social understanding a specific socio cultural sensory order is produced. Or as Geurts describes it: "Sensory orientations represent a critical dimension of how "culture and psyche make each other up" and play a critical role in a person's sensibilities around intersubjective dynamics and the boundaries between self and other." (2002:236). In line with Geurts (2002) is Stroeken (Stroeken in Hsu, 2008) who uses different terms but also argues that the social and situational aspect of the sensory order should not be forgotten, since it is intra-cultural. Chau (Chau in Hsu, 2008) emphasizes that sensory experience is an interpersonal event that is

socially produced: the experience is intersubjectively created, as in, not in an individual but between people. Hsu (2008) explains that people use instances of simultaneously felt feeling, memories and sensations created by touch to communicate next to words and mental meaning making. This is a form of intersubjective communication and a social aspect that has always been part of the senses, since it is about (inter alia) seeing/touching and being seen/touched (Hsu, 2008). She summarizes that sensory experiences are only (knowingly) perceived if socially and culturally patterned and when fitting the particular social situation.

Potter (2008) argues that, in the anthropology of the senses, we should focus less on the Western folk ideology of the five ‘classical’ senses and more on other senses such as the *sense of motion* or kinaesthesia. Kinaesthesia is as well an awareness of the position and movements of the body, as a sense of a physical state of being and an indication of personality and moral sensibilities (Potter, 2008). Geurts (2002) names this an embodied intersubjectivity: to be a person and what kind of person, is tied to the senses that a cultural group recognizes, attends to, and incorporates into their way(s) of being-in-the-world. These notions of a person differ culturally. Kinaesthesia, as other senses, are culturally established and thus implies culture. Focusing on kinaesthesia leads to “an understanding of the senses as a cohesive phenomenological complex that engenders an interconnected, bodily-grounded sense of cultural identity.” (Potter, 2008:444). Geurts (2002) and Potter (2008) both argue that the sense of kinaesthesia is an important ‘feeling in the body’, which means that this sense of motion is important in bodily activities such as dancing.

According to Blacking (1983) dance is a special social activity as it is communication without words but within the context and the conceptual worlds of the dancers. Dance and culture are intrinsically connected since through dance practice and performance we are able to understand how culture is learned, adapted, and embodied (Ede, 2010). Indeed every dance is a reflection and representation of particular cultural notions. While dance is created by these notions, dance also plays a part in constructing and reconstructing these same notions. A part of studying dance as a cultural practice is about how cultural identities are formed, gestured and negotiated through bodily movement. Donnan and Magowan (2010) argue that dance can transform social relations for the enhancement of social well-being. Hanna (2010) argues that dance allows people to reclaim their humanity and is inscribed within the realm of feeling and emotion and that the dancing body is therefore a symbolic expression that may embody many notions of feeling. Combining the insights of Hanna (2010) and Donnan and Magowan (2010), a close understanding is that the embodied feelings of the self while dancing are

intersubjectively produced and go back to the notion of humans as being inherently social. Anthropologists therefore not only look at dance as an loose contextual space but always take into account the cultural, sociological, historical, political or environmental context (Hanna, 2010).

Dance is inherently connected to the senses. Not only are both shapers and bearers of culture (Howes, 2003 and Polhemus, 1993), feelings in dance are culturally encoded as soon as they are brought into action (Blacking, 1983). This means that dancers produce and reproduce different sets of meanings and values in different cultural and social contexts. Using the anthropology of the senses to explain how dance can make people more aware of their embodied self, and as a consequence their embodied feelings, is by localizing their culturally encoded senses while emphasizing the sense of motion. Kinaesthesia in dance not only refers to physical touch and movement but more accurately to the ability to feel the motion of one's own body framed in culturally appropriate ways. Since an anthropologist is his/her own research instrument, the difficulty is to capture and to be conscious all of the 'felt experience' while doing research (as Stoller (1997) does imply with his approach). Hsu (2008) names this the technique of 'participant experience', which is different from the traditional 'participant observation' technique. It is in light of this technique Potter (2008) did her research in a group of British-trained contemporary dancers.

Through training, a dancer learns about one's bodily feelings, to cope with them and to manage one's emotions: they learn how to master the interdependency between the body and the mind. (Potter, 2008). Feeling different while continuing dancing refers to the internally aspect of kinaesthesia: it encloses all of one's other sensory modes. While dancing, dancers not only are connected through sharing a sense of feeling but also through touch. Touch is a highly socialized sense and therefore connected to shared social values among one's cultural group (Potter, 2008). The social connotations attached to the sense of touch influences experiences and potential decisions regarding touch. If the experience was pleasant and socially accepted, one is more likely to repeat this 'way of touching'. To conclude, Blacking (1983) illustrates beautifully how dance is able to recover the ownership of one's senses by a process of awareness: "the bodily experience of performance can stimulate the imagination and help to bring coherence to the sensuous life, which in turn could affect motivation, commitment, and decision-making [connected to reason] in other spheres of social life." (Blacking, 1983:97-98).

### Common ground

Following Repko's (2012) techniques for creating a common ground between concepts of different disciplines, we analyze various concepts used in feminist philosophy and anthropology of the senses on their nature and the extent of the conflict between them.

The first thing to note is that both the theoretical framework of feminist philosophy and the anthropology of the senses state that rationality is regarded of higher value in the Western society. Anthropology of the senses speaks of senses, considering the five senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling) traditional to Western society to be culturally specific senses that are ranked in a *cultural sensory order* of 'higher' and 'lower' senses. The 'higher' senses, seeing and hearing, were associated with reason, whereas the 'lower' senses of feeling, tasting, and smelling were associated with the body, and by early anthropologists connected to non-Western society. Feminist philosophy has mainly focused on the *binary system* of patriarchal society, which created a dualism between reason and feeling, and the extent to which this dualism was gendered: reason was associated with masculinity and with the mind, and was valued higher than feeling, which was associated with femininity and the body.

Here, the concepts of *cultural sensory order* and *binary system* actually reflect the hegemonic position: both concepts consider a hierarchy in two or more culturally constructed values, and the place in the hierarchy of these values is determined by their association with the norm (masculinity, Eurocentrism/association with Western society). Repko notes this as one of the possible situations of conflict when creating a common ground: "Concepts and assumptions of two disciplines are different but not opposing; they really represent alternatives" (Repko, 2012:335). Considering that the cultural sensory order as defined by the anthropology of the senses is as much connected to the Western hierarchy of rationality above feeling as is the binary system as defined by feminist philosophy, we conclude that by the technique of organization (Repko, 2012:346), the cultural sensory order is one of many cultural frames which is directly connected to the binary system. In other words, the binary system is an overarching normative frame in both disciplines.

Both theories from the anthropology of the senses and feminist philosophy agree that feeling is central to dance, especially to couple dance. To dance with someone, one has to stay in touch with oneself, as well as with one's partner. Both disciplines argue that dance is an embodied activity that is influenced by a socio-cultural frame and influences people's feelings about themselves and others. The anthropological concept of *embodied feeling* is the feeling a person has regarding the way one embodies the self – one's identity – while being in the

world. The philosophical idea of *becoming body/becoming world* is about how one can feel with one's body and because of one's body, and how this basically 'creates' and 're-creates' one's world. After consideration, we decided to keep the term 'embodied feeling' to refer to both disciplinary notions, and to extend its definition, in line with Repko (2012:340) as: the feeling one has about how one's body and bodily activities, such as dance, exposes who one's self is and how this influences the formation and reformation of the self.

This notion is influenced in a relational sense; it is created by an intersubjective process. The anthropological concept of *intersubjective communication* refers to the idea that all forms of relations are formed by communication between people with or without words and rational meaning. This depends on a mutual social and cultural background. In dance, communication by moments of simultaneously felt senses created by touch is a form of intersubjective communication. In feminist philosophy the concept of *reaching-toward* refers to awareness of the roles of self and other by touch, wherein bodies thus are relational. In the end, both theories fall short in terminology as 'intersubjective communication' can plainly be interpreted as 'a conversation' and the term 'reaching-toward' does not seem to take into account the relational process of back-and-forth. As a solution, proposed by Repko (2012:336), we combined both terms and created the overarching term *intra-relational flow*. This expresses the procedural as well as the relational aspect of how embodied feelings are created while dancing, which both disciplinary theories explicate.

The process of an intra-relational flow influences how dancers position their body in space and how they feel about it. Both disciplines use different terminology to define this form of sense. The anthropology of the senses name this the *sense of motion* while feminist philosopher Manning (2007) created the notion of *politics of touch*. Even though both describe how sensing influences the way a moving body orientates itself in space and time, the politics of touch enfolds a more comprehensive understanding of notions of feeling in time and space. Consequently, we used the technique of organization again (Repko, 2012: 346) to regard the sense of motion as an aspect of the politics of touch.

This common ground should form a bridge between the two disciplinary theoretical buildings, to construct a path of a more comprehensive understanding in order to answer the question how dancing Kizomba can contribute to the individualistic rationalism in the Western society. In the next chapter is explained how, based on an ethnographic and philosophical account, the division between feeling and reason forms a frontier for dancers based on gendered cultural performances in the dance as well as in daily life. And how it is this 'space' in which the

'leader' as well as the 'follower' in the dance can become more aware of their bodily feelings and let their 'minds' rest. We continue our research in the shape of an hourglass, the way we created a contracted common ground from the broad theoretical frameworks, and we now apply our common ground to the context of the research question, to show how the disciplinary frames together form a more comprehensive understanding. To do this, we start off by exposing the frames in which both disciplines formulate the context of the research questions, then the common ground is impregnated and eventually we make clear that both frames are simply two sides of the same bridge.

### 3) Frontiers in leading and following

As shown in the creation of the common ground in chapter two, the concepts used in the anthropology of the senses and feminist philosophy highlight different aspects of the same case, with anthropology of the senses focusing on the more personal, individual side, and feminist philosophy theorizing on the case. In the next chapters, we focus on the gendered nature of Kizomba, and explore how performances of masculinity and femininity influence the experience of feeling. To do so, we apply our common ground as outlined in the previous chapter to the frameworks of our disciplines, which is outlined below.

Kizomba is, as many social dances, a gendered dance in which women and men have a role they should perform: the following role, which is traditionally performed by a woman, and the leading role, which is traditionally performed by a man. In social dancing Western people seem to experience a pleasant feeling in performing according to this gender division since they refer to it as feature of ‘another’ culture (Schneider, 2013). It can feel to them as if they are just performing according to ‘other’ cultural standards, considering that in many Western societies the large divide between men and women is slowly closing over time. The analysis of Schneider (2013) reveals the dualism between West and non-West cultural features such as feeling – body – femininity, which is associated with non-Western society, versus mind – reason – masculinity, which is associated to Western society. In social dances the two opposites of this dualism cross while dancers dance together, which bonds the dancers and they experience this as pleasant.

This performance of gender roles resonates in feminist theory. The influential feminist philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler sees gender performance not just as an entertaining activity in dance, but argues that gender itself is a performative act, made to seem normal through continual repetitions of everyday behavior, for example the way one walks. She characterizes gender as “*a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were*” (Butler, 1988:272). She sees language as a performative act, and argues that we cite the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us in everything we do – in our language, in the way we behave, in simple things like the way we move – thus incorporating the socially constructed reality by enacting it with our bodies. In other words, there is no reality but the one we create through our constant repetitions of the social conventions – the fictions of reality, as it were – and by our continual enactment of conventions we make them appear to be natural and necessary.

Butler sees gender as a performative act, that similarly is assumed to be natural and real, and as such has real consequences on people’s lives. She states: "gender cannot be

understood as a *role* which either expresses or disguises an interior 'self,' whether that 'self' is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an 'act,' broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority" (Butler, 1988:279). Butler thus turns the idea around that a subject, a person, already has a certain identity and this identity is either expressed or not, and theorizes that through the repetition of certain acts a certain identity is created. As such, the subject is a retroactive construction, constructed through the act, making identity an *effect* of performance acts.

In dance, the social bonding between dancers does not only depend on performing one of the two gendered dancing roles, but has to be enacted between and through a dancer's body (Hsu, 2008), as is illustrated by the ethnographical text above. This is why a pleasant feeling - an embodied feeling- is intersubjectively produced while dancing; the process of the intra-relation flow. The space in which an awareness of embodied feelings is created, is on the border of existing binaries in society as feeling – reason, body – mind, non-Western – Western and femininity – masculinity. From an anthropological perspective, Nagel (2007) offers an understanding of the sensibility of intersections. Her theory explains how frontiers are the borders of either side of a division, which entail the 'invisible' space where boundaries cross. Nagel focuses on how the intersection of ethnic and sexual boundaries form ethnosexual frontiers (2007:14). Yara however uses her theory by defining the boundaries of the gendered socio-cultural dualisms which are present in Kizomba. Frontiers are intersections of these dualistic boundaries which can create an intra-relational flow. In other words, if a connection between dance partners is pleasantly intense, an intersubjectively created embodied feeling emerges from frontiers of dualisms. To explain this with ethnographical examples, the next chapters are on the basis of the inherent dualism of Kizomba, which is de division between the dance partners: one is the follower and one the leader. Without this basic dualism, the dance would not be the dance as it is.

## 4) In need of feeling

As explained in the introduction of this project, many dancers Yara interviewed during her fieldwork wanted to start dancing Kizomba because they felt the need to lose their energy and to get more relaxed. Most dancers continued dancing Kizomba because of the good feeling they get while dancing. The following ethnographical account represents an analysis of how dancers performing the leading role explain their experience of this feeling. The philosophical account following this anthropological analysis focuses on how a social dance like Kizomba can both challenge and reinforce dominant gender roles.

### Ethnographic account

While doing her research Yara encountered a lot of different opinions about what is ‘feeling in dance’ but every dancer agreed that this feeling is necessary while leading to show the beauty of the dance. Yara analyzed that this feeling is based on an bodily connection with your partner as well as a connection with your own bodily feelings, which is intersubjectively created since both dance partners play a role in creating this embodied feeling – the intra-relational flow. Most dancers found it difficult to circumscribe and define this feeling they have while leading. Yara analyzed that the space in which this feeling is produced, could probably be at the crossroad of thinking about steps while feeling the music and touching your partner who follows your every movement. To explain this, Yara gives an analytical discussion of ethnographical examples of conversations with three of her informants named TQ, Til and Rockey.

Rockey<sup>2</sup> had a interesting way of explaining how a connection between two dance partners can create a sensual feeling: *“Being occupied with each other while dancing based on feeling, is the sensual aspect of Kizomba. You become one with your partner and try to put feeling in the dancing which connects you to the music, your partner and yourself. Because you are dancing close, not only physically but also emotionally, you are sharing this intimacy and it is not what you normally would do with strangers, but if the dance feels good, this makes your partner a match. What makes the difference is if you can understand each other while dancing. That only occurs if the lady can feel me well and I can lead her correctly. If she lets me lead her also makes the connection better.”* In this short text Rockey explicitly says that connecting and touching your dance partner is at a physical as well as an emotional level, which eventually creates a bond between the music, you and your partner. Here Yara analyzed that ‘match’ which is the term Rockey mentions, could in theory be the

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<sup>2</sup> Interview on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March

intersubjective embodied feeling, which, according to him, is possible when understanding each other while dancing and does not require knowing each other. This ‘understanding’ is as Hsu (2008) discusses a form of communication through feeling and touch.

TQ<sup>3</sup> told me: *“Dancing Kizomba is very intimate and has an intense connection to music. And since you and your partner are glued together, you both have to be in the same flow. The dance is therefore very interactive and that is how it is supposed to be.”* Here Yara interpreted his expression ‘flow’ as his description of the intra-relational flow between partners and the music, since he uses the terms ‘together’, ‘interactive’, ‘intimate’, ‘intense’ and ‘glued’.

Til<sup>4</sup> told Yara quite a similar experience as TQ: *“I started dancing Kizomba after having danced already other social dances. For me dancing is not the exposure but more the relax effect. I work all day, sitting in the office and only busy with my mind. I drive to other meetings, sit in chairs, so I need to have something in which I can lose my physical energy, so that I can let my mind rest.”* Both TQ en Til explain quite explicitly that in dancing they can embody their feelings, which they cannot during daily life activities, since these are based on thinking with the mind. Til explains in the next part that his embodied feeling can even become so much embodied that he cannot recall the movements he did with his mind: *“I like it when people ask me how I did a movement, I like to explain things to people and if it goes well, I can float away completely. If I am really in a good flow while dancing, if I am dancing completely on the feeling of the music, and that is the moment, people mention, when I tilt my head and start playing with the lady. Haha. And then I am gone, I am doing things and sometimes I do not even remember what I did.”* In this last part of the explanation Til exposes the play of kinaesthesia (Potter, 2008), part of the politics of touch. While embracing his sense of motion, other senses fade. The fact that he did not remember his movement, means that the sense of his body ‘took control over’ the sense of his mind, which made him unaware of his movements. This is a feeling he circumscribes as ‘floating’, which Yara interpreted as his way of saying that he has an intersubjective embodied feeling created by the connection between the music and his dancing on the music with his partner.

TQ explains that a mutual connection is not always present, which can make a dancer feel uncomfortable while dancing: *“If the lady does not cooperate, the song will feel very long. Also if a lady tries to take over the leading by telling the man what to do, this will be difficult*

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<sup>3</sup> Interview on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February

<sup>4</sup> Interview on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March

*for the men since he is being pushed during his whole dancing career that he has to lead, since that is tradition.*” This explanation shows that a connection is needed to, as Yara interpreted, create an intersubjective embodied feeling. In analyzing terms Yara argues that it is because of the different intensity of the crossing of boundaries, which creates frontiers, between dance partners, which influences the creation of a connection. If boundaries cross heavily, they create a sensational frontier and overlap of feelings between dance partners, or in other words, an intersubjective embodied feeling forms if there is intersubjective understanding.

*“I could never dance the following part, because I would not let somebody lead me. I am not lead-able haha. But because I already dance a long time, I am able to help the ladies. This is how I can create a better connection with the lady, because I know where they have to go opposed to many other men who do not care for the lady. That’s how those ‘battles’ occur. But I can feel when a lady goes wrong and then I can anticipate which makes the dancing together better.”* In this text, Yara interpreted Til’s explanation of connecting with a woman while dancing as a way of explaining that the boundaries of thinking about steps while feeling the music and touching your partner who follows your every movement, should be bendable to the boundaries of the dance partner (woman), to form a frontier in which intersubjective embodied feeling can occur. He argues that the frontier between the borders of thinking about steps and following the steps, which forms the space of the possibilities of movements, can only be as big as a female dance partner can handle. And Til, by getting to know the boundaries of his dance partner, relies on this to know how to bend or sharpen his boundaries to be able to intersect with as many of her boundaries to make a broad as possible frontier and to have the best opportunity to create an intersubjective embodied feeling. This is ‘the feeling’ a leader should have while dancing, or as Til states that a men should ‘care for his lady’ and ‘anticipate’.

An intersubjective embodied feeling which only result from an (sometimes explicit cooperative) intersubjective understanding, is also connected to the gendered traditional roles in social dancing. Interesting was that without directly referring to gendered roles, TQ told me: *“Men should let women shine while dancing, that is their main role while leading the lady. By getting to know the limits of a female dancer and the things she likes to do, I try to make sure she has fun. Of course I also want to have fun, so if I hear a great song, I want to dance with a wonderful lady. If she is not around, I won’t dance. So eventually both have to have fun, because it makes no sense if you are both staring at the ceiling.”* The social and

thus intra-relational process of dancing, according to TQ, is overwhelmingly present in this short text. The connection between the music and choosing a dance partner also assumes that his boundaries of choosing leading movements while feeling the music and touching his partner, is related to his tasks of letting women *shine*. If this task cannot be properly executed, this means in analytical terms that boundaries are not properly crossing and thus a connection between partners is limited. Sometimes embodied feelings can only occur while dancing with a specific woman, TQ told me. Yara interpreted this as the desire to dance on certain songs with a woman of which a man knows boundaries will cross and sensational frontiers will form.

Til also puts an emphasis on the intra-relational aspect of dancing and the task of a man to make sure his female dance partner has fun, so that both can enjoy dancing. He says that the importance of dancing together is not only because you are touching but also because you can feel each other's mood: *"Dancing is something you do together, so I really have to know what kind of lady I am dancing with. It has to be a party for us both. Of course I can do difficult movements, but if the lady cannot follow me, she will be annoyed and I too. So than I can better keep it simple and we both will have fun. To many times I see 'battles' on the dance floor, even Saturday there was a lady we told me there is a 'breaker' on the dance floor.* In this quote the traditional sensory order is shining through; women should rely on men, since men are associated with rationalism, which is much more reliable than the emotions women are associated with.

Rockey explains to Yara in which way he finds this gendered sensory order distinctive in dance: *"I do think that women are more emotional and therefore choose their dance partner based on character, while men are more focused on the appearance and are more phlegmatic which is why they have more difficulty in getting the feeling in the music."* TQ also refers to the gendered dualism in which women are associated with the sense of feeling and men are associated with the sense of reason. *"The thing is that men and women process information differently. Men have more tasks while dancing. They have to lead, listen to the music, look around, correct and compensate, (since you cannot say 'hey, you are doing it wrong') be careful with their lady and at the same time they have to stay tactful and kind. This all is a barrier for men to become one with their feeling. I think men are firstly occupied with the technique than later the feeling can develop.* TQ uses the traditional gendered sensory dualism to explain why it can be more difficult for men 'to get the feeling' and thus learn how to dance. Both TQ and Rockey make a clear distinction between masculine and feminine 'traits', which Yara interpreted as their way of explaining cultural values. They

basically reproduce the stereotypical gendered cultural values in which women are identified with emotion and men with soberness.

Rockey even more explicitly explains how he feels that his masculinity is present in dancing: *“By dancing, I feel more masculine since I am less shy, more daring to take initiative and to look women in the eye while talking to them. When I am doing ‘my thing’ in dancing, I never want to take advice from a woman, because this will disturb this feeling. While being at a party, I would never dance with a man because this would make me feel un-masculine. On the contrary, dancing with a beautiful, sexy lady makes me feel more masculine. If I dance with a less pretty lady, I will feel less masculine, even if she is a great dancer. So I choose a beautiful lady to make her feel more beautiful while dancing and to make myself feel sexy.”*

Rockey explains about his masculinity in dancing and how a feminine woman can make him feel more masculine while if that same woman would give him leading advice, he would feel disturbed in his masculine feeling. In Yara’s interpretation this text illustrated the power of the tradition of the dualism between masculinity and femininity, which are connotations of the leading role respectively the following role in dancing. Yara can also analyze that this means that the creation of an intersubjective embodied feeling can be stimulated if the frontiers have strong distinctive borders and enforce each other.

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Thus the leading role is connected to masculinity and male dancers also emphasized their need for feeling while leading. This feeling is needed since it is the way these dancers communicate with their dance partner; it is an embodied feeling created in an intra-relational flow in the frontier which forms both sides of the dancers’ borders. For this, the men have to be aware of their selves and their motions, as in, their sense of motion. They need to be in touch with their feelings. In the next chapter Yara discusses these processes in regard of the following role by an ethnographic analysis of the experiences of female dancers.

### *Philosophical account*

A familiar image to anyone who has ever attended a school dance or other dance party for youths is the image of young men stiffly standing around, maybe holding a drink, mostly watching the dancers (mostly girls) rather than dancing themselves. This is a sight that has been written about in manifold (Gard, 2001; Craig, 2014; Fisher, 2009; amongst others). And while the relation between masculinity and dance a complex one, influenced by intersections such as ethnicity, class, and sexuality, the general conclusion of researchers on dance and masculinity is that dance does not fit within the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, and as

young, white, straight, middle-class men most closely resemble this ruling image of masculinity, they are least likely to dance. In this chapter Els explores various theories on the performance of hegemonic masculinity, and why this hegemonic masculinity problematizes dancing for men. However, as we have seen in the ethnographic account on male Kizomba dancers, Kizomba reinforces and strengthens the feeling of masculinity for the men who dance it. How does Kizomba reinforce the masculinity of dancers/does it attract male dancers with a performance of masculinity that fits their hegemonic masculinity? And how does the “dance-of-two” of Kizomba challenge notions of hegemonic masculinity through the feeling required to dance well with a partner?

Gender, as shown in the introduction to this chapter, is argued to be a performative act, and as such gender is also not just something personal: gender performativity is part of culture, and because it is a performance it is public. As such, Butler reinforces the feminist slogan that the personal is political – which entails that the problems feminism points out are not just personal problems, but problems of society – by stating that the distinction between the personal and the political is a fiction. She claims that not only our personal problems are in fact problems of society, but also our most personal acts are continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies. Through the continual repetition of gender acts, not necessarily in an explicit way, but through mundane activities such as the way someone walks or talks – these activities being for example the way we walk and talk, as they are connected to gender stereotypes that propose for example that men are tough and women are sensitive – the hegemony of heteronormative standards can maintain power.

The hegemony of heteronormative standards is closely connected to hegemonic masculinity. In her 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” Adrienne Rich argues that compulsory heterosexuality – a term she defines as the notion that heterosexuality is a political institution that reinforces heterosexuality as the norm, and as a natural inclination of both sexes – emerges through the act of male dominance and men’s subjugation of women. Compulsory heterosexuality assures men’s physical, economical, and emotional access to women, and reinforces the dominant position of men over women (Rich, 1980). Jeff Hearn distinguishes this male dominance as well: “While power functions, flow and re-forms in multiple ways, it is difficult to avoid the fact that in most societies, and certainly those of western, ‘advanced’ capitalism, men are structurally and interpersonally dominant in most spheres of life” (Hearn, 2004:51). This socially constructed dominant position of men is called hegemonic masculinity, or the hegemony of men. Since the late 1980s scholars began to conceptualize masculinity as a changing social construct, focusing

for example on men in the context of power relations, posing questions of gendered power in particular.

The Gramscian notion of hegemonic masculinity has been “proposed as a form of masculinity or configuration of gender practice which is in contrast to other less dominant or subordinated forms of masculinity – complicit, subordinated, marginalized” (Hearn, 2004:55). As such, the definition of hegemonic masculinity developed to signify the cultural ideal of masculinity, which is dominant to alternate kinds of masculinity, such as the masculinity of “young and effeminate as well as homosexual men” (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985:586), as well as to others – women and children. A “key form” of subordinated masculinity is homosexual, argued Connell, because the “most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual” (Connell, 1987:61).

Performing too far outside of the ideal of hegemonic masculinity can be problematic for men. Michael Gard (2001) shows through the analysis of a children’s book about a boy who wants to dance that dance in general, and ballet in particular, poses a “potentially terminal threat” to the nuclear family: boys who want to dance “might be gay” and thus perform outside of the hegemonic masculine norms of behavior (Gard, 2001:215). Gard focuses on the way the story, and cultural narratives surrounding it, are concerned with proving that ‘real’ boys can dance – relying heavily on the discourse of hegemonic masculinity, that portrays young boys as “boisterous, energetic and physically active” (216). Gard shows how male interest in dance has been traditionally framed as an interest in developing an athletic skill, drawing attention to the “virility” of male dancers to counter the “assumption of homosexuality” that always remained (216-17). Yet, as Maxine Leeds Craig shows in her book *Sorry I Don’t Dance* (2014), “[t]he supposition that dance is feminized, and that men do not dance, was never about all men” (4). In the belief that men do not dance, ‘men’ stands for white, heterosexual men – or men who most closely resemble the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Black men, for example, are stereotyped to be good dancers, but this stereotype supports “long-standing racist associations between blackness, femininity, sensuality, the body, emotional expressiveness, and lack of control, on the one hand, and between white masculinity and the opposite characteristics of rationality, intellect, and emotional control, on the other” (4).

Considering that the “most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual”, a large part of men’s reluctance to dance comes from the fear of appearing gay (Connell, 1987:61; Craig, 2014x). Even though gender is a social construct, a performative act, it becomes embodied – and as Butler noted, this internalization of gender is

enacted in small ways, such as the way one moves. As such, the embodied habits and movement capacities a young boy develops position him within the gender regime, where, depending on his movement habits, he may be seen as “gay” (Craig, 2014:7). Because of this threat “[b]oys learn habits of controlling entire regions of their bodies. Their chests are stiff. They do not move their hips” (8).

Ballet is considered to be the most feminine style of dancing in the Western world, and as such male ballet dancers are often stereotyped as ‘gay’ or ‘effeminate’. Responding to these accusations of male ballet dancers’ lack of masculinity, the ballet world has started to promote dance as a macho activity, focusing on the athleticism of male dancers, and comparing their ‘toughness’ to that of American football players – a sport generally considered to be a ‘real’ man’s game (Fisher, 2009; Gard, 2001). However, Els would like to argue that while male ballet dancers face negative stereotypes of their masculinity, dancing social dances such as salsa and Kizomba allows men to perform within the borders of hegemonic masculinity enough to be considered masculine, and to consider themselves masculine, while still enjoying the benefits of dancing – and specifically dancing with a partner.

Following our concept of the politics of touch, as outlined in chapter 1, dancing with a partner creates an exchange of responses, in which the two dancers are closely connected by intently listening to each other’s body movements (Manning, 2012). As such, even in heavily gendered dances such as tango or Kizomba, in which traditionally the man leads and the woman follows, these gendered roles are not rigid: while men are able to perform their masculinity in these social dances, this masculinity takes the shape of an interaction with their partner’s femininity, rather than a dominance over their female partner, as the power dynamics of hegemonic masculinity would suggest. Thus, men might feel more masculine when they perform in the leading role – the role traditionally associated with men, as shown in Yara’s analysis, and thus indeed reiterate their gender performances as Butler argues. Yet, because of the nature of social dance, because bodies exist *before* language and thus before gender, dancing Kizomba is the simultaneous embodiment of reiterated gender performance and gender reinvention through the interaction between leader and follower.

In her analysis of the dancing couple in the Black Atlantic, Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2013) endorses this notion of interdependence: she argues that gender play is an important aspect of Latin American dances – a category in which Kizomba, with its tango influences and its lusophone music, also fits. These dances gave boys an “occasion to act like men just as they gave women a chance to play the stylized feminine role” (Chasteen, as cited in Kabir,

2013:140). Dancing together has the potential to transform social relations, and even though partner dance is always performed under the stint of gender, gender play is part of the dance's revolutionary potential. In what Kabir calls the "Black Atlantic 'dance-of-two'", masculinity and femininity are constructed as complementary (Kabir, 2013:135). The dancing woman performs a hyper-femininity, while her male partner performs hyper-masculinity in his dance – Kabir calls these performances not stereotypical, but archetypical (2013:147). Kabir argues that "[g]endered role-play becomes the key to the dance-of-two's counter-hegemonic potential. The couple subverts literal meaning, camouflaging their interdependence" (Kabir, 2013:144). This interdependence is what lies at the core of the dances of the Black Atlantic: in dances such as salsa and Kizomba there is a gendered binary in which traditionally men lead and women follow. However, a man's leadership does not make him more important than the female dancer who is following him: contrary to the construction of hegemonic masculinity there is no negative hierarchy in a couple dance: the dance is a way of working together, exchanging, essentially becoming "enclosed in one world, oblivious to what's going on around them" (Ofili, as cited by Kabir, 2013:147).

## 5) Relying on feeling

In this chapter is discussed how dancers while following experience ‘feeling good’ while dancing. The following role is normatively danced by women and because we live in a gendered society, other connotations than in the previous chapter can play a role.

Ethnographical accounts are used again to analyze how, from a personal perspective, female dancers experience their ‘feeling good’ while dancing. The philosophical account provides a feminist negotiation of ‘feeling good’ while dancing a heavily gendered dance, arguing that couple dances can be counter-hegemonic because of their play with gender.

### Ethnographic account

In every Kizomba lesson Yara participated during her anthropological fieldwork, the teachers emphasized that women, while following their dance partners, should shut down their minds and thoughts. To help them to do this, they had to close their eyes and only focus on feeling and touching their dance partner. In the beginning, Yara found this hard and others agreed with her. But eventually they succeeded in being able to let loose of our minds and being only occupied with our feelings while following the steps of our dance partner and listening to the music. Now, when Yara dances, she quickly gets in to a state in which she is not really aware of her movements but she is aware of moving on the music in sync with her dance partner. So Yara feels that she is moving, which is her sense of motion, but she is not mentally conscious of how she is moving, which is a kinaesthetic experience (Potter, 2008) or intersubjective embodied experience (Geurts, 2008), since it concerns how she feels about her physical state of being in that shared moment. This feeling is intrinsically based on the connection she has with her dance partner during that specific movement, moment, song or maybe all the time when she dances with him.

This state was most frequently referred to by other female dancers when they talked about which man is most pleasant to dance with. Yara analyzed that it is an intersubjectively created embodied feeling women (followers) strive to experience while dancing and which they also rely on since if they do not, the dancing does not feel as good for both dance partners. With the next three ethnographical texts Yara illustrates how Belle, Tyl and Lila are examples of why it is relying on this feeling which makes women want to dance Kizomba.

One of Yara’s first interviews was with Tyl on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March and she enthusiastically told Yara her reasons for dancing Kizomba. *“I can relax emotionally while dancing, When I dance, I think about nothing, I am just completely empty, relaxed. On top of that it is a very*

*nice way of exercise. I love being occupied with my body and dancing is a way to stay healthy. I also like to feel feminine, I like to dress myself up and this is part of the dancing scene. My femininity has grown since I started dancing. When people compliment me, that is a boost for my feminine self. Kizomba is a dance I can become one with the feeling of my feminine self.*” Her reasons were equal to many other female dancers Yara spoke with. In this quote Tyl places an emphasis on ‘shutting down the mind’ to relax while dancing. In the next quote she explains why she likes this so much: *“There is not a better way of meditating than dancing Kizomba because you really should not think while dancing Kizomba. That is something I find really awesome, because the moment I think I might know in what movement he is going to lead me, it immediately goes wrong. Haha. And because it is so important in Kizomba that you, as a lady, are able to follow the man, I am afraid that if I would learn how to lead, that I tend to take the leading position while dancing as a follower. And that is exactly what a woman really should not do.”* This means that she acknowledges that how women should do while dancing, is something she feels as meditating which relaxes her. It is also, Yara analyzed, the fact that she feels feminine, which makes her want to be the follower, as the tradition is that followers dance feminine. It is mainly the last sentence that illustrates Tyl’s conviction about how women should be while dancing and Yara thinks that Tyl feels one with her feminine self because she is able to perform as a woman should perform in Kizomba. Especially since she indicates that to be her best version of a follower she would rather not learn how to take the lead: *“I like to dance with my partner Til, it connects us more. With Kizomba, our relation came into being. It was because he gave me space to dance freely and did not seem only occupied by my breasts, for example, that I grow closer to him. When I dance with other men, I do not feel the same as when I am dancing with Til. There is a sort of different tension because it does not mind wherever Til touches me, which means I can focus solely on feeling his movements on the music. While when I dance with other men, it might be that I am more occupied with his way of leading than the movements themselves and then I know that after one song I would like to stop dancing with this man because it does not feel good.”* This explanation of Tyl can be interpreted as the intra-relational flow, which produces either positive or negative embodied feelings depending on the connection. Clearly she feels like she can embrace her embodied feelings more when interacting while dancing with her partner Til than with any other men. Yara thinks this is, based on theory, because Tyl accepts her bodily boundaries, in which feelings about herself, the music and the touch of her partner cross, to connect with the bodily boundaries of Til in a broader sense than with other men. In

analyzing term this means that the embodied connection between Tyl en Til produces a more sensational frontier and a more pleasant intersubjective embodied feeling.

Belle also has had interactions with dance partners, which suggested intense embodied connections. Some connections felt so sensational for her, that she acted this out in a physical way. There was one specific evening<sup>5</sup> on which Belle told Yara about a dance partner she really started to like:

*“It was mid night and I had lost Belle. We went to a dance party together, and now I could not find her anymore. This is a good sign, I thought, since I know she is dancing with somebody while blending into the crowd. After 30 minutes, just when I finished dancing with a guy, she walked smiling in my way and said: “Woahh, I just had an amazing time with that guy with the striped t-shirt,” she said while pointing. “He dances soo good.” I asked her the reason why she thinks he is a good dancer. She replied: “When I am dancing and I just want to crawl into my partners frame, I know he is leading me just in the good way. Then I can dance with him the whole night. I like the tight frame of a man. I like it when he is strict.” “And then? Is there more?”, I asked. “Well, yes, every good dance partner I have, I am also sexually attracted to. I can tell you that is just how it is.”*

*When I talked to her later that night, she told me: “I kissed him, hihi, but downstairs, not on the dance floor off course. Because than everybody would see it. I just could not control myself because during our dancing the tension got so high. He is such a good dancer!”*

Yara interpreted this as Belle experiencing the dance in such a high level of intersubjectivity that the positive embodied feelings she got while dancing with the man, made her physically and sexually attracted to the men. This might be why she liked his tight frame and had the feeling she wanted to ‘crawl in to him’. In analytical terms, the boundaries of her own feelings with the music and his touch and movement, had such intersections with the boundaries of her dance partner that the overlap, in the space of frontiers, made her have a feeling of total connection.

Lila explained Yara her theory about how she thinks that not every dance couple can have a mutual feeling of total connection: *“I feel different with different men. With some I feel chemistry but if the chemistry is in no way present, things can go very wrong like standing on his toes. But if there is chemistry, which means that I can feel the smallest movements he*

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<sup>5</sup> On the first of April 2014

*makes, dancing feels really good. Dancing also feels most pleasant when it just happens, this is because of chemistry and since Kizomba is a dance in which you really have to follow and there is not much room left for women to do their own 'thing', it is not your task to make sure your partner dances correctly on the music. So you just have to hope that your partner moves as you like to move while listening to the music. But if that is the case, the level of connection will be very high.*" She also explained that trust plays a key role: *"Eventually in Kizomba it is about trust. As a woman I put my trust in the frame of a man. If he accepts this trust and he will have the right approach, the connection gets better. During dancing, if I feel a pleasant connection, I dare to try different and new movements, which is a way of scanning my limits in dancing with this partner. This is not something I do with every man, only those that have gained my trust and I feel chemistry with."* Because Yara did not really understand the difference she made between connection and chemistry, Yara asked her to explain the difference to her. She replied: *"There is a real difference between chemistry and connection. Connection is more like having the right posture, so that you can feel your partner's movements more easily. This means that this is harder when you and your partner have very different heights. But if there is the right chemistry, you also try to establish a great connection. Thus if there is no chemistry, you will also not put effort in making a connection."*

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These quotes represent Lila's view of how connection between dance partners are formed. Her idea of how one can feel totally connected to a dance partner, corresponds with Yara's theory of intersubjective embodied feeling. She defines chemistry as being a intersubjective emotional feeling and connection as a physical touch. Connection is thus always there (even if it is a good or bad connection), because in Kizomba dance partners touch, but when boundaries cross and form an intersection of sensing the music, your own feelings and your partner, the overlap or frontier of feelings produces chemistry between dance partners which can positively influence the connection. Lila's division of chemistry and connection, is in analytical terms the intersubjective embodied feeling of a dancer created in the space of frontiers.

Thus female dancers experience embodied feelings, created in the space of frontiers by an intra-relational flow between themselves and their dance partners. In this sensation, awareness of their sense of motion in combination with feeling good, leads to associating pleasant feelings with these dance partners. While a female dancer intersects her boundaries of her own feelings with the music and her dance partner's touch and movement, the overlap with

the boundaries of her dance partner, in the space of frontiers, is experienced as a feeling of total connection.

### *Philosophical account*

Simone de Beauvoir, considered one of the mothers of feminism, famously stated: “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman”, arguing that womanhood is not something innate, but something that social and cultural norms create: gender, as such, is a social construct (Beauvoir, 2010:293). Feminism attacks the “social and cultural construction of women as being different”. Patriarchal society constructs women as “other-than Man”, as a negative opposition, as also noted in chapter 2. (Braidotti 1993, 235-36).

Lorber (1994) explores “learned helplessness” as a characteristic of Western construction of femininity (59). This learned helplessness is influenced by stereotypes that portray women as weak, and is constantly reinforced by the performance of gender. A simple example is that of a woman carrying a reasonably heavy bag – Lorner shows how this woman is asked by several people (men) around her if the bag is too heavy for her, and eventually she starts believing the bag is indeed too heavy, and lets a man carry it for her. This example shows that the more one is treated as a woman, the more one acts like a woman, and the more one becomes a woman. Taking this example further, it shows the reiterated performance of gender as defined by Judith Butler in action. The example shows how gender is not only an individual performance, but is also expected and reinforced by society: women are supposed to be weaker than men, so if a woman carries a heavy bag, this does not fit in her supposed gender performance, and because of that people will subtly push her back into her gender performance, making her believe that the bag is indeed too heavy for her to carry.

Sandra Lee Bartky (1997) shows that this social reinforcement of femininity is present in all layers of society. Focusing on the disciplining of the body, Bartky explores how women are disciplined into producing “a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine” (132). The production of a recognizably feminine body happens in various ways – Bartky shows how women consistently are conditioned to take up less space and to limit their movements, as well as submit to countless regimens to alter their looks, like diets, exercise, make up and clothing, and plastic surgery.

After mapping several ways women are disciplined into femininity (e.g. not taking up space in public, make up and aesthetics/pushing the body to fit a certain ideal through dieting, plastic surgery, restricting clothing, etc.) Bartky asks: “Why isn’t every woman a feminist?” (Bartky, 1997:145). She poses that through the internalization of patriarchal standards of

bodily acceptability women can gain a certain sense of mastery and identity. Women are, she poses, “skilled” in the ways they perform femininity (as for example the application of make-up demands a certain skill), so the deconstruction of the patriarchal construction of the female body, aimed at by feminism, especially radical feminism, threatens women with “a certain de-skilling” and thus with feelings of incompetence, even if they “would have been better off had they never had to acquire [these skills] in the first place” (145). Moreover, the deconstruction of the female body may feel for women as a threat to their sense of self: “To have a body felt to be ‘feminine’ – a body socially constructed through the appropriate practices – is in most cases crucial to a woman’s sense of herself as female and, since persons currently can *be* only as male or female, of her sense of herself as an existing individual” (Bartky, 1997:145-146).

“Can one defend, from a feminist perspective, a form of leisure in which a woman follows a man’s lead, apart from dismissing the practice as a retrogressive mimicking of patriarchy’s demands?” asks Ananya Jahanara Kabir in her article “The Dancing Couple in the Black Atlantic” (2013). Kizomba, as has been expressed above, is a social dance in which one person – traditionally a man – leads, and the other – traditionally a woman – follows. This role pattern suggests the conformance to patriarchy to the fullest extent. The patriarchal construction of femininity suggests women are passive, weak, and submissive. These assumptions can be recognized in the partner-hold of social dance, in which the man serves as a strong, tight frame with which he leads the woman to make her shine (ref). This tight frame, through which a woman’s movements are dictated, is reflected in the larger society. Sandra Lee Bartky writes: “Woman’s space is not a field in which her bodily intentionality can be freely realized but an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined” (1997:134). Women, she shows, are far more restricted than men in their manner of movement and the space they take up.

However, for the past twenty years a movement in gender studies has been going on which sees femininity no longer as a “set of negative behaviors which keep women in a subordinate position” (Mills, 2003:148). Instead, “feminists are beginning to see the potential play within the behaviors which have traditionally been seen as denoting powerlessness” (148). Kabir joins this movement: in her article “The Dancing Couple in the Black Atlantic”, she shows that “[t]he interlocked construction of masculinity and femininity is a heuristic prompted by the very nature of the couple dance, which, beneath the apparent submissiveness it demands of the female as follower, an reveal and promote a dynamic, joyous, equitable, and, as this chapter suggests, even a counter-hegemonic partnership” (Kabir, 2013:135). In

her article, Kabir shows how dance can give agency to women, even, or in particular, when they perform the hyper-femininity characteristic to Black Atlantic dances such as Kizomba.

Bartky writes that “[w]oman’s space is not a field in which her bodily intentionality can be freely realized but an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined” (Bartky, 1997:134). The confinement of women’s bodies is also reflected in the partner-hold of social dance – especially in Kizomba, in which a woman is held closely to a man’s frame. However, Kabir argues that the partner-hold enables and dramatizes what she calls the ‘play of power’ in couple dance, a play with gender and power which is “the key to the dance-of-two’s counter-hegemonic potential” (Kabir, 2013:114). An example of this is lady-styling: the individual movement of a woman within the partner-hold of Kizomba. While female dancers are pressured by patriarchy to perform a certain femininity, their bodies resist these pressures at the same time. As a beginning dancer, a woman has to be ‘led’, but as she gains mastery of the dancing skill, she can move into “a kinetic intra-couple relationship that supersedes the denotative (and connotative) force of words” (Kabir, 2013:142) Even in styles which seem to restrict a woman’s independent movement (such as Kizomba), the woman can assert her agency in “crafting her response to the ‘lead’” by using ‘empty’ time, doing what Cubans call *vacilar* or ‘to tease’ and which in Kizomba is referred to as lady-styling (142). While it is still the question what was first – the man’s direction of the woman’s movement – what is created in this moment is “a shared ‘high’ as both partners move in consonance with the music and each other”, a state Kabir refers to with the verb *gozar* (translated as “to enjoy, particularly within the communal context of dance”), and what Manning aims at in her explanation of the feeling created when both parties in a dance take part in the exchange created by touch (142).

While in a gender stratified society the status of ‘woman’ holds a less high esteem than the status of ‘man’, and what men do is valued more highly than what women do (Lorber, 1994:61), this hierarchy does not work in dance: the Black Atlantic dance-of-two demands in every step “not the subordination of the ‘follower’ but intelligent and humorous coordination between the two dancers in a couple” (Kabir, 2013:138). To reach the state of *gozar*, or of ‘feeling good’ in dance, one needs to consider ones partner as their equal, and understand that they are both part of a whole. In this context, woman’s enjoyment of dancing creatively within the framework of the partner-hold “points to empowering self-expression through kinesis” (Kabir, 2013:148). The intimate connection that is formed in the partner-hold allows for “new modes of conceptualizing the relationship between desire, pleasure, and empowerment” (148). As such, social dance does not force women to conform to hegemonic

standards of femininity, but instead allows for a reconceptualization of femininity on equal footing with a male dance partner.

## 6) More comprehensive understanding

The more comprehensive understanding of this project is built up from the concepts created from the common ground between the theoretical frameworks of the anthropology of the senses and feminist philosophy, and the application of these concepts to the case study of Kizomba. The ethnographic accounts provide a personal perspective on how performativity is inherently linked to binary socio-cultural connotations in Kizomba. These personal perspectives are necessary aspects since the way Kizomba can influence the individual balance of the dualism rationality and emotionality is a highly personal process and thus individual experiences are of value.

The more comprehensive understanding is thus as follows: dance creates embodied feeling – the feeling one has about how one’s body and bodily activities exposes one’s self, and influences how one’s self is formed and reshaped through bodily activities. Consequently, dancing with a partner creates an intra-relational flow – a procedural as well as relational aspect of how embodied feelings are created while dancing with a partner. One becomes aware of being a body that moves in space and time through the touch of another – this is an aspect of the politics of touch.

In the context of the gendered social dance Kizomba, as examined by both anthropology of the senses as well as feminist philosophy in the previous two chapters, we conclude that the intra-relational flow – the most important aspect of a couple dance, as it signifies the couple’s connection (and thus their success in dancing together) – in Kizomba is dependent on the gender binary created through the traditional gender roles of leading and following. This is because the process of the intra-relational flow takes place on the space between the borders, where two dancers touch. In this frontier, where multiple axes of identity intersect and overlap, the power of gender performance is strong and allows for a play of gender roles that stimulates the intra-relational flow.

While dancing, it is in the frontier, created by an intra-relational process of feeling, dualisms intersect and validate each other, as in, female dancers feel ‘real’ feminine while dancing because they are dancing with a man. Because femininity goes hand in hand with the following – female – role in Kizomba, validation of this femininity underlines the feminine self of the dancer and this makes her feel good about herself. A similar process goes for male dancers: their masculinity is validated by the opposition of the femininity of their dance partners. Embodying masculinity while dancing and experiencing this as a pleasant result of

the intra-relational flow between him and his dance partner, gives a male dancer a good feeling while dancing as he feels 'real' masculine.

A metaphor for understanding the intensity of connection as created by Kizomba can be found in the Greek myth of the first humans, as written down by Plato in his *Symposium*. According to this myth, the first race of humans had a round body, four arms and four legs, and two faces that shared one head and each looked in the other direction. This human race was so strong they "attempted to make an ascent into the sky with a view to assaulting the gods" (Plato, 1993:19). Because they were so strong, the gods could not kill them, and could only fight them off with difficulty, until Zeus decided to cut them in half, to make them weaker. From that moment on, humans have been looking for their 'other half' and when they found one another have been "entangling themselves with one another in their desire to grow together" (20). Following this myth, Kizomba can be seen as a way humans can 'grow together', at least for however long the dance lasts. Here, this 'growth' is not the sexual intercourse Plato referred to, but the intra-relational flow that is created through the interaction between dancers.

Thus the process of performativity and the space of frontiers almost completely overlap, which means that there might be more theories connected to this complex system, which can enlarge the understanding beyond our interdisciplinary reach. We opt to look at the frameworks of educational sciences, health sciences, psychology and the study of artificial intelligence to create an even greater comprehensive understanding regarding the effects of dancing Kizomba to the interpersonal dualism between body and mind.

## Discussion

The more comprehensive understanding of this interdisciplinary research shows that Kizomba is a dance based on an intersubjective process of embodied feeling – a process we conceptualized as an intra-relational flow. An important requirement of this intra-relational flow is to be in touch with one's feeling and the feeling of one's partner, but when this requirement is met, dancing Kizomba makes the dancer 'feel good'. This 'feeling good' is caused by the gender play that happens when two individuals have overlapping frontiers and perform an enlarged version of their gender.

The result of this gender play is that the female dancer feels more feminine and the male dancer feels more masculine, and because of the masculinity of the man the woman feels more feminine, and vice versa. Although this might seem like a simple reinforcement of patriarchal standards of femininity and masculinity, the process actually appears to be two-sided. On the one hand female and male gender roles are indeed reinforced in dance, as women perform an archetypical femininity in their traditional role as followers, and similarly men perform archetypical masculinity as leaders in the dance. However in the dance the gender binary is also reinvented and recreated: the gender play of Kizomba allows for the creation of a counter-hegemonic dynamic between men and women. Because of the intra-relational flow women are no longer submissive to men, but the dancing man and woman are in an equal relationship with each other – a relationship in which they both have room to develop embodied feeling and thus construct their 'selves'.

Moreover, dance allows men and women to 'get out of their minds' for a while, and fully focus on feeling, rather than thinking. This is encouraged by the intra-relational flow: focusing on feeling is rewarded in dance with 'feeling good', with the flow created when two people are connected through dancing. As such, we can answer the research question posed in the introduction to this project:

*How can dancing Kizomba affect the individualistic rationalism in Western society?*

Kizomba can affect the individualistic rationalism in Western society through its quality of creating a connection that feels good between two dancers. As such, Kizomba goes against the social construction that feeling is not masculine: men need to be in touch with their feeling to dance well and to 'feel good' while dancing, but because of the gendered nature of

Kizomba this does not make them feel emasculated. Men report being proud to be able to lead a female dance partner well, as this quality is considered masculine, so because of this individual men have the opportunity to shift the balance between feeling and reason they experience in their lives a bit more towards feeling.

Similarly, while dancing Kizomba, women learn to be dependent on men, and while this could be interpreted as an anti-feminist move that puts women fifty years back in time, we should consider that the connection between a woman and her male dance partner is one of equality. With an unbalanced connection, if the man is for example being a pushy leader, or the woman refuses to follow, the two dancers will not experience the intra-relational flow. Thus, it is important for both parties to be in touch with their own feelings and with each other.

In summary, Kizomba is a dance which is pre-eminently based on an intersubjective process of embodied feeling, an intra-relational flow, which, by dancing this social dance, can affect the experienced balance between reason and feeling of people in the West

Of course, this interdisciplinary research knows its limitations. For one, the disciplines of the two researchers – cultural anthropology and gender studies – tend to overlap. Cultural anthropology contains many research fields among them feminist anthropology. Gender studies, as it is in nature an interdisciplinary discipline (and sometimes even argued to be transdisciplinary) often draws upon anthropological findings, and even conducts anthropological research. To work around this problem and represent two disciplines in this project that did not fully overlap, Els, conducting research from the discipline of gender studies, has focused on feminist philosophy, whereas Yara, the cultural anthropologist, has focused on the anthropology of the senses. Still, as research on social dances from the perspective of feminist theory is limited, the overlap of disciplines was occasionally inevitable.

Moreover, there are many more disciplines that could provide valuable insights to the problem of the balance between feeling and reason in Western society, and how this balance can be influenced by a social dance like Kizomba. In order to achieve a more fully comprehensive understanding of the relation between feeling and ratio in the context of Kizomba, we advise future researchers on this topic to also use disciplines like behavioral medicine to explore the positive relation of social dances such as Kizomba to the physical and mental well-being of dancers. West et.al. (2004) already shows that African dance has an effect on the cortisol levels and the self-reported feeling of well-being of dancers, as well as

on yoga practitioners, and the theoretical framework we developed in this interdisciplinary research suggests that similar research performed on the effects of Kizomba could produce a similar result.

As concluding words, we would like to compare the writing of this interdisciplinary project to dancing Kizomba. Working together on a research project for ten weeks an intense, intimate experience, and similar to dancing Kizomba, the research from two disciplines has to fit together and work together. We have attempted to reflect the intra-relational flow necessary for successful dancing and productive project writing in the way this project is set up, creating an intellectual dance-of-two to create a new unity, like two dancers create a new unity when they are dancing Kizomba.

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