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Dancing Identity

An ethnographic study of the influence of Afro Latin social dances on the gender and sexual identity of dancers in the Netherlands and Guatemala.



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Acknowledgements [Hilde&Yara]

Hilde

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Contents

Acknowledgements [Hilde&Yara]	3
Introduction [Hilde&Yara]	5
From theory to context	10
Defining identity in anthropology [Hilde].....	10
Embodied by society and culture [Hilde]	11
Gender and sexuality in dance practice [Yara].....	14
Dancing identity [Yara]	17
Context	20
Afro Latin social dances [Hilde&Yara]	20
Dance in the Netherlands [Yara]	21
Dance in Guatemala [Hilde]	23
1. You lead, I follow	26
Gender in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara]	26
Gender in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde].....	29
A gendered dancing identity [Yara].....	33
2. Our bodies, ourselves.....	36
Embodiment in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara].....	36
Embodiment in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde].....	38
An embodied dancing identity [Hilde]	41
3. A touch of intersubjectivity	44
The process of intersubjectivity in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara]	44
The process of intersubjectivity in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde]	48
An intersubjectively formed dancing identity [Yara]	50
Discussion [Yara]	52
Literature.....	55
Appendix.....	59
A. Research summaries [Hilde&Yara].....	59

Introduction [Hilde&Yara]

[Yara] The music has a hard beat and I'm thinking that his leading isn't really that bad, only sometimes I feel like I'm being crushed in his body 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, then I try to concentrate again to feel and follow his movements. 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 laughed and said: "No, I am not with her. But why do you ask?". His reply was as follows: "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 awkward. "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. I don't have to have an underlying reason to dance sensual." "No, okay, I get it now," says the man with a skewed smile to his left cheek. He stops talking, puts my hands on his shoulders and starts dancing while holding me even closer in his frame than before. He moves his hands to the left and the right in a circled movement while squeezing his fists, just in the area between my hips and lower back. While following his movements my buttocks make the shape of an eight in the air. This feels right, and I close my eyes while feeling the music and the movements we are creating together.

[Hilde] Afro Latin social dances are several couple dances which are often circumscribed as presenting a certain sensuality, seductiveness and elegancy. Dance couples, mostly a man and a woman, stand close together while dancing. They both have different steps yet they move together and perform and express the same dance. Dancing is like body language, moving your body on the beat of the music can make you feel part of another world. Afro Latin social dances have been danced over many years in different parts of the world.

From all Afro Latin social dances we have decided to focus our study on four different dances: Kizomba, Zouk, Salsa and Bachata. Our choice for these dances is based on similarities of these dances; all are social couple dances with a certain sensual touch. Couples originally consist of a man and a woman, creating a strong heteronormativity. Also all these dances comprehend a certain sensuality and a sexual tension between the dance partners. Thereby these dances are danced all around the globe, creating opportunities for us to participate.

During our research we investigated the meaning of dance for dancers, by focussing on the way they express themselves by dance. Since people vary and have very different preferences and characteristics we have decided to focus on two different axes of the personal identity. Because of the character of Afro Latin social dances we have decided to focus our research on

the embodiment of gender and sexuality. We discovered that the process of identity formation is very intersubjective, especially in dance. Hence the body is used as mechanism of communication in dance we described the manifestation of these identity axes upon the body; embodiment. Gender and sexuality in the sense of sensuality are of mutual influence on each other and related to the body. This led to our research question: *How does the embodiment of dancing contributes to the formation of a gender and sexual identity of dancers of Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands and Guatemala?*

This topic is examined in two different research settings: the Netherlands and Guatemala. For this matter our study on dance has a comparative character, we implemented the same research independently from February until April, and later compared our results. Yara implemented her fieldwork in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, while at the same time Hilde carried out fieldwork in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

In this time period we tried to implement the same research methods so that we would have the least possible investigator or research bias. Our principle method of research has been participant observation at dance classes and dance parties. We have participated in group classes and Hilde also took private classes in dance, by signing up for dance classes we entered our field.

Yara also visited two dance congresses, one in London and one in Prague, to enter a 24 hour dance setting. The daily life of her informants was quite hectic and the people she had met were only occupied with dance for the little hours of dance classes or dance parties. Dance was not really integrated in their lives, while at the congress dance made up all the activity in that time period. Hilde was not in the position to visit certain congresses, yet at her field several informants were always involved in dance. Especially at Bakanos dance took up quite a lot of time for all dancers there.

Since we were often ‘just dance students’ we did not bother the classes or people in it. Yet we were very open about our aims and research, we informed our informants when we first took dance classes and reminded them when we asked questions. The observations we made during these classes were written down as jot notes in our notebooks. Yet we did not want to interrupt our classes, for this matter we took most of the notes straight after the dance class. We also attended other dance classes wherein we took observational notes which we did very openly.

Aside from participant observations we had casual conversations during our participant observations and as well when we were just there, or hanging out at dance schools

and dance parties. We used the information acquired by these conversations. But moreover specific information was obtained by interviewing dancers and dance instructors. Our interviews were overall semi-structured; we have never used structured interviewing. We did record all interviews and made some notes of the details of our interviews. We first intended to use visualisation as a method in interviews, but it turned out that we did not need this method after all.

Dance instructors are the key informants we had hoped to find before the start of our fieldwork, they provide us from important information and gave us permission to enter the field. We did not use life histories as we intended before. After we had permission to enter the field it was quite easy to gather enough informants by joining these dance classes, we could not say we did use the snowball method, because we got to know the informants by ourselves.

All our jot notes were created into field notes, just after the event in order to remember everything in detail. If something was unclear after we written it down and analysed it, we were able to ask our informants for clarification. Also out of the field notes, vignettes were created to represent the setting and to give clear examples of the situation we were in. To keep track of what we were doing and to be able to reflect on situations afterwards we kept a log of our activities and a personal diary.

To present the data we have chosen on ethical grounds, not to use the names of our informants, even though they told us they wanted their names in it or had no problems with the revealing of their names. Some of the answers, which are represented as results, are very distinct and could hurt other people and thereby harm the relationship between our informants. Thereby some of our informants have key roles in the dance community; we did not find it ethical if those people would be recognisable in our thesis. We wanted that our informants would feel and be safe by the presentation of our thesis.

We are very grateful for all the help and information that was given to us in the field. As an act of reciprocity, respect and as sign of our gratitude we helped our key informants with their classes in return. We both helped out our key informants with their classes by being their assistant when needed, which meant that we, together with our instructors, showed other dance students the dance moves.

In order to answer our research question we set up three different sub-questions, which all focussed on each separate part of the identity process we have investigated. First we focussed on the concept of gender: how do dancers feel about their gender by dance? Our second question focussed on the embodiment of identity in dance by answering how dancers

experienced their bodies while dancing. Behaviour is for a great part explained by personal experiences, which should therefore be taken into account. Also we could not investigate the creation of embodied identities without a focus on personal body experiences. For our last question we focussed on the intersubjective process which takes place between two dance partners. How dancers feel about the connection with their dance partners and feelings about themselves while dancing is depended on this process.

These questions are the result of the term of a literature research. Although Afro Latin social dances have been danced for years all around the globe, very little research is done on the topic, especially anthropological research on the topic has been very little. As well we want to contribute to the discourse of identity and embodiment of identity; we notably want to examine the influence of cultural practices, such as dance, on the individual identity process. Since identity is a complex and extensive concept we limit ourselves to the identity axes of gender and sexuality in relation with the embodiment of identity and the intersubjective creation of an identity. On the topic of embodiment and intersubjectivity very different researches have been conducted, yet the amount of useful anthropological researches is negligible in the range of philosophical and physiological research in this discourse. For this matter we want to contribute to anthropological research within the discourse of embodiment and intersubjectivity by creating an anthropological perspective within the topic of Afro Latin social dances.

Dance in particular is a very interesting research setting for a subject as identity. Dance is located mostly outside of the normal daily life setting, therefore it enables another social framework with different social rules and norms than the ones applicable in daily life. Especially the identity axes of gender and sexuality are provoked by couple dances, and even more by Afro Latin social dances.

To create inside and to understand the background and discourse of our research, we will present our theoretical framework at first. Next our argument will be elucidated by the empirical chapters, which represent our findings in the field. For these chapters we will start off with gender, then embodiment and after the intersubjective process, it is presented by our own ethnographic examples. At the end of every empirical chapter we present our findings on the particular subject in a sub conclusion. At last, we answer our research question, as well as criticising some existing theories on the topic, in our discussion.

From theory to context

[Yara] In this chapter Hilde explains multiple theories regarding the conceptualisation of identity and embodiment in an anthropological perspective. Thereafter Yara explains how theories of gender and sexual identity can be exposed in dance practice and what role dance and dancers have in this process.

Defining identity in anthropology [Hilde]

People are constantly trying to find themselves by defining who they are, and what makes them special among many other people. The finding of the self can be retraced in the creation of identities and identity groups (Erikson 1999). We agree with Sökefeld (1999) who states that an identity group is a social group of people who share one or more of the same values or characteristics, this is defined as sameness. To recognise sameness there must also be difference since there are different identities, people who share sameness are in the group and people who are different are outside of the identity group (Sökefeld 1999).

Your identity is defined by others, who reckon you to a certain group based on your characteristics. For example the biological sex creates two different categories: men and women, others will reckon you to a certain group based on your biological appearance. Aside from identity definition by others, identity is also defined by the individuals themselves. *“The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences”* (Giddens 1991:2), individuals also place themselves in a certain category or can choose to join an identity group. We for example choose to go to university which makes us students. There is always a certain *agency*, within a system of identity groups you can choose to join or to leave certain identity groups (Giddens 1991).

Yara and I are both students and girls, and many things more, which makes us belong to more than one identity groups. This can be retraced in Högg’s identity theory (2006) which enfolds homogeneity within identity groups. He does shares his opinion with Sökefeld (1999) that identity groups are formed by people who have a certain sameness. Yet he notes that individuals uphold different identities, since they comprise many different characteristics, which is something that Sökefeld (1999) neglected. People belong to more than one identity group and therefore people within one group do not share all the same characteristics, they share for a group important values but vary on other axes, therefore groups are homogeneous.

The different axes of identity are not always freestanding, moreover social categories are crosscutting and they can be manifested into subgroups within an overarching identity

group. The categories men and women are very often a distinction, and therefore a subgroup, within a bigger group, for example within a Nationality or within a group of dancers. One or more axes can move to the forefront in certain occasions (Högg 2006). For our identity group girls it is not of great importance that we are students too. Yet in other occasions we become more aware of our other identity axe, especially at times when differences among group members are complementary and homogeneity within a group is necessary.

This can be explained by Stets and Burke's (2000) role theory, subcategories are manifested into different social roles. A social role means that for every group member different behaviour is expected, or to every subcategory or even individual a different role is ascribed. The social roles need to be performed according to the norms and values of the group in order to let the social system of the group operate. *Role identities* create a special place for everyone in the identity group, attaching members to the group. A group is only well functioning when all group members fulfil their roles properly (Stets and Burke 2000). For Afro Latin social dances this means that dances can only be well performed if both the man and the woman fulfil their own role. This role identity will be further clarified in chapter 2, embodied identity.

People have a strong desire to belong to a group, therefore they will try to attach themselves to a group. Although individuals can develop themselves and their identities in absence of social influence, in order to belong and to be accepted into a group people need to reckon the other people around them. For this matter moreover people develop themselves and their identities around others as an intersubjective development of identity. Individuals create their identity in consultation of other humans and yet existing social frameworks of prevailing values (Shteynberg 2012) In our regard this also amplifies the social roles, social roles are created around others in order to be complementary to each other, so that in the end every needed role is taken and the social system will be functioning. So for dance dancers take some basic steps which create the social framework into account when they start dancing.

Embodied by society and culture [Hilde]

As Stets and Burke (2000) highlighted, identity comes with identity roles and different roles for the subcategories within a social group. The social group has certain expectations as a social framework for appropriate behaviour, group members expect a certain performance according to a role. If the performativity of an individual covenant with the expectations, the individual's place in the social group is reinforced.

Which only makes sense if there is a relation between the body and identity. Mauss (Mauss in Dyck and Archetti 2003:1-2) states that the body is humans first and natural instrument as a technical object of expression. In our conception the body is used to act according to social norms and values, culture forms the disciplined knowledge for the body: the social framework. People within the same social group should be able to relate to other bodies within the group. This conception is affirmed by Rapport (2010): the body expresses different identities such as cultural, gender and sexual identities. Also Budgeon (2003) reaffirms that the body is a medium of communication that can be used to attach the individual to a certain social group. For us this is the embodiment of identity; the way people behave and use their body is related to the social framework of an identity group.

This all comes together in the theory of Csordas (1993), he notes that the body is necessary to embody identity. Individuals are represented by their bodies, and if people can relate to other bodies within an identity group individuals feel allied. People within the same identity group have the same social body framework and for this matter have learned the same expressions and movements so that they can communicate with other group members. The social body framework, which means that people are conscious about the use of the body, behind has been created with the body as an object with pondered body movements (Csordas 1993).

Yet people will use their body in a way that they feel pleasant while moving. According to Dyck (2003) the body is moved in a way that the individual has a pleasant or neutral experience of the movement. According to him this pleasant experience only happens when the doing of the body or performativity of a person is accepted by other people in a social system. As said before people want to belong to a group and therefore their behaviour is dependent on other people's opinions.

Even though certain body behaviour connects the body to identity groups, the bodily behaviour and movements and the personal experience of the body are not constantly related to social body frameworks. This can be clarified by the theory of Nash (2000) who states that by moving according to social frameworks thinking is related to the moving of the body, but movements can become separate of thinking about the movement. If someone is fully moving and has a strong pleasant experience of the movement the body and the person become in a state of sensation or even ecstasy. When this happens people are merged into the movement, they are the movement and their bodies and the only thinking is about the pleasant movement. Surroundings become unimportant, since the mind is only occupied with the sensation of the

bodily movement. The body and mind are separated since there is no thinking before the body is used. To put it in other words people really feel their bodies in a way that the individual is represented by the body and the only experience is the movement (Nash 2000).

After the sensation of moving, people want to know what made them feel this way so that they can do and feel it again. Therefore they need to reflect on the movement they were making when achieving a state of ecstasy, people reflect on the movement and start to rethink the way to use their bodies. To give an example of our own fieldwork at the dance studio one of my informants was constantly moving until he felt pleasant about the movement. After feeling pleasant he tried to make the movement again but this time in front of the mirror so that he could see the movement. By seeing and reproducing the movement he became aware of the exact movement that made him feel so pleasant and the seeing and reminding made him able to reproduce the movement. This thinking about the movements reconnects the body and mind, as said before in state of ecstasy surroundings become unimportant and the mind is only occupied with the sensation felt by the movement. So when people think about the actual movement so that they can perform the same movement again, the body and mind become reconnected (Samudra 2008).

As Samudra (2008) goes on movement has a certain memory, since we remember the sensation of the movement the reflection after the movement will be pleasant. However in a state of ecstasy we could be unaware about the actual movement, since the feeling about the movement is on the forefront. Yet when we have such a pleasant experience we will try to reproduce the movement, we start to think again about the movement and the body and mind become reconnected. New movements are learned by experiencing before thinking, which is referred to as a *kinaesthetic practice* (Samudra 2008).

Since people can have a personal very pleasant experience, we think that individual bodies have their own agency about movements too. If we turn to Budgeon's theory about bodily capacities (2003) we can give a deeper explanation. She states that parts of an embodied identity are created by a kinaesthetic practice of movement. A body can only move and act upon what the body is capable of. This means that the movements has to be done before we come to think of it and make it part of our identity (Budgeon 2003). For this matter we state that the experienced or social body is bendable if there are new individual experiencing bodies with a positive reflection. When new body capacities occur and it is well experienced by the individual and by others the actual living body or body politics will change as an outcome. This new body knowledge can become part of an embodiment of identity and will

be passed on to others of the same identity group. Body politics is for this matter a constant process of development.

Even though there is a certain embodied identity which goes together with a certain social system, the rules of a social system can differ for the place where the body is set in. At other places different rules count or different expectations are apparent. For every setting and activity there are different social rules and expectations according to the body (Lindemann 1997:73-92 and Low 2003). This can only be so if the setting is not (completely) related to a certain identity and social framework that is apparent in every day life. For our particular situation dance schools are outside of the ordinary every setting and are not (completely) related to the main embodied identity. By this matter people feel more liberated to move and to experience and also to experiment more with their bodies. By their experiences with dancing new movements are also created and adjusted to the personal taste.

Gender and sexuality in dance practice [Yara]

As Hilde explained earlier, anthropological research in identity can be explored by defining the different axes of characteristics of an identity group (Sökefeld 1999). For our research, we would like to emphasise the axes of gender and sexuality which we will explore in depth in this paragraph.

14

Gender is not the same as one's sex: they are distinct identity axes while also interdependent. Aalten (1997:201) explains that: "*Sex' is everything concerned with the bodily differences between women and men, while 'gender' is about cultural elaboration of these differences.*" Sex and gender seem almost inseparable since the cultural and social construction of femininity and masculinity, one's gender, is projected on the body and thus depends on the sexed body.

The existence of gender identities depends on the particular social cultural situation in which the concepts of gender are invoked. Societies have a gender principled system: the consensual categories of masculinity and femininity (Blume 2003:96). This 'belief' system may consist of stereotypes and attitudes towards standardised gender roles and following gender norms. The social dancing scene can be described as a sub-society in which the standard division in roles are gendered: men lead and women follow. Attached to these roles are connotations regarding femininity and masculinity, which make the two parts differ not only in technical moves but also in performance. Many authors explain that gender is a 'performance' (Aalten 1997 and Nagel 2003). Butler notes that: "*Gender is instituted through*

the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self." (Aalten 1997:203). This quote explains that even though one's gender seems inherently present, it is actually created by repeated performances of the body in a matter that it fits the existing gender patterns while (re)producing new ones. Gender is a performance, which are the different ways in which we carry out our bodily expressions, or the ways gender is enacted (Nagel 2003). Gender is performative, because concepts like gender are only real to the extent that they are performed and thus are not 'natural' existing concepts (Nagel 2003). And gender is performatively created, as in, by affirming, reaffirming, constructing and reconstructing hegemonic social roles and definitions (Nagel 2003).

The mechanism of performativity is so powerful that it tends to go unnoticed and functions at the intuition level. "*It is the abstract, hidden, unthinking, habitual ways of how gender and sexuality are constituted.*" (Nagel 2003:53). This is how one has invisible and habitual notions of gender, while actually performing socio-cultural elaborations. An intrinsically gendered body, is in fact a highly socially mediated product (Aalten 1997). Femininity and masculinity thus are achieved through persistent performance in the socialisation process, just as sexuality.

Sexuality and gender are connected and intertwined but separate socio-cultural systems (Vance 1999). The definition of sexuality by Donnan and Magowan (2010) has two sides, one is the sexed body and the second is the feeling of lust and excitement towards another person. This feeling is connected to the perception of particular body parts and their boundaries (Nagel 2003:23). Furthermore sexual desire and touch are constructed by culture and history from the energies and capacities of the body (Vance 1999). In other words, to connect the arguments of Donnan and Magowan (2010) and Vance (1999): to have feelings of desire towards another person is influenced by the perception of that person's sexed body, which is influenced by (historically) socio-cultural gender connotations. This, not only makes one's sexuality intersubjective but also one's gender identity, since, as I explained earlier, both are an 'act'. And an act needs a viewer and a performer, who share an interpretation of the performance.

The intersubjectivity of sexuality and gender is always about the shared interpretation of the embodiment of these axes; it is about *being defined* by others as well as *defining yourself* and vice versa (Donnan and Magowan 2010). In most Western countries, when you have feelings of desire towards a male body while being defined as a 'man' yourself, you are

labelled as homosexual. This would be different if either you would have a female body or if the body you desire isn't defined gender-wise as 'man'. Such an identity could not exist without the gaze of 'the other' (Donnan and Magowan 2010). This argument is in line with the idea of 'voyeurism' (Smelik 2007). Voyeurism is about the pleasure in looking, sometimes knowing one isn't actually allowed to look, and the desire to *be with* someone. The viewer, male or female, is able to enjoy the spectacle, mostly erotic, of the 'being-looked-at' sexed body and vice versa. The voyeuristic gaze takes place at two levels: looking and being looked at (Smelik 2007). In other words voyeurism supposes intersubjectivity between two gendered sexed bodies with shared feelings of desire, consequently sexuality is apparent.

Intersubjectivity is not only present at the feeling of desire but at all levels of shared feelings. In dance this is most prominent since these feelings become embodied while dancing. In a way the body is a never-ceasing materialisation of possibilities in expressing one's feelings (Aalten 1997), which gives dance research an interesting angle. The bodies of dancers are cultural bodies and dance movements can be seen as scripts, which are culturally encoded and part of daily life. The body is the materialisation of cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, maleness and femaleness, and also materializes the dancer's interpretation of them (Aalten 1997). In other words, dancers create and recreate their gender and sexual identity intersubjectively while dancing. Hanna (2010) explains that dance allows people to reclaim their humanity and is inscribed within the realm of feeling and emotion. The dancing body is therefore a symbolic expression that may embody many notions of romance, desire and sexual climax. Donnan and Magowan (2010) argue that dance is a cultural practice which can transform social relations for the enhancement of social well-being. 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.

We think that because Afro Latin social dances have an intrinsically social aspect, intersubjectivity is prominent in the process of forming and exposing embodied feelings of the self. Donnan and Magowan (2010) give an example of how these intersubjectively created feelings are explicitly present in social dancing. They explain that expressions of desire may be improper during daily life but acceptable in the social dance scene, since the sexual behaviour of you and your dance partner influences the emotional intimacy while dancing (Donnan and Magowan 2010).

Dancing identity [Yara]

I want to refer to Ted Polhemus and his idea that: “*Dance is the metaphysics of culture.*” (1993:8). This quote is intriguing since it states dance as the fundament of culture. We do not know if dance really can be accounted as the basics of culture, but we do know that dance and culture are intrinsically connected. 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. To study dance as a cultural practice is about how social cultural identities are formed, gestured and negotiated through bodily movement.

Dancers and their dance practices reflect what exists in a society and culture, like how sexuality and gender are perceived (Davis 1997). Dance is a place of performativity, in other words, dance is or can itself be a form of sexual [and gender]¹ expression (Ward 1993). Because dance expresses a cultural representation (Albright 1997) and is a form of embodied performance, feelings and cultural ideologies about gender differences and sexual identities take shape and can be reproduced by dance (Hanna 1987 and 2010 and Reed 1998). Polhemus (1993:11) states that: “*Dance always embodies and identifies a gender-generated division of cultural realities.*” This quote indicates that dance is formed by and mirrors a gendered cultural space, since dancers are not only embodied by their cultural and historical background, it is also this that influences the way they embody dance. Dance has the essential capacity to express and reformulate identities and senses by means of their practised movements, socio-cultural scripted forms (Dyck and Archetti 2003), and its connection with self presentation. It is the process of making and remaking the self through movement in which dancers create a representation with their bodies while actually forming those bodies (Albright 1997). Through the arguments of Dyck and Archetti (2003) and Albright (1997) I state that during the process of representation and embodied feelings while dancing, a dancer’s gender en sexual identity are intersubjectively created and recreated.

It isn’t easy to separate sexuality from movements, because a sexual identity is intimately bound up in movement and therefore in dance (Donnan and Magowan 2010). Moreover, sexual acts can embody meaning and desire in cultural performances as dance, while enhancing the embodiment of a dancer’s identity. While practicing a dance, which presumes a certain amount of sensuality (Donnan and Magowan 2010), dancers can transform and

¹ Ward does not account ‘gender’ into his statement but I think it fits the argument Ward makes here.

develop a more conscious sense of their intersubjectively created identity. Or in other words, the way they define their selves in regard of their dance partner. I cannot agree more with Bosse (2007) who explains that dance can naturalise ideas about gendered and sexualised bodies, and Boulila (2011) who states that dance produces bodies and ideas about bodies. For example ‘whites’ think in general that ‘latinos’ have sensual social dances (Bosse 2008), therefore performing a Latino sensual dance was seen as sexualising themselves through dance (Hanna 2010). On top of that, the gender division, which is a fundamental part of all social dances (Bosse 2007), can also enhance a dancer’s sense of one’s intersubjectively created gender identity: women and men have different roles and steps in social dances, which stresses the difference between femininity and masculinity.

Women were encouraged to show their feminine sensuality in social dancing because of the association “*to courtship, and when senses of touch combined with acts of looking they were considered to arouse intimacy, passion and desire.*” (Donnan and Magowan 2010:62). For men, it was different, social dancing brought them problems of possible effeminacy and emasculation because it was seen as an unrestrained space of sexuality (Donnan and Magowan 2010). So instead of having control, men had no power in containing the presence of ‘forbidden sex’ in social dancing, which they had in daily life order². This was ‘resolved’ by masculinisation of dance through the displacement of female sexuality (Donnan and Magowan 2010). Willer et al. (2013) concluded in a recent research that men who react to masculinity threats by masculine overcompensation have masculine insecurity. Combining these two insights indicates that a performance of a gendered sexuality is intrinsically present in social dancing and therefore sexual and gender identities would be implicitly, but mostly explicitly, performed and performatively created.

Afro Latin social dances are mostly heteronormative: a man should dance with a woman and they both have different roles while dancing. Traditionally seen, a man is the leader, which is an ‘active/dominant’ role, and a woman the follower, which is a ‘passive/submissive’ role. This division is present in dance practices as well as in daily life (Hanna 1987). Classen (1997) and Howes (2003) who both have played a key role in the development of anthropology of the body and the senses, explain that the division of these sex-segregated roles for men and women have historically been based upon the contrast between rationality and emotionality. Men controlled the rational order and woman had the power of the

² It is the idea that ‘good’ women are pure and prudish and ‘bad’ women are promiscuous who should be controlled by men (Donnan and Magowan 2010 & Nagel 2003).

emotional senses. And even though this dichotomising order is seen as ‘traditional’, it is still part of the Western stereotyped gender division. This is reflected by the research of Schneider (2013) who argues that Western dancers find pleasure in performing these ‘traditional’ gender positions, and justify their performance of submissive femininity and dominant masculinity by subscribing it as belonging to another culture. She discovers that although people argue that behaving according to this gender division is no longer appropriate in daily life, they have to admit they like to express their desire to perform gendered oppositions in social dancing. It is the longing to perform an ‘inner’ female or masculine identity, an effect of the power of performativity (Nagel 2003), which dancers try to justify as it gives them a positive feeling.

Context

Afro Latin social dances [Hilde&Yara]

[Yara] To be clear, when we refer to Afro Latin social dances we mean: Kizomba, Zouk, Salsa and Bachata. These four types of dance do not only have a connection in being social dances, wherein heteronormativity is apparent and men and women have different but matching moves, they also share a certain essential flow of sexuality and intimacy. To give an understanding of the types of dances we will participate in, here is a short explanation of their origin and ‘dance rules’.

Kizomba³ is an Angolan word which means ‘party’ in the Kimbundu language. Apart from Angola, Kizomba dance is also performed in other Portuguese speaking countries and its popularity is growing rapidly in the Western world. The style of Kizomba dance emphasises a very 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. It is danced accompanied by a partner, very smoothly and slowly, though not too tight. A rather large degree of flexibility in the knees is required, owing to the frequency of dancers bending their knees to move slightly up and down.

Zouk or Brazilian Zouk⁴ is also known as ‘Zouk-Lambada’ as the dance developed from the Brazilian dance Lambada (the Forbidden Dance). Since Brazilian Zouk is danced in combination with a variety of music, including French Caribbean Zouk music, the dance came to be known as Zouk. It is now being danced all over the globe. Zouk is a close sensual partner dance, in which an intimate and deep connection is necessary for both partners to be able to dance together. It is characterized by flowing motions and upper body movements, called ‘body waves’. The pace of the dance is generally slow and smooth.

[Hilde] Originally Salsa has its roots in Cuba and Puerto Rico, where it was performed by people of different social and cultural backgrounds. Salsa is a cultural phenomenon that connects all different kinds of people, making it accessible for everyone. Due to the emigration of Puerto Ricans and Cubans into the barrios of New York, Salsa was spread and being brought into a new context. Nowadays Salsa is a global phenomenon and now has many different variations (Sanabria 2007 and Johnson 2011). Salsa is described as very sensual with sexy movements. The lower part of the body is important in this dance; especially the hips and pelvis are used while performing this dance (Wieschiolek 2003).

³ This piece of text about *Kizomba* is written with help of Claudia de Vries, who is owner of Brasa Dance Studios in Amsterdam.

⁴ This piece of text about *Zouk* is written with help of information from an article of Kim Rottier, who is a dance teacher at ZoukNewYork, on the website of the dance company.

Bachata is best known to be originated from the Dominican Republic. Bachata is originally associated with the lower social class. For that reason Bachata existed on the streets. Nowadays it is no longer connected to the lower class people since all different kind of people perform Bachata and the style is know all over the globe (Pacini Hernandez 1995). Bachata is all about seduction; the man tries to seduce the woman. In dancing Bachata, male and female can move in opposite directions. The dance is circumscribed as very sensual (Tomé 2012).

[Yara] Kizomba, Zouk, Salsa and Bachata can all be described as sensual couple dances in which aspects of gender and sexuality play obvious key roles. This makes all of these dances an excellent contextual space to study the gender and sexual identity formation of dancers. As explained in the introduction, we use the context of Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands and Guatemala for our comparative study. This comparison is interesting since Guatemala is stereotyped by the West in being a country full of citizens who have the feeling of dance in their ‘blood’ (Lundström 2009). And the Netherlands are stereotyped as having no connection to dance at all (Aalten and Linden 2000).

Dance in the Netherlands [Yara]

Research in dance, gender and sexuality in the Netherlands as well as in the rest of Europe doesn't seem to have been a combination of direct study. There are many research organisations such as AtGender, a European association for gender research, education and documentation, and Atria, a Dutch knowledge-institute, in which gender and sexuality are topics of study. Dutch anthropological researchers like Anna Aalten and Gloria Wekker regard these topics as important subjects for every kind of study. Aalten writes about the relationship between gender, culture and constructions of the body in the light of feminist anthropology. Her recent research is focused on (ex-)dancers and the training methods at Dutch ballet academies. Wekker writes about her gender analysis on various case studies taken from everyday Dutch reality.

Sunny Bergman is a known Dutch program writer, reporter and film director who tries to make people more aware of ‘problems’ which are connected to understandings and social prejudices about gender and sexual identities. In her recent research she uses multiple

anthropological methods (interviews and participant observation) to undermine the idea of sexual liberalism in the Western society⁵.

In public discourse about dance, it is being said that Dutch people don't dance and in a way this is true: Dutch people don't have a national dance or traditional wedding dances and there is no tradition of dancing spontaneously on the streets (Aalten and Linden 2000:119).

Although dancing spontaneously seems more common these last couple of years for example in the streets when it is Kingsday or Carnaval. The Dutch don't have a 'real' tradition of their own, but they have a tradition of opening themselves to different influences, traditions and styles. Consequently, 'Dutch' dance has become a crossroad of all kinds of dances that originate from different places. So Dutch people do dance, but in a diversity of originally 'non-Dutch' ways, which is a central feature of dance in the Netherlands (Aalten and Linden 2000:131).

Other European countries can be as divers in dance as the Dutch are and yet retain their traditional dance (Grau and Jordan 2000). Take Flamenco which is still typical Spanish (Ede 2010); it is intertwined with the national identity of Spanish people, their 'Spanishness'. But in the Netherlands there isn't such a thing as a Dutch identity (anymore) (Reekum 2012). 'Dutchness' actually is defined by diversity and one can say that this is reflected by the multiplicity of dance styles and techniques used by Dutch dancers.

Nowadays there is more and more dance research done in the Netherlands. Establishments, articles and research topics can be found at the website of the Dutch Society for Dance Research (VDO). Yet, Afro Latin social dances form a category of dance which only recently has been the topic of research in the Netherlands (Mathiessen 2014). Although dancing Afro Latin social dances is an activity more and more Dutch citizens start doing, it remains a marginalised dance scene. I experienced that the Afro Latin social dance scene is diverse and spreads all over the Netherlands. Multiple organisations (such as: Salsa Casa Loca, Copa Cobana, Kizomba Bass, etc.) try to create a possibility for dancers to dance at social dance parties, aside from the lessons. There are, for as far as I know, no Afro Latin clubs to which dancers can go on a regular basis to social dance.

To learn how to dance Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands, you can choose from varies possibilities of teachers and dance schools. For our comparative study, I will do my

⁵ <http://www.hollanddoc.nl/kijk-luister/documentaire/s/sletvrees>, viewed on 10/5/2014.

part of the research at the dance school BrasaZouk in Amsterdam, of which the owner is Claudia de Vries. She is one of the pioneers whom introduced and promoted Zouk and Kizomba in the Netherlands. To participate in one of the dance courses, you won't need a partner and there are different levels in which you can enrol, dependent on your experience, talent and effort. People from many cities in the Netherlands come to BrasaZouk to learn how to dance, which indicates the high quality of the dance program and the teachers. Sometimes there are guest teachers, who come from all over the world to give the dancers a taste of their distinct dance style.

Dance in Guatemala [Hilde]

In Guatemala, identity is a very important but very sensitive subject for Guatemalans (Nelson 1999). Guatemala is formed by different groups of: Mayans; the indigenous inhabitants of Guatemala, Ladinos; a mixed folk of indigenous and Mayans; and white people, former European immigrants. Those identity groups were contested by the Spanish Conquest [1524-1821]⁶ and the civil war [1960-1996], yet Ethnic identities remains an important identity category in Guatemala (Nelson 1999).

Next to ethnicity gender has always been an important (sub)category in Guatemala. The gender identity creates a division between men and women in which there are different expectations for the two different categories (Sundberg 2004). In Guatemala women are “*the givers of life, the transmitters of culture and the pillars of the community*” (The Guatemalan Human Rights commission 2009:3), according to Stern (2005) women embody their culture by the way they speak, dress and behave and raise their children.

During the civil war [1960-1996] the rape of women was part of a war strategy. Raping a woman will destroy her honour and her emotional, physical and mental integrity, thereby it will dishonour her family and the ethnic community to which she belongs. Therefore female rape destroys a collective identity, making women more vulnerable (The Guatemalan Human Rights commission 2009).

Nowadays there still is inequality between men and women. The rape and abuse of women continues (The Guatemalan Human Rights commission 2009). Guatemala is a patriarchal society, wherein machismo is the mandate for men. Men are expected to be strong and dominate, they are the designated heads of the household. Partly this can be underpinned by the macho role of men in Guatemala. Guatemala is mostly a patriarchal society wherein machismo is the leading mandate for men, making men the

(Sanabria 2007). This macho culture makes women obedient to men and their social rules (Sundberg 2004).

Due to their status as pillars of culture women are protected against dangers from outside making them more restricted. This argument is confirmed by Sanabria (2007) who states that women embody ethnicity while men seem to abandon indigenous traditions (Sanabria 2007:139). To remain the honour women are also more covered up, even on the beach they are wearing shirts and shorts meanwhile men wear only shorts. Thereby women are more protected and their virginity until marriage is still highly valued.

When it comes to dance less Guatemalan women dance than Guatemalan men. Even though many people expect all Latino's dance, Afro Social Latin dances are not originated from Guatemala. Since it is not a Guatemalan tradition to perform these types of dances, I think less women are involved due to their status as pillars of culture. Thereby Afro Social Latin dances are stereotyped as sensual and intimate, and women's purity should be protected, which might be another reason why less women dance.

Yet the dancing scene in Guatemala is growing, and more and more people are involved in Salsa and Bachata. I took classes at three different dance schools in Quetzaltenango; Bakanos, Salsa Rosa and Escenic and also attended several dance nights and parties.

Empirical chapter Gender

[Hilde]

I am standing aside from a big stone floor, while listening to the music, I watch a few couples dance. “Do you want to dance?” a young guy approaches me and asks me out to the dance floor to dance with him. Although I had been standing the side for quite a while, I knew it would have been very inappropriate if I had asked a man to dance. I let the man lead me to the dance floor, we stand close and I follow his lead through the dance.⁷

This vignette illustrates the awaiting role of women in the Afro Latin social dance culture. In dance women follow the lead that is set by men. This is discussed in the perspective of the Netherlands and Guatemala in the next two paragraphs.

⁷ Hilde at a dance party at the Caribbean restaurant (20/2/2014).

1. You lead, I follow

Gender in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara]

In this paragraph I discuss the gendered aspects I discovered during my research in the Netherlands. At the dance school BrasaZouk there are a few norms in which gender as a category is central. For as far as I know, every Afro Latin social dance is danced in couples of which one dances the following role and the other person the leading role. Dancing at BrasaZouk as a woman, means that you will learn how to follow. Men who register at the dance school will learn how to lead. Classy specifically told me that there are exceptions: *“there is a lesbian woman, who registered for a course and noted that she wanted to learn how to lead. I was like mmm how would the other students react to this... because 98% of them pay to dance with a man, so I cannot force them to dance with a manly woman, because it really seems as if she want to be a man by how she tries to hide her breasts and wears her hair very short. But luckily the whole group accepted her.”*⁸ On the other hand, a few other women and I also did courses in which we took the leading role, but this did not create any thoughts of confusion. This is an example of how strong the heteronormativity is; the norm that a dance couple consists of a heterosexual man and woman.

The quote also is an example of how your sexed body determines beforehand which steps you will learn in the dance course, unless you specifically mention you want to learn other steps. The fact that it is organised like this, is because of the connection between gender roles and the sexed body (Aalten 1997). To give another example, I quote a conversation between the male dancers Jarro and Kwek: *“After my Kizomba exam, other dancers came to me and complimented me on my hip movement. I was like, NO don’t say that. I don’t want to hear that! Because that has to have been my lady styling, but I don’t want to hear I am good at that.”* *“No, haha, no man wants to hear that he can dance feminine and is good at it too.”* *“No, you know what I mean, I don’t need to hear I can move my hips, keep those thoughts to yourself!”*⁹ In this conversation, it is very clear that both male dancers don’t want to be associated with femininity in any way. They like to behave, as Blume (2003) explains, according to their gender ‘belief’ system, which means they are an example of the inextricable connection between the sexed body and gender connotations: to be a man [sex] you should not behave feminine [gender]. This is intrinsically connected to the divisions of the dance roles: the leader should behave masculine and the follower feminine. As a consequence, the norm that men lead and woman follow, easily occurs.

⁸ Interview with Classy at BrasaZouk (7/3/2014).

⁹ Interview with Jarro and Kwek at café Bagel and Beans (26/2/2014).

Who dances which role, does not necessarily have to be connected to the sexed body. A male dance teacher I have met at the London Zouk Congress, was able to perform both as a feminine follower and as a masculine leader. He and his sister formed a dance couple, and he was the one giving the Lady styling courses. He told me that he disliked the heteronormative tradition in the social dance scene and did not see a problem teaching dancers both roles, as long as it is clear while dancing who is leading¹⁰. I analysed that it is the connection of gender connotations to the sexed body, which shaped the tradition of talking about ‘male’ roles and ‘female’ roles in social dancing instead of leading and following roles. This is why, during parties or courses, other dancers ask me if I want *to dance as a man* today, instead of asking me if I want *to lead* them.

I have never felt less feminine when dancing the leading role. Since the technique of lady styling is connected to the following role, I am less able to do my lady styling when leading. Femininity was described by the dancers as being soft, controlled, sensual, sexy, flexible, confident, having a curved appearance and looking good. The general definition of masculinity was the nerve to talk to women, to ask them to dance, to be able to lead the women, to be able to make women feel beautiful when dancing and to have self-confidence. TQ, Til, Rockey and Kwek among other male dancers said that during dancing the woman has the main role and it is the duty of a man to make her feel beautiful and good about herself.

This gender dichotomy, which is also partly reflected in the social rules of society (Stets and Burke 2000), as in men and women have different certain ‘social duties’, is one of the basic traditional ‘rules’ to which Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands are intrinsically connected. Dancers represent cultural values (Davis 1997), which in this case are connotations of how men and women should behave. During my research, I noticed that a lot of dancers strive to represent these cultural values as best as they can. In her recent research Schneider (2013) argues that Western dancers tend to find enjoyment in performing these ‘traditional’ values. This performance then is accepted by other dancers, since, according to Dyck and Achetti (2003), an individual only finds his body movements pleasant when the performativity is accepted by others of the same social group. This might be why dancers talked about femininity and masculinity as some kind of feature you can gain and grow to be better while dancing, since that would make them more part of the group.

¹⁰ Interview with Daani in one of the studios at the London Zouk Congress (2/3/2014).

It seemed that the dancers regarded femininity and masculinity in dancing as a sort of blue print of how gendered behaviour should be. *“I always thought I was real masculine, but since I started to dance I felt less masculine and now I am learning to be masculine through dance. (.....) I would never dance with another man. That would feel on-masculine and unnatural, since I am not gay.”*, Jobby told me¹¹. Most other male dancers I spoke with, would have agreed with him, since most of them emphasised that their masculinity should always be present while dancing and in daily life. Male dancers seemed to fear that all associations with femininity or homosexuality are treats to their masculinity. I observed that most men refused to do any movements which appear feminine. I interpreted this as a form of overcompensating their masculinity. This is comparable to the research of Willer et al. (2013) in which they conclude that masculine insecurity can lead to overdoing gender.

Female dancers explained they start to dance to feel more feminine. Some, like Classy, felt like they have ‘masculine’ traits, like being dominant and direct, in daily life, which they would not express while dancing, because that would contradict with their required femininity in the dance. There were also female dancers who told me that, when they feel tired, they try to overrule this feeling by dressing up, which is another way of emphasising their femininity. *“This is why I dress up girly girly when I go to a dance party, since if I feel tired my appearance sucks, then I like to put on make-up and my heels and a sexy outfit to be able to feel: yes! I’m ready. I feel more confident and beautiful after getting ready, which positively influences my dancing.”*, Ryda explained to me¹². There was one group of girlfriends who all agreed that the more they got accustomed with dancing Afro Latin social dances, the more feminine they felt and the less afraid they were to express and embrace their feminine self. No female dancer seemed to be afraid in any way of losing their femininity while dancing, which is in line with the result of Willer et al. (2013), even when taking the leading role. Shalini said that: *“femininity is not being afraid of acting masculine.”*¹³ She explained that when she takes the leading role, she does not fear to be associated with masculinity, since masculinity is appropriate behaviour in the leading role. In her opinion femininity is something natural, which cannot change when you are performing differently. I think that it is the mechanism of performativity (Nagel 2003) that is so powerful that it creates the intuition of these female dancers that being ‘real’ feminine is something intrinsic present. While according to Vance (1999) nobody is naturally gendered, as in, no woman is naturally feminine. My analysis is

¹¹ Interview with Jobby at BrasaZouk (21/3/2014).

¹² Interview with Ryda at BrasaZouk (14/3/2014).

¹³ Interview with Shalini via Skype and Facebook (21/2/2014).

that Shalini and other female dancers are, by performing masculinity while taking the leading role, validating the naturalness of their femininity.

During my participant observation, I noticed that the teachers put more emphasis on the leading role. When I asked about this to some of the dancers, I got the answer that the leading role is more difficult and that women are more in touch with their feeling which makes it easier for them to dance to the rhythm. In this the traditional dualism of men associated to the realms of reason and women to the realms of feeling (Classen 1997), reflects in the arguments of the dancers. Classy explicitly told students that they had to have patience with the men, otherwise there would be no man left to dance with. This all puts an emphasis on the leading role which is normatively embodied by men. I analyse this as a gendered division of hierarchy in the embodiment of the two roles in social dance. In the next chapter I will explain more about embodiment and bodily aspects in social dance in the Netherlands.

To summarize, I observed and experienced that in the Afro Latin social dance scene in the Netherlands femininity and masculinity are highly valued while dancing. For women social dance is seen as a way to learn to act feminine, as this will also help them to be more comfortable in exposing their femininity in daily life. Male dancers explained that their masculinity is always present and they see dance as a possibility to practice to act out on their masculinity so that they can use this in daily life.

Gender in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde]

When I showed up at Bakanos dance studio for my first dance class I was directly assigned to the female following role in dance and all the men were expected to take on the leading male role. This first division of the category is based upon the sexed body as explained in our theoretical frame by Aalten (1997), in Afro Social Latin Dances there is a female part and a male part. The division of these two different categories is made by the dance instructor and by other dancers. When I asked my informants how the different roles in dance were situated all of them answered that there is a male and female role in Afro Social Latin dances.

Nevertheless the first division is based upon the sexed body, sex and gender are an inseparable category and are constructed in a social and cultural construction (Blume 2010). Upon the reactions of the dancers I have met in Quetzaltenango, I have noticed that in Guatemala it is very unusual to divide the two dancing roles differently than based upon sex and gender. Yet when I stepped into Salsa Rosa dance school, there were two women dancing the guiding 'male' role. One of those women said to me: *'When I dance the guiding role I*

*take on a role, but when I am dancing the female role I am more myself*¹⁴. She told me that she only danced the guiding role when there were not enough men to guide the women during her classes. I have seen this the other way round at my other dancing school Bakanos; when there were not enough women the male teacher danced the feminine role. But it is necessary to note that they only danced ‘the other’ role if it was necessary. The role division in dance is strictly holding on to the sexual differences with a certain ascribed gender category.

Although out of my own observations and conversations with my dance teachers I think that a female teacher who dances a male role when giving class is more accepted than a man taking on a female role. Male taking on a female role is more associated with being gay, and other students were making jokes when the male teacher danced the female role. Even though he told me he had no problem with it, he did send me a text if I could come by, because there were so little women and he wanted to dance his own male role more.

In dance a strong gender belief system is invoked, with a stereotyped and standardised divided category for men and women. In Afro Social Latin dances the man is the guidance and the woman is the follower; men decide which steps and movements will be performed by the both of them, the women follow this lead. The two roles in dance can be regarded as two social roles (Stets and Burke 2000), this two roles are situated in a way that they are complementary.

The two different roles are regarded as complementary, what the man is not performing will be performed by the woman and vice versa. When the men are occupied guiding the dance, the women are free to move their hands. *“You need the two to make the dance looks good”*¹⁵, a leading and a following role are equal necessitate.

I noticed that for this matter male dancers need to know the dance and its steps, figures and movements very well, especially since they lead the women. This became clear to me when I was watching a private dance class of a man who was quite new in Salsa. *“So how do these different hand movements work, I get so confused”*. While dancing he looks really occupied in his mind and cautiously put his hands above his head or in front of his chest. *“Am I doing this in the right way”, “is this correct”*. The man who took the dancing class looks a bit confused

¹⁴ Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

¹⁵ Interview with Cecilia at Kaffeto (13/3/2014).

*while he is trying to guide the woman through the figures by his hand movements. "Can you help me with my hand movements that will guide a woman?"*¹⁶.

Men also need to be strong, by this I refer not only to their physics but more to their mind. Male dancers need to be strong minded so that they will guide a woman with confidence through the movement, if a man is not certain than a woman will be even less certain about a movement in dance. The man is actually the one who is in control over the dance, he decides which figures and movements will be performed and by his hand movements he will lead the woman and guide her through her steps. I got this information by the interviews I have held, both the sexes gave me the same kind of answers, when I asked them what the importance features for male dancers are.

Still men are not only leaders in dance, but they are also the ones taking the initiative to dance. As demonstrated by the introduction women wait until men ask them to dance. In this aspect we regard men again as leaders and decisions makers in dance.

So women start dancing after they have been asked by a man, for women it is expected that they will take on the men's lead and will follow his guidance through the dance. *"The women link the information they get through a men's guidance and perform the right movements"*¹⁷. Her quote from our interview summarises what most of my informants told me in interview. Yet the most important duty of a woman in dance is express the emotion and sentiment of the dance, this is what they told me more frequently. Men perform the steps and guide the women through theirs, which is why they are occupied with the structure while women have more time to perform emotion. Thereby women are regarded as the more emotional type in general and for this reason are more qualified to express sentiments. Women express these sentiments and emotions by the hand and body movements they make additionally to their steps: the shines. Shines can be regarded as a certain performativity (Nagel 2003) of the female role, most shines are very elegant which is associated with femininity. So when women move very elegant they are adding beauty to the dance and affirm their role as a woman. Much attention is paid to the shines during dance classes, I have had several lady styling classes to improve our female role, *"Okkkaaay Chicas, we are going to practice our shines. So show me which movements do you know. Very good but now a bit more sexy, move your chest" A group of ladies is standing in a circle and are practicing their shines and learning new ones with the help of the dancing teacher. The women are moving their hands with lots of grace, moving*

¹⁶ Dance Class from Karl given by Ernesto at Bakanos (1/04/2014).

¹⁷ Interview with Cecilia at Kaffeto (13/3/2014).

*their hips and chest and move their hands over their bodies while their fingers are slightly touching the body. "Show them what you got, they need something to look at."*¹⁸ Women perform certain additions to the steps of the dance, they shake with their hips, move their hands and arms elegantly and move their chests while dancing. *"Women fill up the dance"*¹⁹, according to my informants women perform the movements that make the dance more beautiful and spectacular, it draws the attention, like a form of voyeurism (Donnan and Magowan 2010). *"Women need to shine on the dance floor and stand out"*²⁰. Hence women need to express the sentiment of the song, *"Men set the lines and women colour them"*²¹. This colouring is done by their movements, which will be put into the dance naturally when they are performing all this additional movements and act sexy on the dance floor at times.

Since the role of men and women in dance are complementary and therefore we think that more attention is paid to the axes of gender. It is an evoked gender pattern that is linked with a certain location; a dance school or a dance hall and linked with a certain activity; Afro Latin Social Dances.

Yet when I asked both men and women if dance was of any influence on their general gender identity perception, only women said they felt different about their gender on the dance floor than in general life. The women told me they felt more feminine while dancing and that dance enabled them to show a more feminine side which they could not perform in daily life. The elegance and sexiness which is apparent in dance was linked to their femininity.

Since my female informants started to dance they also acted more feminine in general daily life. They started to dress more feminine; by wearing more dresses and skirts and more garments in pink which are associated with femininity. It is totally not accepted for men to wear pink since it is associated with gay. Once I was wearing my pink glasses and Juan was putting up my glasses for fun, but it needed to stay between the dance teacher, him and me, because both the guys told me that wearing something pink was 'gay'. So by wearing pink women really stand up for their femininity. Also my female informants told me they started to pay more attention to their appearance and applied more make-up, their way to stand out and shine in daily life.

¹⁸ Group dance class in Salsa at Salsa Rosa (1/04/2014).

¹⁹ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

²⁰ Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

²¹ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

Men told me they did not feel different about their gender in dance than in daily life, which might can be retraced in the gender dichotomy and differences in daily life. Machismo is a part of the Ladino and Guatemalan culture, so there is less difference on the identity axe of gender for them.

Some of my informants regarded that the role division in dance was an outcome of gender patterns in social life and biology. Originally men have been the leaders of a society for over a long time, they took care of their women and protected them. In Afro Social Latin Dances men also care for the women, guiding them through the dance and taking on the lead. *“I like to take care of a girl, when I am in a relationship with her. I am there to protect her. I also feel like this when I am dancing with a girl, I am guiding her through the dance, making sure she moves well, in this way I am also taking care of a girl while dancing”*²².

In fact the machismo which is apparent in daily life and culture in Guatemala seems also apparent in Afro Social Latin Dance. The man is the guide and is leading woman through a dance, and oftentimes men are still the decision makers and guides for women in everyday life. The position of women is changing for women in daily life (see context Guatemala), while in dance old gender patterns, of a guiding man, are still performed and affirmed in dance.

A gendered dancing identity [Yara]

In this chapter, we discussed as much gendered aspects within Afro Latin social dances, as we had observed during our fieldwork in Guatemala and the Netherlands. Dancers were aware of the way gender is present in the dance scene and also reckoned that their feeling about their femininity or masculinity was influenced by it. The categories of the leading and following role are based on the sexed body. This reflects the connection between a sexed body, gender (Aalten 1997) and the dance roles. There is the leading role, normatively danced by men, and the following role, normatively danced by women. In both field sites it was possible but seen as an exception, since it was not in line with the gender belief system (Blume 2003), if a dancer would not dance according to tradition. Although women leading other women was quite accepted. But men performing the following role, was in both sites associated with being homosexual because their feminine performance was seen as a threat to their masculinity. Most male dancers reckoned that they were more masculine if they do not dance with another men, or, for that matter, dance feminine, which is a form of overdoing their

²² Interview with Raúl at Salsa Rosa (20/3/2014).

gender (Willer et al. 2013). Heteronormativity is apparent in both Guatemala and the Netherlands: men and women behave according to the social roles in the Afro Latin social dance scene. Both roles are equally required and complement each other (Stets and Burke 2000). And because both roles are intensely connected to gender connotations, feelings regarding one's feminine or masculine self become important while dancing.

Masculinity and femininity are, just as in de daily life social order, connotations of a male body respectively a female body and cultural values (Davis 1997). These gendered connotations were traits which dancers could learn, as in, they would feel as 'natural' traits, which would be a result of the power of performativity (Nagel 2003). Many Dutch and Guatemalan female dancers admitted that since they started to dance, they felt like exposing their femininity more in daily life. Male dancers in Guatemala and the Netherlands all argued that masculinity should always be present, but Dutch dancers emphasised that they experienced dance as way to learn to act out more masculine.

In other words, a gendered system is inherently present in Afro Latin social dance in both field sites. And while dancing, Guatemalan female and Dutch male and female dancers experience a change in their gender identity, conform to how they learn to be feminine and masculine in dance. How a dancer's body is influenced by dancing according to these gendered 'social dance rules' and how these effect a dancer's experience of embodied feelings, is discussed in the next chapter.

Empirical chapter Embodiment

[Hilde]

“Look I have created a new move!” Pablo is turning his body around and after his body has turned 360 degrees he is stepping forward and aside. The day before I saw him dance and move around the dance studio and only after he was happy with the movement, he watched himself in the mirror and tried to remind the movements he made. When I later spoke to him he told me he was fully enjoying the movements of dancing: “When I dance only the dance is important and it feels great.”²³

This vignette illustrates the process of an individual in dance. Here Pablo was just enjoying dancing to the fullest, his moves were on the forefront. In a way he is fully experiencing and enjoying the movement of his body by dancing. This is discussed in the perspective of the Netherlands and Guatemala in the next two paragraphs.

²³ Pablo and Hilde at the dance studio Bakanos (14/3/2014).

2. Our bodies, ourselves

Embodiment in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara]

Almost all aspects of dance relate to a dancer's body. This chapter is devoted to the dancers' feeling of their bodies and the connection of their 'selves', as in who they feel they are (Sökefeld 1999), with their bodies. This is important since the identity of dancers is influenced by dance *because* it is a bodily activity.

The most intriguing aspect of the dancers' interpretation of the connection between dancing and their body, is the fact that they see dancing as a form of rescue from daily life activities. TQ: "*Dancing saved me from a burn out, since I was working 80 hours per week.*"²⁴ Ryda: "*Dancing helped me to find myself back again, who I am and what I stand for.*"²⁵ Classy: "*I have heard stories of people saying that dancing took away their depression. And for me, dancing is a healthy work out which gives me satisfaction in life. I feel free, happy, beautiful and joyous when I dance.*"²⁶ I interpreted that the dancers experienced a change of view on their body because they had experienced a change in how to act according to social norms and values which are present in the dance scene. This new 'cultural' environment changed the disciplined knowledge for the body (Rapport 2010), which made them push to start to take better care of their body. By doing so, they felt part of the group, or in other words, to link that with Csordas's argument (1993) and my own: an individual is the body and when the body can relate to other bodies [of other dancers] it is an embodied identity, which contributes to a change of bodily appreciation of belonging to a group. I will discuss the relational aspect of a dancer's embodied identity in more detail in the next chapter.

I observed that female dancers tended to embody the gendered system which is basic in Afro Latin social dances, more and more. They started wearing heels, dresses, tight leggings and more (socio-culturally) feminine clothing which is a standard in the Afro Latin social dance scene. Bella explains: "*.... acting feminine is more acceptable and even appreciated in the Afro Latin dance scene*"²⁷ Because femininity is a norm, women not only felt the desire to embody their femininity, they also liked to expose it more and more, even in daily life. Many female dancers told me that since they starting dancing, dressing up more feminine while preparing for dance classes or parties also became a habit during daily life. Fara said:

²⁴ Interview with TQ at BrasaZouk (10/3/2014).

²⁵ Interview with Ryda at BrasaZouk (14/3/2014).

²⁶ Interview with Classy at BrasaZouk (7/3/2014).

²⁷ Interview with Bella at BrasaZouk (12/3/2014).

“Since I started dancing Salsa, I feel more comfortable and one with my female self, which I express by wearing more feminine clothing during daily life such as heels and skirts.”²⁸ The experience of their feminine self, influenced by socio-cultural gender connotations, while dancing thus influences the female dancers in their actions and feelings of their feminine self during daily life.

Female dancers had the tendency to let the way they look (in every aspect: from shoes to t-shirts to glasses) influence the way they feel about themselves, their body and their bodily movements. During my Zouk congress in Prague²⁹, Loena, Lila and Belle asked my opinion on their clothing. They wanted to look sexy but not too sexy. Jobby and Curley asked me if their outfits would match with the theme of the dance party. This reminded me of the theory of Budgeon (2003) who explained that it is not only the body structure but also the individual experiencing body which influences a person’s agency. I analysed that these dancers were able to feel better doing their bodily movements on the dance floor when their experience of their bodily appearance matched with their feelings while dancing. I think that wearing a sexy outfit, made Loena, Lila, Belle (and also myself) feel more sexy which made us feel good while dancing sexy, and dancing sexy made us feel more sexy and more in line with our bodily appearance. The idea that a dancer’s experience of his or her body influences her agency and action was also apparent in my interview with Classy who said: “When I am comfortable in my skin, I want to wear heels.”³⁰ Wearing heels is a personal sign for Classy to show her desire to dance: she embodies her dancing desire by wearing heels. If the desire was absent, because she still had some work to do, she would wear her sneakers since these fit more to her ‘masculine’ business attitude. “People say I have balls when I am occupied with my business.”³¹ This shows that a dancer’s embodied identity is framed by a dancer’s individual bodily experience which often is gendered.

Dash and Emco, two male dancers, told me that they felt that Afro Latin social dancing is a way of getting to know all kinds of different people, while being occupied with your body, which makes it a different bodily activity than going to the gym. Allu explained to me that social dancing is far different from other social activities: “you get to know your dance

²⁸ Interview with Fara at her home (14/3/2014).

²⁹ From 27th of March until 31th of March.

³⁰ Interview with Classy at BrasaZouk (7/3/2014).

³¹ Interview with Classy at BrasaZouk (7/3/2014).

partner based on your body and not on your personality. This is what scares some people.”³² This means that the dancers see dancing as a way of showing who they are with their body, as in their bodily identity, and not with words. Bodily insecurity can form an obstacle. Dancers who appeared to me as not afraid of showing their bodily identity seemed more confident in holding their dance partner and exposing their femininity or masculinity while dancing. Some dancers who, during my research, could not overcome their insecurities used all kinds of arguments related to their embodied identity. Gino’s told me, when I asked him to a party during the course *“I am white and not a dancer, I am just doing this for my wife.”* Nestie said to me, while dancing with him: *“I am so a-rhythmical, I cannot understand how everybody in the course keeps having patience with me.”* One day³³, Jobby and Belle were in discussion about some movements, when I entered the room: *“I just do not feel masculine doing this movement,”* Jobby said. *“But everybody does it, so why not you? It isn’t like everybody would look strange to you. But now they do because you just stop dancing,”* Belle replied. Jobby answered with frustration: *“No, but this movement is gay and I feel very strange moving my hips in circles like that.”* *“Haha, you are just not manly enough to do it, that’s it.”* Belle said amused. *“Well, maybe that is true, so be it.”* Jobby replied, but I could almost feel his disappointment. This discussion as well as my other examples show that the dancers feel that how they experience their bodies while dancing influences how they feel about who they are in general and vice versa which influences their sense of agency, and their sense of self (Geurts 2002).

In this paragraph the ethnographical examples show that Dutch dancers experience that their body plays a key role in both the ability to make movements and dance, as well as the ability to embodying feelings regarding one’s gender identity and more comprehensively one’s self, while dancing and in daily life.

Embodiment in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde]

For dancers dance is more than just a performance or body movements on the rhythm of music. Dance is a way to express yourself, to move freely and be engrossed in the movements and to blend in with the music, loose all the problems and feel better. Dance is transcending just performance, it is more it is a way to embody the self.

³² Conversation with Allu at Brasazouk (7/2/2014).

³³ Conversation between Belle and Jobby at BrasaZouk (21/2/2014).

To embody an identity there should be a relation to a body and a mind or person. The individual person is the body as shown by Csordas (1993), but most people don't relate to their bodies or the movements they make in normal daily life. The movements people make during everyday life have become so normal that those movements happen or are done unconscious. *“When I am in the park ah well I don't know really I am then just walking”*³⁴. The movements feel so normal that it becomes natural, the walking Susana mentioned is so normal for people that no one is conscious about the way they walk when they are out on the street. Yet when dancing dancers become aware of the way they move their bodies and their body appearance also moves to the front. People descend in their bodies, or even become their body when upon a dance floor. Also most of the focus in the dance class is on the body. *“So first we start with a warming-up”, every dance class at Bakanos started with a stretch session to warm-up our muscles. The warming-up session drew my attention towards my body and the need of a fit and flexible body in dance. During my classes I first needed to learn the basics of Salsa and Bachata, but after I had reached an advanced level I became more relaxed in my dancing. It was like my mind was no longer occupied with the thinking about the steps but was more feeling and enjoying the different movements and the spins and turns*³⁵.

For me dancing became an activity whereby the sensation of moving was transcending over the thinking. The awareness of the body and the full ascending of movement makes that the body is more experiencing. Constantly I was making a reflection upon the movements I made, if I thought I did it well and thereby how I was feeling about the actual movement. Also my movements were reflected by others and especially by my dance teacher who would tell me if I did it right or wrong. Therefore within dances there is a certain framework for the movements, some basic steps. Yet According to my own experiences I could at a personal touch or my own movements, and the ones I liked I would perform over and over again.

It is like the *kinaesthetic experience* (Samudra 2008) I got into dance and moving and only reflected upon my movements after the sensation of the movement. Although there are basic steps it still requires personal experience, which are up front. So in dance doing is before the thinking about the movement. New steps are created by doing and after thinking it through, so steps are created by a kinaesthetic experience. Since the experiences are personal

³⁴ Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

³⁵ Private dance class in Salsa at Bakanos dance Studio, although the warming-up sessions happened every time I had a dance class there

this will mean that everyone has steps of his own, creating a personal style. This style and movements are a reflection of personal preferences, hence an embodied identity.

Not only is the dance different for the use of the bodies, it is also different for the sentiments the dancer experiences. According to their mood they perform different movements or choose different types of music to reflect what they feel. According to my informants emotions are required while dancing, because: *“Without emotions the dance would be empty then it would be just steps”*³⁶. Dancers put their heart and soul into the dance to give it meaning. By dancing dancers can loose of what makes them feel sad, *“when I dance I just feel better”*³⁷. In dance the body is the only tool that is used for communication, if there are certain emotions someone wants to express they will be performed upon the body. All of the dancers I have met even told me that they felt more liberated to express what they feel in dance and that there were also more options to express their emotions. The dancing scene is a different location outside of normal daily life. Therefore people become loose of the rules according to their bodies which are apparent in their regular daily lives. Dancers feel free to express what they feel in dance. When people become loose of the restricted social framework the experiencing body moves more to the front enabling kinaesthetic and somatic experiences.

40

Although dancing scene is different than the social scene in daily life, many dancers told me they carried their experiences of dance with them in their daily life. For one part because they can lose their daily tensions by dancing. But also because by dancing they developed the self further in a way that they started to change their movements in daily life too. Also they expressed more in daily life and felt more liberated to be who they really are, which is also worn on the body by the change of clothing styles.

So far I associated dance with an embodied identity of the self as an individual creation process. Yet in Afro Social Latin dances one is always dancing with a partner, for this matter it is impossible not to consider the other into the performance of dance. The creation and formation of a dance is always a result of two people dancing and experiencing together. *“In the case of dancing with a partner it is how you feel the music and dance with her, it is very*

³⁶ Interview with Cecilia at Kaffeto (13/3/2014).

³⁷ Interview with Eva at Salsa Rosa (27/3/2014).

dependent on the kind of connection the two of you have. With every girl I dance differently.”³⁸

Dance does not only embody one identity but two that are combined into one performance. Also how someone acts and performs is different for every different partner someone is with. The experiencing body is not only different for every different situation but is different for all the people around the body too. The embodied identity of dance is therefore an intersubjective identity; it is the conjunction of two different people and the development of one body in relation to another body. This intersubjectivity will be further discussed in our next chapter. But I do want to note that due to intersubjectivity all dancers told me they have opened up socially. By this they mean that they felt more comfortable to communicate with others and that they have become more open for social interaction with others.

An embodied dancing identity [Hilde]

It became clear for us that dancing is a different social setting with a different social framework than the social sphere which is valid in daily life. This can only be so if the dancing scene is (partly) placed outside of another social structure (Lindemann 1997 and Low 2003), thereby dancing is an activity which is not (often) performed in the social sphere of the daily life. For this matter not only the scene of dancing, but also the dancing itself stand apart from daily life. Due to this special position dance has its own social framework with different rules.

Yet we have noticed that the way the social space is used was different for all dancers. But by dancing for all dancers a more experiencing body seemed to be activated. This could only have happened if the body did not relate to daily prevailing social rules, since these had a strong grip on behaviour. By dance a space is created to express and experience, by this many dancers in both Guatemala and the Netherlands felt enabled to let go the troubles they experienced in daily life.

Thereby dancers felt more related to their bodies in dance than they felt they were their bodies in regular daily life. We think this is related to the attention and focus that dance puts upon the body. In dance the body is the only mechanism to express, also since dancers are more experiencing their bodies in dance, they transcend into their bodies more than they would do in daily life. They become more aware of their body and their body appearance, which affects the dancers bodies. Due to the awareness many dancers started to pay more attention to their bodies by changing their nutrition and by changing the way they dress.

³⁸ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

Since Afro Latin social dances are danced in couples an identity that is intersubjective is created. Behaviour is different for every different dance partner since people reckon the other. But aside from it, intersubjectivity creates social bodies. Many dancers told me they have become more open for contact with others after they started dancing. They opened up and found more ways to communicate with others.

Empirical chapter Intersubjectivity

[Yara]

It was mid-night and just when I finished dancing with a guy, Belle came smiling my way and said: “Woahh, I feel so good! I just had an amazing time with that guy” she said while pointing. “He dances so well. I just wanted to crawl into his body frame. If it wasn’t because of the heat I would have danced with him all night. I liked his tight frame so much. And the tension between us got really high! I think I would kiss him if he makes a move. This is why I love dancing, it just makes me feel really good about myself.”³⁹

This vignette illustrates how dancers can influence each other’s personal feelings. Belle would not have felt that good about herself on that specific evening, if she would not have had that pleasant feeling while dancing with that man. They created this feeling together. This reflects the intersubjective process which precedes ‘feeling’ and influences identity formation.

This is discussed in the perspective of the Netherlands and Guatemala in the next two paragraphs.

³⁹ Belle and Yara at a dance party (1/04/2014).

3. A touch of intersubjectivity

The process of intersubjectivity in Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands [Yara]

How a dancer embodies their identity is in relation to other dancers. In this paragraph is explained how this intersubjective process plays a key role in the way dancing Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands influences a dancer's gender and sexual identity.

"I am now more tolerant towards other people and able to let people get closer to me, not only physically but also mentally. Moreover, I am more open towards women after having lived in a technical men world. So dancing has made me more manly and social." This is what Jobby told me, when I asked him about his social experiences with dancing⁴⁰. Many dancers said they had become more self confident and open towards other people since they started to dance. I interpret this as the process of how one feels about one's self is intersubjectively produced and influenced. In other words, dance allows people to retrieve compassion via the sphere of feeling and emotion (Hanna 2010). Another male dancer said: *"Since I started dancing I now dare to challenge women more during dancing and daily life and to take initiative. Because of this I feel more manly and confident."*⁴¹ In these quotes, the intersubjective aspect of how these dancers feel about themselves, since they started dancing, is connected to their social gender connotations: they feel more masculine because they find it masculine to be able to interact with woman.

I encountered other examples of how a dancer's feeling of his gender identity is intersubjectively created, when asking which teacher a dancer preferred. Most male dancers told me that they would feel more masculine during the courses when they were either taught by a man, a dominant woman or a very feminine woman. Curley could explain exactly why he wanted either a male or a good looking female teacher: both teachers would make him want to perform as masculine as he can⁴². I interpreted Curley as seeing his masculinity something with which he can impress his teachers. Another male dancer, named Rockey said: *"Dancing with a pretty woman, makes me feel sexier than dancing with a good female dancer that is less pretty and feminine."*⁴³ I analysed this as an intersubjective process of enhancing one's gender identity (Bosse 2007): Rockey felt more masculine when dancing with a very feminine woman than dancing with a good dancer which was (in his eyes) less feminine. A female dancer, Bella, said to me: *"I had difficulty with my femininity when I started dancing, but because I feel that acting feminine is more acceptable and even appreciated in the Afro*

⁴⁰ Interview with Jobby at BrasaZouk (21/3/2014).

⁴¹ Interview with Rockey at BrasaZouk (24/3/2014).

⁴² Conversation with Curley at the Londen Zouk Congress (1/3/2014).

⁴³ Interview with Rockey at BrasaZouk (24/3/2014).

Latin dance scene, I now feel more in balance with exposing my femininity in daily life."⁴⁴

This quote reflects the intersubjective aspect of Bella's embodied gender identity: only if others [intersubjectivity] accept it, Bella feels good about embracing her femininity [gender].

Next to the intersubjective created feelings, based on gender connotations, about one self, sexuality is also formed by an intersubjectively process (Donnan and Magowan 2010 and Vance 1999). The theory of voyeurism explains this most adequately since this entails *looking* and *being looked at* (Donnan and Magowan 2010), which is only intersubjectively possible. This is why heterosexuality is intersubjective: it depends on the shared interpretation of the (cultural) embodiment of perceived sexuality (Donnan and Magowan 2010), which stands in relation to gendered societal connotations of masculinity and femininity. The intersubjectivity of one's sexual identity intrinsically influences the heteronormative system of social dancing: the fact that others perceive a woman as a lesbian, because she has a 'masculine' appearance, creates the thought of possible difficulty. But women who are not perceived as lesbians, who also learn how to lead or lead during courses because there are not enough men, still seem to follow the normative system.

Dancers become aware of the role of their sexual identity in dancing when experiencing feelings towards their dance partner when they are directly interacting with them and being observed by others surrounding them. Since the fact that you are dancing with the opposite sex, suggests heteronormativity, and the thought of the slightest possibility that you or your dance partner wants to do more than just dancing together, can create a tension. The female dancers Bella, Tyl and Ryda told me that this possibility can sometimes feel as a threat while trying to dance. They gave me several reasons: (1) sometimes this will make you more cautious about dancing in such a way that you can arouse (sexual) feelings in your dance partner or yourself, than, if these feelings occur but unintentionally there is (2) a confrontation since you have to reject your partner or he can reject you based on intended excitement and not on dance skills or (3) there is the possibility that you both want to act on these feelings, but then there is always the possibility (4) that you or your dance partner misinterpreted the exposed feelings and a rejection still follows. All these things can make a dancer feel that she, and also male dancers had this experience, is prohibited in the way she would like to move. Fara told me she is very conscious of the misguided intentions one can make while dancing. She said to me: "*I try to express no sexual intensions when I go dancing. I dress myself with*

⁴⁴ Conversation with Bella via social media (12/3/2014).

sexy but covering clothes and never dance close in the first ten seconds of the dance . If a man does this, I use the 'famous thump', and push him a little bit away from me. I just want to dance, this can be sensual dancing, but I never want more than just dancing."⁴⁵ Another female dancer told me that: *"The dances are intimate: you are standing close, the music is sensual, but I dance for dancing not to feel intimacy. When I dance, I feel free and I am able to leave everything and enjoy the moment, while I forget the world around me. The sensuality is what makes the dance beautiful. If there is a sensual connection, I like to dance close to a man, but if I get the intention he wants more than just dancing, I try to make apparent that I don't want that and he has to respect that.*"⁴⁶ All these aspects are why, some dancers told me, they rather see dancing as just dancing without the confusion of sexual connotations.

There were others who said that the sexual connotations are what make dancing more exciting. Lila, Belle and Loena admitted that with the right dance partner, dancing can feel better than having sex. At the dance congress in Prague Loena came to me and said: *"I think I just had an orgasm! This man was sooo good, I have to dance with him again. I think I even want to have sex with him.*"⁴⁷ This reaction of Loena is an example of how dance embodies notions of desire based on intersubjectively created feelings. Having sex that feels good is among many things based on a connection between your body and your partner's. This is the same in dance: when two dancers feel a connection this is a bodily connection. The body is intrinsically connected to dance and to sex. According to Hanna (1987) sexuality is always present in movement. But most dancers I spoke with would rather not admit this, just as Nelly: *"I do not make a connection between dance and sex, but I do know that dancers are better in bed by experience.*"⁴⁸

Donnan and Magowan (2010), Bosse (2008) and Hanna (2010) say that social dances are dances through which dancers can try to sexualize themselves. During my research I thought this was what every dancer was doing, but I was wrong. Some dancers explained to me that there is a specific difference between dancing sensual or sexual. Rockey said that *"sensuality is dancing with each other based on feeling. You have a connection with your partner and become one with her. You became one with the music, one another and yourself. Intimacy is dancing close with feeling not only physically. I feel a good connection, when I*

⁴⁵ Interview with Fara at her home (14/3/2014).

⁴⁶ Interview Ryda at BrasaZouk (14/3/2014).

⁴⁷ Conversation with Loena at the Zouk congress in Prague (29/3/2014).

⁴⁸ Interview with Nelly at BrasaZouk (17/3/2014).

can feel that the woman lets me lead and surrenders to me."⁴⁹ Classy explained: *"I can dance sensual, but that is different from sexual. Dancing sensual means showing your femininity, dancing sexual means that you want more than just dancing. And that is something I really do not do."*⁵⁰ In analysed that dancers see sensuality as a performance of gender while sexuality is a bodily intersubjectivity (Donnan and Magowan 2010), as in, a performance of physical intension. Classy also told me that there are dancers who dance sexual on purpose since the thought of finding a love partner in the dance scene, appeals them. Curley, Nelly, Til, Tyl and Fara shared her opinion. They all experienced that many people start dancing Afro Latin social dances to find a sexual or love partner, which they found logical since a lot of people say these dances seem to be 'mating dances' because of the intimate contact and the sensual movements. But the moral idea at BrasaZouk is that you dance to dance, not to find a partner. As Nelly explains: *"Some dudes are just monkeys, who want more than just dancing. But I don't. For me dancing is just dancing. There are possibilities for intentions, but that is no reason for me to go dancing. I dance for myself, but I can understand if people dance for a sexual reason. I always make my intentions clear: I come to dance and have fun."*⁵¹

To conclude, the intersubjective process is not only present at the level of sexuality but at all levels of shared feelings. During my research, most dancers defined their feelings of their selves based on what they share with their dance partners. The term 'intimacy' was mentioned many times and was used to refer to this intersubjective connection. According to most dancers, intimacy is all about feeling and contact. It is the physical contact as well as the feeling of affection, attraction, security, surrendering but also lust and love. It is a combination of these things and for some dancers the one category plays a bigger role than the other. This feeling of intimacy depends on a harmony based on length, personality, smell, hair, appearance, charm and other individual traits. The dancing body is a symbolic expression that may embody many notions of romance, desire and sexual climax (Hanna 2010), which are all forms of intimacy.

In the Netherlands I thus experienced that a dancer's gendered embodied identity is intersubjectively produced and connected to a dancer's sexual identity. This is an intersubjective process since the (gendered) bodily posture, appearance and movements of a dancer interacts with that of other dancers. This influences a dancer's feeling about oneself

⁴⁹ Interview with Rockey at BrasaZouk (24/3/2014).

⁵⁰ Interview with Classy at BrasaZouk (17/3/2014).

⁵¹ Interview with Nelly at BrasaZouk (17/3/2014).

while also creating feelings towards a dance partner. Depending on the sensuality of the movements, these feelings embody forms of intimacy, which can interact with one's sexual identity.

The process of intersubjectivity in Afro Latin social dances in Guatemala [Hilde]

*“All foreigners have this image about Latinos and therefore also about Guatemalans that we are all very sensual and that we are all born dancers.”*⁵² I must admit that before entering Guatemala I had a vision about very passionate Latinos and also I expected that most of them danced. I would soon discover that sensuality knows a certain controversy in Guatemala, along with this finding I quickly found out that the dancing scene was there in quite extent, but there were also many Guatemalans who are not involved in Afro Social Latin Dances.

*“I don't dance Bachata, because of the physical contact for me it is too sensual.”*⁵³ In Guatemala sensuality is more on the background, close physical contact is not so accepted. According to the gender norms, little sensuality is performed during daily life. Yet on the dance floor close physical contact between the two different sexes is present and even obliging. However, less intimate forms of dance with less physical contact, like Salsa, are more popular than the more intimate forms of dancing such as Bachata. Especially women seem to have more problems with more intimate forms of dance. So this is one explanation that invalidates the sensual image of Latinos. Nowadays the dances are more common in Guatemala and danced on more occasions, but it is not a traditional Guatemalan dance type.

The first sensual association has to do with the (close) physical contact between men and women, which is required for every form of Afro Latin social dances. Notwithstanding the two different bodies and individuals who are involved in Afro Social Latin Dance, all dances are performed together and movements are well coordinated. *“We dance together, as if it looks like only one person is moving.”*⁵⁴ To move as one a certain connection between the two dance partners is required. It is about the performance you have together and the experience together which is so close that you feel as one. Therefore dance partners have to feel the sentiment and rhythm of the music together. They need to feel the same in a song in order to feel the same so that they can perform the same sentiment and move as one. *“In the case of*

⁵² Just after the interview I have held with her, just before the dance class started Susana said this and after she rhetorically asked me and another dance student for a confirmation (19/3/2014).

⁵³ Interview with Eva at Salsa Rosa (27/3/2014).

⁵⁴ Interview with Ivan at &café (9/04/2014).

*dancing with a partner it is how you feel the music and dance with her, it is very dependent on the kind of connection the two of you have.*⁵⁵

Although the connection between two dance partners is required and even necessary in order to dance together. The connection between the two is mostly described as a relation of very good friendship. “The most important thing to me is that you can relate to your partner”⁵⁶. Thereby my informants told me that the connection between ones dance partner is more based on a certain sympathy and respect for the partner. They need to trust each other in the guidance, and also in order that they know the movements are just a performance in dance and are not addressed to the partner as a real flirtation. In dance the sensuality or chemical that is shown of is not regarded as real but more as a creation. But everything is dependent on the personality of the dancers, because if you don’t like the personality of your partner it is impossible to create “*chemical*”.⁵⁷ The two need to be comfortable around each other so that they can move in a liberated way. “*It is just some sympathy for each other in the dance. When I do not like someone or don’t feel comfortable, there are sometimes that I don’t like to dance with someone.*”⁵⁸ “*It is like a real good friendship. Well if it is someone I don’t like, it is better not to dance with each other.*”⁵⁹

Albeit the connection between the two different dance partners is described as a feeling of good friendship, the elements that appear in these dances create a strained sexual setting. At first the strong hetero normative in the society and dance in relation to the physical contact in dance is creating a tension. Where in daily life it is not appropriate to have close physical contact with the other sex, it is appropriate in dance. Dance is located in a different setting which is related to a special social practice: dance. For this matter people feel more liberated in a way that behaviour that would not be appropriate regularly is now approved. “*The dance is just more sensual. Dance is directly a more sexual environment.*”⁶⁰ Because the connection on the dance floor is strong and the dance movements are close and even sensual, it is easy for the dancers that there might be more to the connection than just the dance floor. Especially since the sensation dancers feel on the dance floor cannot be found anywhere else.

For another part the thought that there can be more to the connection than just being good dance partners, is not that strange if you regard the fact that many people express more

⁵⁵ Interview with Ivan at &café (9/04/2014).

⁵⁶ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

⁵⁷ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

⁵⁸ Interview with Eva at Salsa Rosa (27/3/2014).

⁵⁹ Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

⁶⁰ Interview with Raúl at Salsa Rosa (20/3/2014).

while dancing than the amount of the self they will show in daily life. *“You can get to know someone very well by dance, and then the person becomes very interesting and a connection is created.”*⁶¹ Someone who does not look that special at first sight can become more interesting by dancing, all part of identity seem to unfold themselves on the dance floor as explained in the chapter regarding embodied identity.

Thereby there is a certain sensuality or even sexuality which can be performed in dance. Especially women feel more aware of their sensuality and sexuality on the dance floor. *“When I am walking, I am not trying to be sexy or to move sexy, which I would do in dance.”*⁶² *“Oh I think dance makes me more sensual. In dance you move your hips more and make arm movements, which I wouldn’t make just walking down the street.”*⁶³ The way they moved in dance they would describe even as inappropriate in daily life.

Except for the shines which are regarded as sexy the sensuality in dance is derived by different aspects. The kind of dances are inspired by a certain type of music, the rhythm is rousing and the lyrics tell a story. My informants told me that the music was their guidance through the whole dance, if the music is intimate or sensual then the whole dance should be performed very sensual. The music sets the setting for dance in a certain way. *“When you dance it is like you have two actors, the song tells a story and it is up to the dancers how this is told and reflected.”*⁶⁴

The sensual aspects of the Afro Latin social dances in combination with the heteronormativity, evoke sexual tensions. With a close physical connection, a mental connection and a sensuous setting it can lead to sexual thinking.

An intersubjectively formed dancing identity [Yara]

In this chapter we discussed the intersubjective process, which takes place between dancers, as an important aspect of how dancing influences a dancer’s identity. We can conclude that in both Guatemala and the Netherlands this process effects the feelings dancers have about themselves, regarding their gender and sexual identity. In other words, a dancer’s embodied identity is influenced by the relational aspect between dancers.

Dancers connect via de sphere of feeling while experiencing compassion towards each other (Hanna 2010). These feelings stand in relation to the shared interpretation of socio-cultural connotations and values (Donnan and Magowan 2010). The feeling of being intimate

⁶¹ Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

⁶² Interview with Susana at Salsa Rosa (19/3/2014).

⁶³ Interview with Cecilia at Kaffeto (13/3/2014).

⁶⁴ Interview with Ernesto at &Café (8/3/2014).

while dancing is inevitably intersubjectively created, since dancers sexualize themselves through social dances (Bosse 2008). In the Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands this is seen as an accepted part of the dances. Some even name this as a reason to start dancing. While in Guatemala the level of intimacy can be a reason not to dance certain Afro Latin social dances. This is probably connected to the socio-cultural values and morals of each field site, which is reflected in the social order of the dance scene. The dances have sensual movements, which can create sexual tensions, but both Dutch and Guatemalan dancers explicitly told us that dancing should be just dancing and finding a love partner should happen outside the dance floor.

All dancers spoke about being one while dancing together to the music and connecting with each other by movement and feeling good about themselves as a result. The relational and social aspect of Afro Latin social dancing is inevitable. This shows the intrinsic character of the intersubjective process in which embodying Afro Latin social dances influences the development of the gender and sexual identity of dancers.

Discussion [Yara]

In this thesis we have discussed how the gender and sexual identity of dancers of Afro Latin social dances in the Netherlands and Guatemala is influenced by the intersubjective process in which dancers embody their identity while dancing. First we explained that both Guatemalan and Dutch dancers were aware of how dancing influenced their gender identity while dancing and in daily life. Secondly, we discussed how dancers experience their bodies while dancing. How they embody their identity, such as their gender and how they experience embodied feelings while dancing. We conclude that a dancer's gender and sexual identity as well as their feelings of self are influenced by an intersubjective process between dancers, while embodying Afro Latin social dances.

We encountered some differences regarding the theoretical framework of Giddens (1991), who argues that self-agency is how people stand up for their distinct differences and therefore their different identities. We on the other hand observed and analysed at both field sites that, although dancers used their agency to embody their identity in a way they individually find pleasant, it was always in the analogous grid of the group. Feeling one with others influences one's agency.

By participating we noticed that dancers create an awareness of their own bodies as well as the body of their dance partners when dancing. At the same time they embody their identity (Csordas 1993). Hall (1996) discusses the fluidity of the process of creation and recreation of identity formation. From our observations, we argue that the process of identity embodied by dancers and influenced by Afro Latin social dance, might be most fluid in life. A dancer's embodied identity can become one with movement (Nash 2000), and the movements have a strong connection to a dancer's sense of self (Geurts 2002). Moreover dancers can embody many different identities while dancing (Rapport 2010). The connection between dance and the body is most important in the fluidity of a dance identity.

Dancers communicate with their bodies. We invigorate Budgeon's (2003) claim that the body as a medium of communication, attaches people to a certain social group. Within the view of Afro Latin social dances, a dance couple can be a social group. When two dancers connect physically and intimately, they get attached to each other. At both field sites, dancers who experienced a pleasant feeling while dancing with someone, would always dance as much or as long with that person as he or she would allow it. A key aspect is the intersubjective process at the level of shared feelings (Aalten 1997).

As final, we reckon that the fact that we are female researchers might have influenced how informants behaved around us. Would we have been men, we might have gotten different data. On the other hand, being women allowed us to discuss, within the socio-cultural frame, certain sensitive topics during conversations and interviews with both female as male dancers.

Moreover, even though we used the normative Western frame of two genders, we are aware of other 'non-normative' possibilities such as the gender *queer* (Nagel 2003). Furthermore, we worked with the assumption that sexuality and sexual identity are in a strong relation to an individual's sexual behaviour. But this is not a cultural universal or changeless notion: every society has standards for moral sexual behaviour framed in a sexual hegemony and imposed by those defined as sexually deviant (Nagel 2003). That said, a more comprehensive understanding can be possible in future research into the influence of Afro Latin social dances on a dancer's identity, if other possibilities of a gender identity are taken into account and the cultural view of a sexual identity is more explicitly contextually discussed.

Hilde dancing Bachata at Bakanos with Juan (14/4/2014), he gave his permission for using this photo:



Yara dancing Kizomba with Rocky at BrasaZouk (13/3/2014), he gave his permission for using this screenshot:



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Appendix

A. Research summaries [Hilde&Yara]

I. [RESUMEN EN ESPANOL \[HILDE\]](#)

Los bailes sociales Afro Latinos bailaban por muchos años en todo el mundo. A pesar de esta información no mucho estudio había realizado para este sujeto, especialmente en antropología muy poca atención esta daba a baile. En antropología el incorporado de la identidad no es un sujeto importante tampoco. Ya que en baile el cuerpo, que es central, es el único instrumento de expresar, estas partes de identidades son incorporado y visible en el cuerpo. La identidad incorporado es visible en las maneras de vestido, pero más en las maneras de comportamiento y movimientos. Por eso nosotros elegimos nuestro sujeto de bailes sociales Afro Latinos.

Debido a la extensión del sujeto de la identidad, el énfasis de esta tesis es dirigido en las partes de género cultural y la sexualidad. Baile es un escenario muy adecuado por estas partes de la identidad. Los bailes sociales Afro Latino son bailes que se bailan en parejas, hombre con mujer. Por eso estos bailes son heteronormativos, y por los elementos sensual se contienen se crean una tensión sexual en la pista de baile. Las identidades de género cultural y la sexualidad están relacionados y son establecidos conjuntos.

También por la literatura se dicen hay espacios y actividades que no están relacionados con las reglas sociales que valen en la vida regular. Por eso es posible de moverse a través de las fronteras de identidad. En baile se tienen otras normas y reglas, y este espacio por la propiedad de los bailarines.

La identidad de una persona si es dependiente de otras personas, por tanto identidades son creaciones intersubjetivas. Este proceso de formación de la identidad es visible en baile especial, ya que estos bailes son bailes en parejas.

La pregunta principal de este estudio es la causa de un estudio de literatura. Cómo afecta la incorporación de los bailes sociales Afro Latinos la identidad de género cultural y la identidad sexual de los bailarines en Países Bajos y en Guatemala? Esta pregunta es central en nuestra tesis. Formulamos la respuesta en base a tres preguntas, cada una da atención a un aspecto de la pregunta principal. Cómo se sienten los bailarines sobre su género cultural en baile? Es nuestra primera pregunta. Después damos atención al incorporado de la identidad con la pregunta: Cómo experimentan los bailarines su cuerpo durante bailar? Y finalmente damos

atención a la identidad sexual: Cómo se sienten los bailarines su identidad sexual cuando bailando con un pareja?

Sobre los bailes sociales Afro Latinos contamos Salsa, Bachata, Zouk y Kizomba. Todos son bailes en parejas de mujer y hombre, y reúnen personas por eso son bailes sociales. Se bailan muy cerca y estos bailes contiene elementos de sensualidad. El origen de estos bailes estan en la cultura de africana y latino, por eso el nombre de bailes sociales Afro Latinos.

Este estudio es el resultado de un período de tres meses, de febrero a abril, en dos sitios diferentes: Amsterdam, Países Bajos y Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Durante este período investigaba la identidad incorporado de género cultural y sexualidad en los bailes sociales Afro Latinos, Salsa y Bachata en particular. Usé diferentes métodos, observación participante en particular. Entré mi campo de estudio para enscribirme por clases de baile, y para participaba en noches de bailar en la Parranda y el Carribean. Participaba en diferentes clases de Bachata y Salsa en estudios de baile: Bakanos, Salsa Rosa y Escenic. También pasaba el rato en estas locaciones y hablaba con los bailarines allí. Encontré muchos bailarines que estaba mis informadores y amigos, los maestros de baile formaban mis informantes principales, me dieron mucha información. Para obtener más información llevé a cabo entrevistas con los maestros y otros bailarines.

La información y los detalles escribí en mi cuaderno, directamente después elaboré estas notas en mi computadora, para no perder información importante y por lo mas detalles. Para recordar actividades especiales escribí viñetas de estas situaciones. Escribí mis primeras notas en público y dije todas yo estaba allí para mi estudio.

Los resultados de este estudio presentamos anónimo, elegimos por razones éticas. No queremos molestar relaciones de maestros y estudiantes. También partes de l'información son un poco privado ó íntimo.

Llega a la conclusión la identidad de género cultural y sexual estan importante para bailar los bailes sociales afro latinos bien. Necesitan dos papperes diferentes un guía: hombres, y un papel siguiente: mujeres. La identidad de género cultural es más visible y más incorporado en baile que en la vida regular. Un parte por los papperes social que estan relacionado a las reglas y normas de un grupo social. Por otro lado porque el sitio de baile esta localizado afuera de la vida regular; por eso otras maneras, reglas y normas son aplicable en baile.

También porque el sitio de baile esta localizado afuera de la vida regular esta posible usa su cuerpo diferente. Lo más de informantes me dijeron se sienten más libertad sobre su cuerpo en baile de en la vida normalmente. Además porque en baile el cuerpo es el único manera para expressarse, se usan más expresiones y mas movimientos por transmitir su sentimientos y el mensaje de baile.

El incorporado de la identidad sexual es un resultado de los dos: el incorporado de la identidad y la manifestación del género cultural. También la manifestación de la identidad con otra persona y el sentimiento sobre otra persona es importante cuando elaborar una identidad sexual. La identidad sexual es un resultado de dos personas, y por eso es un proceso intersubjetiva.

En bailes sociales Afro Latinos estos partes de la identidad son más fuerte y más a la superficie. La identidad en baile es un resultado de diferentes reglas sociales y la relación con otras personas. Bailerenis porten estos sentimientos de su identidad también en la vida regular, se cambian un poco y crean identidades mas fuertes. Especial mujeres sienten mas femenina y sensual despues comenzaban de baile.

No hay mucho diferenció entre Guatemala y Países Bajos, pero las oportunidades para expresarse son más limitado en Guatemala que en Países Bajos.

II. SAMENVATTING IN HET NEDERLANDS [YARA]

In de periode van drie februari tot en met elf april heb ik samen met mijn partner onderzoek gedaan naar de vorming van de gender en seksuele identiteit van dansers. Mijn partner heeft haar onderzoek uitgevoerd in Guatemala en ik op de dansschool BrasaZouk in Nederland. Wij hebben voornamelijk voor deze twee veldwerk locaties gekozen omdat er het stereotype beeld is dat Latijns-Amerikanen met gevoel voor dansritme worden geboren, terwijl Nederlanders geen associatie met dans zouden hebben. Wij hadden de aanname dat er veel verschillen zouden zitten tussen de ervaringen van de dansers in Guatemala in vergelijking met die in Nederland. De vraag die wij met ons onderzoek willen beantwoorden luidt als volgt: Op welke wijze beïnvloed het belichamen van *Afro Latin social dances* dansers in de vorming van hun gender en seksuele identiteit? Wij hebben deze vraag opgesplitst tot de volgende vragen: (1) Hoe voelen dansen zich met betrekking tot hun gender identiteit?, (2) Hoe ervaren dansers het belichamen van hun identiteit tijdens het dansen? En (3) Welke processen spelen hierin een rol?

Door middel van gesprekken, interviews, observatie en participatie hebben wij informatie verzameld over de wijze waarop het dansen van Zouk, Salsa, Bachata of Kizomba invloed kan hebben op de vorming van de identiteit van de dansers. De methoden vormen een basis in de culturele antropologie en lenen zich voor het verzamelen van etnografische data, als in, informatie dat geheel gekoppeld of teruggekoppeld is aan de persoonlijke ervaring van de dansers. Wij wilden begrijpen hoe de dansers zelf ervaren op welke wijze het dansen invloed heeft op hun gevoel over hun mannelijkheid of vrouwelijkheid. En hoe de dansers dit tijdens het dansen en het dagelijks leven uiten. Daarnaast hebben wij de dansers gevraagd naar hun ervaring met de intimiteit en sensualiteit van deze Afro Latin social dances, om zo meer inzicht te krijgen in de vorming van de seksuele identiteit van de dansers. We kwamen erachter dat er diverse processen en sociale constructies zijn die een belangrijke rol spelen in de wijze waarop het dansen invloed uitoefent op de dansers en het gevoel dat zij hebben over zichzelf, aldus hun identiteitsgevoel.

Allereerst hebben wij de connotaties betreffende mannelijkheid en vrouwelijkheid in de *social dancing scene* in beide veldwerk locaties bloot gelegd. In beide situaties hebben de dansers te maken met een gender geladen divisie binnen de structuur van het dansen. Mannen horen de leidende rol te nemen en vrouwen de volgende rol. Verder hebben beide rollen specifieke stylingelementen, maar na nadruk ligt op de *ladystyling*. Vrouwen leren hoe zij vrouwelijk

kunnen dansen. Naast deze elementen zijn er ook connotaties verbonden aan de twee aparte dansrollen. Zo horen mannen strikt te leiden, niet te twijfelen, hun vrouwelijke dans partner er mooi uit te laten zien en haar goed te laten doen voelen. Vrouwen horen zacht en sensueel te dansen, er verzorgd uit te zien en niet teveel na te denken om zo hun mannelijke danspartner zo goed mogelijk te kunnen volgen. In Guatemala waren de mannelijke dansers ervan overtuigd dat hun mannelijkheid niet meer of minder aanwezig was in het dansen dan in het dagelijks leven. In Nederland gaven de mannelijke dansers aan dat, hoewel zij zich al wel mannelijk voelden in het dagelijks leven, zij het gevoel hadden dat dansen hun dichter bij hun mannelijke zelf bracht. Zowel Guatemalteekse als Nederlandse vrouwelijke danseres vertelden dat zij zich tijdens het dansen vrouwelijker voelden en ook in het dagelijks leven daardoor meer bezig waren met hun vrouwelijke zelf. Het uiten van je mannelijke of vrouwelijke zelf, noemen wij de belichaming van de gender identiteit van de dansers.

Het tweede aspect waar wij naar hebben gekeken, had te maken met de wijze waarop de dansers deze sociale rollen en de connotaties daarbij, belichaamden in het dansen. Omdat dans een activiteit is waarin het lichaam een belangrijke rol speelt, hebben wij ook de nadruk gelegd op hoe de dansers hun lichaam ervaarden tijdens het dansen en wat dat eventueel met hen deed in het dagelijks leven. De meeste dansers in beide veldwerk locaties gaven aan dat door te dansen zij ook bewuster bezig waren met hun gezondheid en uiterlijk. Daarnaast legden veel vrouwelijke dansers uit dat, doordat zij gewend raakten aan het uiten van hun vrouwelijkheid tijdens het dansen, zij dit ook in het dagelijks leven meer nadruk gaven door zich onder andere vrouwelijker te kleden.

De gender dichotomie binnen de Afro Latin social dance scene reflecteert ook de heteronormativiteit, als in, de norm dat een danskoppel bestaat uit een heteroseksuele man en vrouw. Wij observeerden dat het niet normaal was als twee vrouwen of twee mannen samen een danskoppel vormden, hoewel vrouwelijke docenten vaak ook de leidende rol innamen uit noodzaak, omdat er te weinig mannen aanwezig waren, of uit leergierigheid. Dit was in beide locaties het geval.

Tegelijkertijd kwamen wij tot de ontdekking dat de processen die een belangrijke rol spelen in hoe een danser de belichaming van zijn gender en seksuele identiteit tijdens het dansen ervaart, relationeel is. Het is met andere woorden geen individueel proces maar iets wat plaatsvindt tussen personen. Dit beantwoordt het derde aspect van ons onderzoek. Het wel of niet goed voelen bij het uiten van je gender of seksuele identiteit gaat gepaard met de validatie die je krijgt van anderen. Zo gaven vrouwelijke dansers aan dat zij zich goed voelden wanneer

anderen bijvoorbeeld opmerkte dat zij sensueel aan het dansen waren of wanneer hun mannelijke danspartner hun mooi en vrouwelijk deed voelen tijdens het dansen. Mannelijke dansers vertelden dat zij zich goed voelden wanneer zij positieve feedback kregen van vrouwelijke danspartners over hun leiding tijdens het dansen. Wij analyseerden dat het vervolgen van de wijze waarop een danser zijn mannelijkheid of vrouwelijkheid had belichaamd, eerder herhaald werd wanneer anderen aangaven het te accepteren of goed te keuren.

Uiteindelijk hebben wij maar weinig verschil ondervonden in de ervaringen van de dansers in Guatemala en Nederland. En na het geheel aan informatie met elkaar te hebben vergeleken, concluderen wij dat zowel Guatemalteekse als Nederlandse dansers meer bewust bezig zijn met hun gender en seksuele identiteit, sinds zij zijn begonnen met dansen. Het dansen van Afro Latin social dances heeft dus wel degelijk invloed op de wijze waarop dansers hun gender en seksuele identiteit uitten en dit is bij uitstek een intersubjectief proces.

