

RUEDA CASINO DANCING FOR HEALTH

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Master of Science in Mind and Body Medicine
by
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Abstract

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The practice of *rueda casino* (or *salsa casino*) has increased worldwide in the last four decades, and the physical, psychological, and psychosocial effects of this dance may improve the health and wellness of participants. There is limited literature defining *rueda casino* as a social dance and previous findings are from interventions with Latin dance practices. This qualitative description focused on the nature of *rueda casino* integrating perspectives of archival data from interviews with three experts and the researcher's observations on this partnered and group dance in Mexico City. The findings present *rueda casino* as a form of dance that has a beneficial impact on the participant's body, self-confidence, cross-gender identity, social integration, and social being, and it opens up possibilities for further research to consider *rueda casino* as part of an integrative approach to wellness.

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Introduction to the Study

Over the past five years, I have discovered many beneficial personal, psychological, and psychosocial changes that I have intuitively related to dancing *rueda casino*, originally a Cuban dance. Changes through dance are possible; this is supported by the definition of dance: moving the body in a rhythmic way, with the “purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy or simply taking delight in the movement itself” (Mackrell, 2013, para. 1). From my experience dancing in three different styles these past twenty years, I am aware that the experience of each style of dance is different and each has particular effects on the dancers. Rueda casino is a ballroom dance characterized by a fast-paced rhythm with couples dancing in a circle formation and constantly exchanging partners. Consequently, it is a unique group dance with particular effects to be explored.

Fundamentals of Rueda Casino

Rueda casino is a Cuban folkloric dance. *Casino* is the original Cuban dance genre and *rueda* refers to the circle formation of the dancers (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). Other popular names used to name rueda casino dance are *timba*, *casino*, *salsa cubana*, or *salsa casino*; nonetheless, existing literature and experts ascertain rueda casino as the appropriate name (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010; Martinez, 2012; see also Interviewee A).

Casino was a dance that responded to various musical genres in Cuba. Casino developed from the Cuban music and dance *son*. Originally, Cuban musicians only named the climax in the music with excessive polyrhythmic percussion *Timba*. The tempo for this part was faster and the singers improvised lyrics while the participants in the rueda casino danced more passionately (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). After the 1990s

music for casino was identified as timba because the term referred to the artistic creation of the fast-paced music (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). Even though the origins of music genres such as salsa cubana, son, and timba have a particular influence in the development of rueda casino dance, it is not within the scope of this thesis to explore such topics.

Contemporary casino dance has been enriched with steps and figures from other popular and folkloric genres in Cuba (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010) and steps from mambo, twist, and even rock and roll (Interviewees A and B). Balbuena Gutiérrez (2010) also mentioned it can reach high levels of complexity with double circles of rueda casino dancers. It is possible to have two or the same caller calling the figures for each circle to dance, and the participants in these two or more circles dancing in the same or opposed directions.

The origins of rueda casino as a ballroom dance lie in square dancing, known also as country dance. Square dancing was introduced in Cuba by Spanish colonizers, and later influenced by British invaders and French migrators. The main element taken from ballroom dance is the basic step, consisting of moving forwards or backwards, alternating the steps in four musical tempos. This element was also maintained in other dances such as: danzon and son. (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 13)

Furthermore, rueda casino is a dance influenced by African-derived communities in which “dance was an improvised escape from emotional stress and one way to restore the emotional and physical well-being of the individual and [the] community” (Cashion, 2013, para. 12).

Rueda casino or salsa casino has been related to New York salsa (Mackrell, 2013), partly, because casino dance started to be identified as a salsa dance during the international renaissance of salsa and Cuban son-salsa compositions (Balbuena Gutiérrez,

2010). However, rueda casino differs greatly because the choreography is improvised. The figures of movement in rueda casino generally move women counterclockwise and men in the opposite direction, switching partners within the circle formation. “The figures, in the past known as *pasillos* and currently named *vuelatas* or turns, are the different corporal and spatial designs partners make, either independently or within the circle formation” (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 69).

In the mid-1960s, the National School of Art in Cuba integrated Cuban ballroom dance including casino into the programs of specialization in Modern and Folkloric Dance (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). But music and dance in Cuba suffered a period of decadence due to sociopolitical reasons and it was not until mid-1980s that casino regained its place as one of Cubans’ favorite hobbies with the international renaissance of salsa (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). Even though rueda casino has not been integrated into international professional dance studies, it is based on fundamentals of dance such as rhythm, appreciation of music, coordination, as well as partner and group synchronization present in any program for the professional study of dance (see Interviewees A and B).

Casino, and its formation in a circle, was originally a recreational dance that people learned from imitation and friends in Cuba (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010); “It was born in the street” (Interviewee A). When I first saw people dancing rueda casino at a social venue, I found it unique compared to other styles of dance. I saw that the people dancing were enjoying the experience individually, as partners, and as a group. They even inspired a feeling of awe and interest from the people watching. These psychosocial effects of rueda casino remain largely unexplored and are described as part of this thesis.

Dance may be considered a form of physical exercise with positive psychological effects. Exercise has been related to an increase in levels of endorphins (Freeman, 2004), and it has been correlated with an augmented quantity of neurotransmitters in the brain such as serotonin, which is known to reduce depression (Strüder et al., 1997). Other associations have been made between exercise and the stimulation of vagal activity, which leads to a reduction of cortisol (Field, Diego, & Hernandez-Reif, 2007). Studies have demonstrated important benefits derived from exercise interventions for treating stress and depression. However, studies or a description of the perceived physical benefits of Latin dance, and in particular of group dancing such as rueda casino, is needed.

Dancing may produce a state of mind and body that is a different experience of the body than in other activities such as sitting at a computer, running, or cooking. And it may also change the participant's perception of time and space.

While each of the movements might be read off as standing for something [a particular emotion], for the dancer creating the dance it is the dynamic patterning of movement, its subtleties and explosions, its range and rhythm, its power and intricacy that are foundational, not its referential value as such. (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 424)

Rueda casino is characterized by movements related to a unique rhythm and social interaction, which may even alter with the participants' perception of time and space. Analyzing the experience of rueda casino as part of this study may clarify in which ways the participant's perception and experience of the body is altered.

As confirmed from personal observation, partial improvisation when dancing rueda casino makes the dance feel unique and strengthens the bond within the group of dancers. Sheets-Johnstone (2011) mentioned:

A dance improvisation is unique in the sense that no score is being fulfilled, no performance is being reproduced. The dancers who are improvising understand this uniqueness in the very manner in which they approach the dance. They have agreed to follow the rules, as it were, of a dance improvisation, rules that might very generally be summed up as: dance the dance as it comes into being at this particular moment at this particular place. (p. 420)

Partners in rueda casino have more space within their embrace, as this permits more freedom of movement, especially important for improvisation (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). This study describes how rueda casino involves improvisation and how improvisation alters the experience of such a dance.

As opposed to the 1960s or 1980s, women today improvise more and have learned to dance the male role in rueda casino (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010). Nonetheless, from personal observation and as Balbuena Gutiérrez (2010) reported, it is still men who direct the figures in rueda casino and lead the women when dancing as female-male partners. Through my experience of rueda casino, I understood the importance of trusting the leadership of a male partner and the psychological support provided by the group. The dynamics in this form of dancing made me realize the psychosocial changes I experienced, mainly (but not necessarily limited to) cross-gender interaction, reevaluation of socioeconomic prejudices, and even increased multicultural appreciation. Since the practice of rueda casino, as in other Latin dances, is dependent on female-male interaction (Pinniger, Brown, Thorsteinsson, & McKinley, 2012), this thesis describes the experience of how the participants perceive their gendered identity.

“Salsa [as well as rueda casino] has broken the barriers of ethnicity and class” (Cashion, 2013, para. 12), and it has become a beat performed throughout the world (Pusnik & Sicherl, 2010). In particular, groups practicing rueda casino, just like salsa dancers (Cashion, 2013), constantly change and create new steps that give unique identity

to the group of dancers. This experience of identity within this form of dance could drive the participants to socialize and find significance within a community. Consequently, further description of the social dynamics of rueda casino dancers is needed.

A folk dance has particular features that seem to affect the individual physically, mentally, and socially in a positive manner. As mentioned before, rueda casino is a folkloric dance and so could qualify as a folk dance.

The language of folk dance is universal because it is based on a basically non-verbal communication, and therefore able to overcome cultural and social status barriers. Folk dance may be practiced regardless of age, for the social purpose it requires no special technical skills or specific athletic training, overcoming many of the difficulties of integration between individuals due to age, physical or mental differences. Folk dance appears as a sporting and mental stress-free activity, which can be formalized mathematically as a cooperative game, in which the utility of cooperation is far greater than the sum of the utilities of physical or mental activities that can be carried out by individuals or small groups. The lack of competitive athletic purposes leads to socialization and improves the individual's relationship with the outside world. Dancing together leads to the creation of a supportive community that recognizes itself in the ritual and celebrates its membership through the sharing of encoded repertoire of steps, movements, musical themes and conventions assembled in creative ways (Forcini, Maturo, & Ventre, 2012, p. 1751)

Background on Theoretical Approach

A variety of approaches have been taken in published research studies to understand different styles of dance and their benefits for health and wellness. These studies used mixed quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Domene, Moir, Pummell & Easton, 2014; Granacher et al., 2012; Kreutz, 2008; Pinniger et al., 2012; Pusnik & Sicherl, 2010), quantitative collection of data, and integration of qualitative data such as surveys, diaries, and observations from participants or teachers (Birks, 2007; Soriano & Batson, 2011). Given the findings of these studies concerning the benefits of dance for health and wellness, it seems possible that rueda casino might also provide these benefits,

but there is limited literature available to support this. There is a need to describe and understand the experience of rueda casino dance and for this a qualitative approach with description is preferred.

Movement and perception are interwoven, and when people are dancing together, the exploration of the dynamic world is entwined with its creation (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011). The approach to describe rueda casino should then integrate the facts taken from experience, observations, and literature related to the topic, while keeping the dynamism of dance and experiential perceptions throughout the research. Qualitative description “is a complete and valued end-product in itself” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 335). As Sandelowski (2000) mentioned, this methodology does not use conceptual parameters that may render the researcher too close or too far from the experience. With qualitative description, it is possible to describe the same event focusing on discovering the basic nature of rueda casino integrating perspectives of more than one participant, “[including the researcher’s] observations, and the examination of documents” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338).

The final output of the research is a qualitative description to set the foundations for further study of rueda casino. The review of the literature identifies the physical and psychological observations of Latin dances and similarly partnered or group dances on participants. The study includes personal experience dancing rueda casino and three archive interviews with experts on rueda casino in Mexico.

Purpose of the Study

Rueda casino dancing is a growing dance practice that remains largely unexamined. Salsa has become a very attractive form of dance worldwide. Even the word

salsa has a positive connotation worldwide (Interviewee A). Further research is needed to describe and understand the fundamentals of rueda casino and to document the experience. The comparison with other similar dance styles that may have demonstrated beneficial outcomes for the mind, the body, the individual, and the community strengthen the description of the experience of rueda casino. It is hoped that this research demonstrates that the practice of rueda casino may be of value as part of an integrative approach to wellness.

The objective of this qualitative research is to describe the physical, psychosocial, and psychological characteristics of rueda casino dancing. The hypothesis of this research study is: Rueda casino is a form of dance that benefits the participant's body, mind, emotional, and social being.

Research Questions

What is the experience of rueda casino? What are the observed physical changes that characterize the experience of rueda casino? What are the psychological and psychosocial changes experienced through rueda casino dance? Identifying physical, psychological, and psychosocial changes experienced through rueda casino dance provides valuable information for understanding the implications of practicing this dance form.

Limitations

There is a gap in the literature for rueda casino dance. Previous studies done for Latin dances showed a number of weaknesses, and associations between gender, age, and psychological changes for social rueda casino dancing have not been demonstrated in detail. Emerenziani et al. (2012) reported associations between gender and physical

experience attributed to a rueda casino lesson. Domene et al. (2014) reported associations between gender, physical, and psychological experience associated with social partnered Latin dance. Additionally, in the major number of cases, studies involved mostly females (Granacher et al., 2012; Kreutz, 2008; Pinniger et al., 2012; Pusnik & Sicherl, 2010).

Most dance interventions have been done with individual (Birks, 2007; Pinniger et al., 2012) or partnered training (Doemene et al., 2014; Kreutz, 2008; Granacher et al., 2012; Soriano & Batson, 2011), and few studies investigated community dancing (Emerenziani et al., 2012). Additionally, a limited number of research studies reflected on the order, guidance, and structure of common Latin dance sessions, and did not mention rueda casino. Literature is limited to modern dance, authentic movement, or a particular dance structured specifically for therapeutic purposes. Therefore, this thesis aimed to set a common ground for the experience of rueda casino as a social dance, which may be used for further research.

Even though rueda casino may be similar to other folkloric dances in the world, it is not in the scope of this research to compare rueda casino with other folkloric group and partnered dances worldwide “because the cubanism is primarily a condition of gestures, attitudes, emotions, thoughts, and Cuban soul” (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 108). The strong influence of Afro-Caribbean dancing and local culture in Cuba make rueda casino a dance closer to Latin rhythms that have similar intertwining influences such as salsa en línea, mambo, or son (Renta, 2004).

This thesis hopefully obtained a deeper understanding of the physical, psychosocial, and psychological effects of rueda casino dancing. Addressing these gaps provides valuable information because there is very limited literature dedicated to rueda

casino. It is a cost-effective dance practice with increased expansion throughout the world in the last decade. This is an additional reason for augmenting literature and research on the topic. The observation of age, gender, ethnicity, or specific populations provides information regarding the effects of rueda casino on the participants.

The limitations for this thesis are various. In a qualitative description, “perceptions remain perceptions” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338), and this is a limitation of this methodology. The end result is to describe the data and the patterns in the data. One of the anticipated potential limitations of this study may have to do with researcher bias, specifically those observations that I have chosen and analyzed. Furthermore, the rueda casino teachers and dancers interviewed, even though they have been in international events, have mainly danced and taught in Mexico City. Their answers could have reflected a perspective limited to the communities and the regions in which they have interacted.

Review of the Literature

Physical Experience of Salsa Dancing

Research conducted thus far regarding Latin dance practice has demonstrated different physical responses based on age and gender. Emerenziani et al. (2012) conducted one of the few studies regarding rueda casino dance. Using a quasi-experimental design, these researchers studied the correlation between exercise intensity and gender differences for a typical salsa lesson, a rueda casino lesson, and salsa dancing at a night club. The sample was a group of 10 pairs of intermediate Caribbean dancers; however, the study did not describe how the dancers were recruited. The variables measured were heart rate, and volume of oxygen; and the variables evaluated for correlation between gender and type of dance were energy expenditure and energy cost. The findings denoted a higher maximum heart rate and energy expenditure for females dancing a rueda casino lesson and for males dancing typical salsa lesson. Males experienced higher exercise intensity in salsa dancing at a night club while females experienced it in rueda casino lesson. Even though Emerenziani et al. did not associate the findings to the actual physical demands required from the lesson in this study, these findings suggested that rueda casino creates particular physical or psychological conditions that are different for men and women.

Domene et al. (2014) conducted a study to measure “the physiological and perceptual responses to Latin partnered social dance to salsa music” (p. 33). The 18 nonprofessional Latin dancers attended two Latin, partnered dance sessions in salsa venues in London, England. To participate in the study the 11 women and seven men, aged 27 to 57 years, were required to have attended Latin social dance events for at least

two hours per week in the three preceding months and had to be novice to advanced level of Latin dance (self-reported). In the laboratory, the measurements were taken for maximal oxygen uptake for descriptive characterization of the dancers, and maximal heart rate to calculate exercise intensity during dance. Dancers used an accelerometer to measure body acceleration with a physical intensity higher than sedentary values and to define dancing time. They wore a chest wrap monitor for heart rate measurement during two hours of social dance.

In total, Domene et al. (2014) reported no observed differences between genders in step count, but reported that women expended significantly lower total energy (172 kcal) from dance. The study mentioned that the calculated energy expenditure of 4,91 to 7,35 kcal/kg/h were different from the Emerenziani et al. (2012) results because this study used the dance-specific calibration device (accelerometer). Women spent a greater amount of time (45 minutes) dancing with moderate intensity physical activity than men (37 minutes). No differences were found for maximal heart rate between genders or between sessions (121 heartbeats/minutes). This study was the first to report the average step count for Latin dance, which was between 114 and 131 steps/minutes. The findings of this study are relevant for dance practices with similar rhythms. The measurement methodology was especially reliable because “Latin partnered dance is a self-selected activity with performance involving a certain degree of improvisation when undertaken socially” (Domene et al., 2014, p. 39). However, the study did not consider the different styles of Latin dance, and the participants were already familiar with Latin dance practices. This study also included an analysis of intrinsic motivation described in the following section of this thesis.

Salsa dancing may reduce the risk of falling, particularly for older adults. Research has indicated that salsa is a safe exercise for all ages (Pusnik & Sicherl, 2010). Emerenziani et al. (2012), moreover, emphasized the “positive physical and psychical effects and the low level of risk” (p. 4) of salsa dancing. In an experimental study, Granacher et al. (2012) investigated the changes in static and dynamic postural control and leg extensor power for seniors training in salsa dancing. In this study, 28 healthy participants were randomly assigned to the intervention and control groups. The intervention, which consisted of 8 weeks of salsa dance training, included individual and partnered dancing with six to eight participants per instructor per session. The measured variables were static and dynamic postural control measured with one-legged stance on a balance platform and walking on a pressure-sensitive 10-meter walkway respectively. The balance platform was made up of four sensors that measured the displacement and direction of the center of pressure. The pressure-sensitive walkway was steady-state walkway with the GAIT-Rite® System (Havertown, PA, USA) and was used to measure the distribution of pressure during walking (Granacher et al., 2012, p. 307). Additionally, leg extensor power was measured by jumping on a force plate. The force platform was a one-dimensional force platform that measured vertical ground reaction force or maximal jumping power (Granacher et al., 2012, p. 308). These findings appear to be relevant for engaging older populations or other populations, such as partially physically impaired populations, in some form of beneficial exercise.

There has been limited research on the energy expenditure, cardiovascular, and musculature changes of rueda casino dancing for different ages and genders. Emerenziani et al. (2012) reported that energy intensity for the salsa dances was less than for ballroom

dancing, while Granacher et al. (2012) reported significant increase in stride velocity and stride length and significant decrease in the stride time. Granacher et al. (2012) recommended additional specific training to increase muscle power because their study did not denote significant change in this area. The authors stated that “it is of great relevance that salsa dancing had the potential to increase gait speed in older adults” (Granacher et al., 2012, p. 311). The researchers also suggested that the lack of change in measures of spatiotemporal gait variability found in other studies may have been related to the short intervention time period.

Psychological and Psychosocial Experience of Salsa Dancing

Psychological changes for men and women dancing salsa have not been described or demonstrated in detail. In my experience dancing in mixed gender groups, women and men experienced dance in a different way. Most of the research studies related to Latin dances have had a majority of women in the sample (Birks, 2007; Domene et al., 2014; Granacher et al., 2012; Pinniger et al., 2012), and most did not comment on these differences nor did they compare results between genders in detail (Kreutz, 2008; Lovatt, 2011). Lovatt (2011) obtained considerable findings in regard to confidence during recreational dance from a mostly male group by using an instrument from an online survey. And the findings reported by Domene et al. (2014) pointed out that Latin social dancing “fosters a positive psychological outlook alongside feelings of interest and enjoyment” (p. 40).

Domene et al. (2014) measured the perceived benefits and intrinsic motivation for Latin partnered social dance. They used the Exercise Benefits/Barriers Scale to evaluate the perceived benefits. Females in general reported significantly higher ($p < .001$)

perception of the benefits of dance compared to men. Psychological outlook is a “state of improved mental health and wellbeing, experiencing a sense of enjoyment or accomplishment, or being relaxed and without feelings of stress or tension” (Domene et al., 2014, p. 35). For females and males, the psychological outlook benefit was significantly higher ($p < .001$) than life enhancement, physical performance, or preventive health. Social interaction was rated as a significantly higher ($p < .05$) benefit than life enhancement or preventive health. The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory was used after each session for the measurement of intrinsic motivation during dance. For females and males, positive indicators (interest-enjoyment, perceived competence, effort-importance) were higher than negative indicators (tension-pressure). For all participants interest-enjoyment was the primary motivation, and it was significantly higher than effort-importance for female dancers and perceived competence for male dancers.

In addition to the social dance study (Domene et al., 2014), studies with Latin dance intervention such as tango have provided specific information on improvements of stress and depression for participants (Kreutz, 2008; Pinniger et al., 2012). For example, Pinniger et al. (2012) assessed the effects of tango dancing to reduce symptoms associated with psychological stress, anxiety, and depression in a sample with predominantly women participants (90%). This quantitative study used a randomized trial design with three groups: waiting-list control, mindfulness meditation training group, and a tango dance training program. Participants responded to pre-trial surveys and tests before knowing which group they would be assigned to. In this way, the researchers hoped to avoid anticipatory effects even though participants had been previously briefed regarding which group they could possibly be assigned. Out of 97 participants subscribed

for the study, only 66 completed the training, and only 66 were subject to analysis. Ages of the participants varied from 18 to 80 years old, and they were self-diagnosed with psychological distress or depression. Self-diagnoses had been confirmed by previous healthcare prescription and pre-testing surveys for distress and depression as part of the study, correlated with what the participants expressed to set a baseline.

Pinniger et al. (2012) demonstrated significant reduction of depression symptoms for the group taking tango dance sessions (effect size $d = 0.50$, $p = 0.010$) and the group taking mindful meditation sessions (effect size, $d = 0.54$, $p = 0.025$) when compared to the waiting-list group. Also, the group taking tango dance sessions demonstrated significant stress reduction compared to the waiting-list and mindful meditation groups. Follow-up studies could not be made to evaluate long-term effects. Since most participants were well-educated women, the results obtained could have been limited to this community. This study seemed to demonstrate the effectiveness of tango dance sessions to reduce stress and depression. Pinniger et al.'s findings certainly suggested and provided a precedent for the benefits of partnered dancing.

There seemed to be positive benefits on the mood of people diagnosed with mild to moderate depression derived from physical exercise during dancing classes (Birks, 2007). Birks (2007) did a small pilot study with quantitative measurements and feedback from participants' experiences. Depression was measured with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) before starting the session, after week 4 of the intervention, and after week 8 (end). Scores 15 and above were considered to indicate mild to moderate depression. Initially, there were 22 female and two male volunteers with depression diagnosed by a general practitioner with ages ranging from 21 to 54 years old. The

researchers mentioned a notable improvement of BDI scores for 14 participants by week 4 and further improvement for 12 more participants by week 8; however, specific values were not provided. An important limitation for this study was the significant attrition of participants by weeks 4 and 8. The Birks study provided positive correlation between the intervention and mood improvement for female participants; however, it left an important gap to address in the future regarding the possible positive effects that rueda casino and partnered dancing may have on men.

Kreutz (2008) studied how mixed gender partnered dancing, such as tango Argentine, promotes health and constructs and maintains relationships. This study had a mixed qualitative and quantitative design, integrating the researcher's observations and the data obtained from surveys. A questionnaire obtained age and gender, information about previous dance experience, stress reduction, social fitness, social feeling, and intimacy. Only two variables obtained a high consistency mark: social fitness and stress reduction, indicating that tango intervention was associated with higher social fitness and increased stress reduction. There were 110 participants, 41.4% female, with ages varying between 29 and 46 years. Most participants indicated they had started dancing tango Argentino when they were in their thirties. Sampling bias may have weakened the study because the population was specifically selected and it lacked control or comparison groups. Health and construction and maintenance of relationships for the participants may be further examined with possible future research.

Self-concept and self-esteem while dancing seem to be related to age and gender. Through my own observations of rueda casino, I noted that being compelled to dance rueda casino with different partners within a group seemed to raise self-esteem and

personal confidence. Lovatt (2011) evaluated dance confidence by self-concept and self-esteem analysis during social dancing in relation to age and gender. This quantitative study, which used exploratory and experimental methods, included 13,715 participants (64.3% males). Participants were divided into young (aged between 13 and 25), middle years (aged between 25 and 55), and older age (over the age of 55) groups for comparison. Findings indicated that in younger age groups, dance was perceived as a recreational activity and the participants had a higher level of confidence. As dance is related to the relationship with the opposite sex, during late-young and middle years, confidence diminished, but it increased again in older middle age groups—in particular for females. However, males in the older age group reported higher confidence than females. Thus, development of self-concept and self-esteem during recreational dance is different and further thought should be given to the styles of dancing that may easily increase confidence.

Granacher et al. (2012) also reported that high satisfaction levels for participants in modern dance classes were associated to music enjoyment, liking the instructor, and salience of exercise. This was also reflected in the participants' ability to maintain interest in the dance. Identifying the high dropout rates, Birks (2007) also mentioned the need of an adequate approach for dance classes that considers perfectionistic traits particularly for people with depression and/or low self-esteem. Developing confidence while dancing within a dancing class could also be further studied because rueda casino requires initial dance instruction.

It is possible that dancing, as an experienced or as a new dancer, may have different physical and psychological effects depending on gender and age, even for the

same individual. Thus, there is a need for studies on people's attitudes toward specific dance styles and how these attitudes change across each person's lifespan. This has been suggested by Lovatt (2011) and, in particular, by Birks (2007) regarding the development of self-confidence during social dance. Further studies could be made with people who might not have an initial interest in dancing and, in particular, male populations. Studying the dancers at dancing venues may provide information from participants who already appreciate the benefits of dancing, and this could be used to confirm particular physical changes or psychological changes related to long term dancers.

Salsa or Latin Dance Within Specific Populations

Few studies discussed the association or results of using Latin dances for populations with a particular ethnic or cultural background. One study was done with a specific sample of Caribbean dancers (Emerenziani et al., 2012), another had 24 female participants (Birks, 2007), of which 22 were White and British, one was Indian, and one African Caribbean. However, ethnicity was not associated with drop-out rates or with the BDI scores. This could be an important gap to explore because even if salsa or rueda casino has become a worldwide dance, it does not mean that it is similarly understood by all cultures. Another possibility is that the specific way it is taught in different settings could have different effects for populations with different ethnic background.

Psychosocial status of participants may influence specific populations' involvement with particular Latin dances or rueda casino. A study done with attendees at regular tango dance venues in Germany and The Netherlands (Kreutz, 2008) demonstrated that participants within this population had a high educational level and most had marital or joint-living relationships. However, the data obtained were not

enough to provide a socioeconomic background or to correlate with specific age or gender. Birks (2007) reported a high dropout rate; but educational level and/or marital status were not studied. This leaves open ground for research associating the educational level and/or marital status of participants and the effects of rueda casino dance involving partnered and group dancing.

Dance, particularly group or partnered dancing, may promote community identity. Bosse (2008) explored how the formation of a multicultural salsa dance team could refashion identity for members of a community in the United States. This was a qualitative case study and part of a project to document couple dancing and the intersections of dance communities. It followed an ethnographic methodology, and it noted the association of improving dancing skills and social standing with group identity. Participants had varied ethnic backgrounds from Europe, Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and United States. Findings showed that participants had a similar feeling of being outside of the locally defined Latin community, and they felt insecure in their salsa dance abilities. The researcher demonstrated that even if the participants were interested in dancing, they were very sensitive to the exigencies of the steps and the routine learned during class, expectations from the group, and the ways of teaching salsa. Here again it is crucial to point out the need for further research on how a program is structured and the language and expectations the instructor transmits to the group. This study also provided insightful information on the importance of group identity for people dancing rueda casino and the possible effects this may have on stress and depression management.

In summary, this research study qualitatively describes rueda casino dance including the physical, psychological, and psychosocial experience of this popular dance

form. A qualitative description methodology was chosen because “the end result [is] a description of the patterns and regularities in the data that have...been discovered and then confirmed” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). This description of rueda casino could easily contribute, as seen from literature reviewed thus far, to the definition of this dance and to new understandings of the physical, social, and psychological effects of rueda casino dancing in regard to self-concept, confidence in social interaction, stress, depression management, and mood management.

Methodology

This thesis employed a descriptive qualitative methodology. To capture all of the elements of rueda casino, data have been integrated based on available literature on this and similar dances, personal experience, and the perspectives of experienced teachers and dancers of salsa casino. The review of the literature examined previous findings from similar dance styles, group dancing, or Latin-based dances. Experts' perspectives were obtained from archival data of three interviews from experienced teachers and dancers of rueda casino in Mexico City. Participants consented to being interviewed and to the use of the data in this research by signing appropriate consent forms. The interviews and interview questions (see Appendix A) for this research were previously approved by the Saybrook Internal Review Board (SIRB). Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the principal researcher.

Since “the description in qualitative descriptive studies entails the presentation of the facts of the case in everyday language” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336), the outcome of the research is a descriptive summary of data organized in a narrative of the experience of rueda casino dance. The data were organized describing the similarities and differences between personal observations, available literature, and experts' perspectives on the theme.

Participant Selection

Participants interviewed were selected from the community of rueda casino dancers residing in Mexico City. These participants studied folk dance professionally and have taught and danced rueda casino in Mexico City for more than five years. The

participants demonstrated that they currently dance rueda casino and regularly teach this type of dance.

Data Collection

The data sources were three archival qualitative interviews. The interview questions are detailed in Appendix A. The three archival interviews (see Appendices B, C, and D) that explored two male (Interviewees A and B) and one female (Interviewee C) experts' experiences of rueda casino dancing. The transcribed data from the interviews have been clarified by eliminating repetitions and distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 189–190). The interviews were structured with open-ended and follow-up questions, and the protocol was approved by SIRB. The data were collected for assignment four of the MBM 5583 Professional Seminar, and details are included in Appendices A, B, C, and D.

Data Analysis

In qualitative description “there is no mandate to re-present the data in any other terms but their own” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). Personal observations, perspectives from the experts, and documentation from the literature review were integrated to form the description of rueda casino. To maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, they were referred to as Interviewee A, Interviewee B, and Interviewee C throughout the analysis. The resulting narrative occurs in the following order: the personal experience of rueda casino, the definition of rueda casino, the summary of physical effects, the summary of psychological aspects, and the summary of psychosocial effects that define rueda casino.

Findings

Starting Point for Your Experience in Rueda Casino

I have always felt dancing made me experience my body and my surroundings differently. Even though recreational dance has always been part of Mexican parties, I had not given thought to specific styles or the true complexity partner or group dancing could have. It was by learning to dance *salsa en línea* that I first experienced partner dancing more fully. Salsa en línea is a partnered dance originally danced for a presentation or show, but the tempo of the music is very similar to rueda casino (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2000). However, as I desperately searched for a place to dance salsa en línea as a recreational dance, I found a group of people who danced in partners and at the same time formed a circle. Individuals were easily integrated to the group, and I was grateful I did not need to bring a partner to come and dance. The synchronization of all the partners dancing in a circle, the exchange of partners, the challenging figures, and the general enjoyment were particularly interesting for me.

I have found it important to appreciate the experts' personal experiences. In dance, I cannot learn from an expert by theory, but I must experience his or her dancing to understand the facts. The experts' voices present the facts of rueda casino in their own terms and their own language. The following three paragraphs provide an insight into how the interviewees became experts in rueda casino.

I did not find this form of dance, it found me. I danced rueda casino with friends as a frequent way to party, it was natural. I learned by imitation. I grew up dancing. And later in Mexico, I promoted dance out of need, that is, for economic reasons. I was dancing in a show and when I saw that people asked for salsa I started to teach casino. (Interviewee A)

For me in particular, I started in the medium by going to dance to a Cuban bar in Mexico City where they play salsa music, teach, and dance rueda casino. When I

entered the nightclub and I saw how they changed partners, how they turned, it was a challenge to see and learn how to do it. Casino was not part of my professional studies, but my studies helped me to analyze it and learn it. I studied in the INBA [National Institute of Fine Arts]. I am a Mexican folklore, ballet, and contemporary dance dancer. Afterwards, I practiced Colombian folklore, some Peruvian folklore, and ended in casino. (Interviewee B)

I only danced Mexican folkloric dances for five years. I am a primary school teacher and during my professional studies I had folklore classes. Many years ago I went to Cuba, I was very surprised with what they danced there and I thought I would never be able to dance that way. I have always liked to dance and there is something from the Caribbean that I feel attracted to, that Latin flavor, those rhythms. (Interviewee C)

The following is a picture that developed from the descriptions given by the interviewees. In some topics, the personal experience of the researcher is included.

Definition of Rueda Casino

“Rueda casino is a folkloric dance” (Interviewee B) and, even though certain rules and basic steps remain, it is changed as it infiltrates into the local culture. “It was part of the popular Cuban dance and music I grew up with, in the seventies and eighties” (Interviewee A). Cubans dance very simply. In the beginning the most astounding characteristic was that you could change partners. Taking this into consideration and the new complex figures people do now, it is possible to appreciate the evolution of rueda casino from 50 years ago up to now. “Human beings have that need of not being left behind, especially since dancing rueda casino is a manner of courting. [Humans think:] I cannot be left behind; I must make a better figure than the other person” (Interviewee B). That is how casino has evolved to be what it is today, and continues to evolve.

Naming rueda casino *salsa* aids in identifying it as a dance with a particular rhythm. The name casino was given because it emerged in the parties at the Casino Deportivo of La Habana, Cuba. “I don’t like [the forename salsa], as salsa en línea was a

dance made for shows and it later became a popular dance, it is not necessarily Cuban” (Interviewee A). Salsa en línea is different from salsa casino; however, they are danced in a similar manner and only two or three steps change. Salsa en línea kept its origins from ballroom dancing, so it is generally danced for a presentation, more elegant. Men look more feminine, and the steps and movements men make are to support women’s performance so their dancing ability is not easily observable. It is limited in creativity, leading, fast-paced dancing or coordination when compared to rueda casino. Rueda casino and salsa en línea dancers have different energy, presence, and steps. Casino is a popular dance derived from Cuban son (Interviewee A and B), danzon (Interviewee C), and it integrates Afro-Caribbean rhythms.

The fusion between Spanish and African cultures in Cuba adds a unique flavor to Cuban dance. Rueda casino has not been internationally as well-known as salsa en línea because the diffusion of a dance movement is based on performing in competitions or dance workshops, and rueda casino evolved in unfavorable conditions. In particular, the economic blockade between the United States and Cuba stopped Cuban dance from penetrating so easily into the world (Interviewee A).

Two interviewees commented that tempo in the music marks the rhythm of the dance. Both agree that in salsa the rhythm for the steps is *one-two-three [pause] one-two-three*; the pause makes salsa different from other rhythms such as chachachá.

Cuban son is the most important Cuban rhythm from which timba music and casino dancing originated. In music, Cuban son evolved and it changed, it added instruments and melodic sections from other music genres such as mambo, chachachá, and rumba. This fusion gave way to what is now called timba. (Interviewee A)

The three interviewees mentioned that the differences between son and casino are also evident when dancing to each rhythm: son is danced off beat and casino is danced following the beat of the music.

Even though the steps in rueda casino are similar to Cuban son, rueda casino is a dance with different intentions (Interviewee A). In fact, rueda casino is a dance with an improvised choreography where the figures to be danced in the group must be known by all the dancers. The three interviewees concurred that the intention of rueda casino is to dance in a circular manner with partners and within the group. As two of the interviewees mentioned and I experienced, within these circular movements, it is possible to observe in the movements of the arms the influence of rock and roll, swing, and other dance styles from the 1950s.

Rueda casino is primarily a partnered dance, and secondly a group dance. The three interviewees agreed that a partnered dance means the couples communicate through the hands. By establishing contact with the hands one transmits what one wants to do. They also ascertained that there cannot be two leaders. Both dancers think but only one leads and the other follows. In all salsa dances, the man is generally the leader and the creative one; nevertheless, he is not the creator of the dance as the dance is created by both. “There even comes a point when dancing rueda casino that there is no need to talk; the man makes the woman turn because the woman responds to his intention” (Interviewee A).

Interviewee C particularly emphasized that when dancing rueda casino with a high level of nonverbal communication, there is no need to ask for consent to dance close to the man or woman. There was a common agreement among all in the group that men

and women can dance close to each other [even with some sensuality] and it is not considered indecorous. “There is consensus within the group to dance and all the couples enjoy it together” (Interviewee C).

All three interviewees agreed that group dancing in a circle is a basic characteristic of rueda casino. Initially, couples formed a line. But when they were teaching each other figures and there were more than two or three partners, it was difficult to teach the figure to all the participants. Additionally, with a long line it was difficult for all to hear the caller name the figure they were supposed to make (Interviewee A). Consequently, a circle formation was found to be the best answer. When dancing in a circle all participants could see each other and copy the figures, all could listen to the caller, and it made continuous dancing possible in addition to constant change of partners.

The three interviewees concurred that dancing in a group is more complex than only partner dancing. It means coordinating not only two people, but even eight to 10 couples or more. Dancing in a group is also eye-catching, and the steps are not as difficult as in other dances (Interviewee B). The constant change of partner within the circle formation requires coordination within the couple and with the group. At first, this may be uncomfortable but after some time, because it is part of the dance, group dancing becomes very comfortable. Rueda casino has the particularity among Latin recreational dances to be the only one danced in a group (Interviewee C).

The experts mentioned that in other Latin dances couples dance separately. “If someone would be calling out the figures [to be made] it would be possible to have this improvised group coordination [that rueda casino has]” (Interviewee B). It is important to

learn the names of the figures in rueda casino, as they are called out while dancing in the circle formation. Currently, the names of the figures vary from region or dancing group, but they have to be short and direct so people react rapidly to the leader's voice and keep the synchronization among the partners in the group. The name can be the name of a girl or a boy, but they must be short names such as *70*, *75*, *Tania*, *caracol*, *caracol con alas* (Interviewee A). In its origins, someone would think of a figure and teach it, naming it as he or she wished. Nowadays it is still so; rueda casino groups have some exclusive figures.

La Mami [figure], I gave it as a present to *la Mami*, a woman who went to Cuba and dancing there they started calling her "dance Mami, dance!" and she got the nickname *Alicia La Mami*. So one day, the day of her birthday, I made up a figure and a friend told me "Why don't you name it *La Mami*?" So we named it as her figure and gave it to her as a gift. (Interviewee A)

The three interviewees agreed that rueda casino changes slightly depending on the place or context. Interviewee A mentioned that timba is a fusion of rhythms, and steps in rueda casino are also fused with *reggaeton* or steps from other dances depending on the region or country. One interviewee gave an example: In Venezuela, there is such a strong influence from salsa en línea that rueda casino sometimes looks more like salsa en línea than casino.

Is Rueda Casino Different From Daily Movements?

The three interviewees generally agreed that dance is about feeling the physicality of the body, and when one is using his or her body one needs to feel it. Interviewee B mentioned that a mechanical movement is totally different from a practical movement or a movement with intention. Many look at their right foot when they want to move it, but it is actually possible to move the foot without looking at it (Interviewee B). For some,

the experience means releasing through dance that internal self that is usually hidden during office hours (Interviewee A). It is possible that by concentrating too intensely on the movements the body must do one loses the physical feeling of the body and the whole experience of rueda casino (Interviewee B).

The general benefits of dancing rueda casino that interviewees referred to were coordination, agility, sociability, and confidence. Interviewee B considered it is possible to find these benefits in other dances, but one may be more attracted to a certain type of dance. As mentioned by the three interviewees, watching rueda casino awakens in most people a desire to experience and feel the dance. Rueda casino is very eye-catching because one can be dancing with a partner by oneself, and at the same time exchanging with friends. As the three interviewees noted, and based on personal observation, there is energy in a rueda casino group that is difficult to find in other dances. However, Interviewee B mentioned that if one is resistant to rueda casino, there is no methodology, teacher, or group that can open the person to experiencing it.

Two interviewees mentioned that the experience of dance is related to courting a partner. Rueda casino is totally sexual and a way to say “Here I am, look at me” (Interviewee B). Both agreed that in rueda casino there is a tendency to think that whoever dances best is the most attractive. It is possible this is the reason why there is a drive from the participants to make rueda casino more complex or competitive between groups.

Different Experience for Men and for Women

“I don’t know, but from what I see in the students women learn rueda casino more rapidly because for them it is very easy as they need to just relax in the movement,

release control, and cooperate” (Interviewee A). The three interviewees agreed that as long as the woman releases control, the man has the responsibility of leading with his body. She must help with her style, but if she is resistant then she hinders the flow of the dance. There are more men than women dedicated to dancing rueda casino, possibly because the man is the leader (Interviewee C). There are women who want to take the lead, but in casino that should not be:

At first it was very difficult for me to adapt, I had to be submissive and I was not used to it. With time it is possible to learn this language in signals and movements that indicate the direction of the next turn; it is difficult but it also something to be learned. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee C mentioned that women, who are generally more coordinated, have more fun when dancing casino. From the comments Interviewee C made and personal observation, it is possible men are more tense because they have to exchange partners, they need to know the figure, and they need to transmit energy. It is possible women have more fun because they receive that energy.

Different Experience Depending on Ethnic Background

The three interviewees agreed that Cubans move differently than Mexicans. There are differences in steps and in style. As mentioned by all interviewees, Mexican men have the need to show off in all that they do, so Mexicans are used to dancing rueda casino with a larger variety of different and complicated figures. Rueda casino in Cuba is simpler; they know mainly three figures: dedo, 70, and 71. Women in Cuba move the hips with a particular style, and Mexican women do not know how to move the hips with the same cadence (Interviewee B). The three interviewees mentioned that Cubans enjoy rueda casino more openly, and there is more flirtatious partnership within the couples.

“In Mexico, there is a strong stereotype that men do not dance; and even as a male teacher that has been very difficult to change with certain students” (Interviewee B). Men that dance in Mexico can easily be criticized for dancing. Two interviewees agreed that this attitude of machismo affects women as well, because Mexicans easily comment on the appropriateness of a woman’s dance. Interviewee B mentioned there is social repression for what women can do in dance, as they could be considered women with low morale if their movements are too sensually expressive. They concluded that Mexican women do not dare to move in a more daring way or to move their hips more because of what many spectators could say about them. Two interviewees considered that Colombians and Cubans have a different ideology, so this does not affect them in this way. “Cubans are somewhat macho and dominant; when a woman follows their lead the result is positively astounding and not only in terms of dance. As a Mexican woman beginning to dance it was difficult to let myself be led” (Interviewee C). This difficulty is common among Mexican women, possibly related to the fact that men in Mexico do not dance as much as Cubans.

It is possible that in other countries where there is less affinity for dance the experience of rueda casino could be differently perceived. Two interviewees mentioned if people do not normally dance when they party, their perception (the way they see or appreciate) Latin dance and rueda casino is different.

It is very easy to dance without exchanging a word or socializing. Dance is our (Cubans and Mexicans) way of establishing contact within a party, but how can I get close to people if it is not in their cultural background to dance? (Interviewee B)

Different Experience for Rueda Casino Depending on the Age

“The godfather of my daughter, who is seventy-something years old, frequently dances with my 7-year-old daughter” (Interviewee A). All interviewees agreed that anybody can dance casino, as there is not a major risk, and people can dance to the level of their abilities. Rueda casino groups have children younger than 10 years of age and people who are above seventy years of age. “As a teacher of preschool and secondary school, I have noticed that casino does not capture their attention because they do not consider it a modern dance like rap, rock, or tribal” (Interviewee B). However, teenagers aged between 16 and 17 start to be interested in dancing because they see it as a form of courting.

The three interviewees agreed that rhythm does not have a nationality, a gender, or an age. Two interviewees considered that even for people who think they have “two left feet,” the real problem is that they do not know how to move with coordination. Teachers mainly teach how to coordinate the feet, music, and all movements. As mentioned by all interviewees, people who are arrhythmic can improve with practice. They will continue to have arrhythmic problems, but they will improve their coordination and movements with practice. “I have observed that people [independent of their ages] who constantly practice improve their coordination, improve their breathing, and find it emotionally beneficial as well” (Interviewee B).

Different Experience for People With Disabilities

The interviewees did not know of specific groups of casino dancers with disabilities. But the three interviewees admitted that in many cases participants in the rueda casino have disabilities and they respond very well to rueda casino. Two

interviewees said one can have rhythm even if one is autistic or if one has only one foot.

Each interviewee mentioned their experiences dancing or teaching rueda casino to people with disabilities:

There was an autistic child, who never joined the rueda casino, but he liked the music and he could recognize with the initial notes the song that was playing. As a group we would ask him to identify the song and the author while we were dancing, he liked going to this Cuban bar, and he liked the music. It was his therapy and it relaxed him. In the group I have now, there is a girl with joined fingers and some other disability unknown to me. She will be 15 years old, and she enjoys and dances casino with rhythm. (Interviewee A)

One person within the group I am with has some kind of partial paralysis. It is a bit difficult for this person to coordinate the body, but he manages it. Another person is partially deaf, he uses a hearing aid, and occasionally he does not understand the instruction, but I just need to talk facing him and he understands. He dances very well at an intermediate level. I believe it is possible [for people with Parkinson or other similar diseases to dance rueda casino]. (Interviewee C)

I have had the experience teaching other dances to children with disabilities. I worked with a child with Down syndrome, two autistic children, and others with other disabilities. It was not difficult to work with these people, I just needed to be patient. They learn and absorb very well. They are slower, but they learn. In the case of autism, one had an advanced level of autism, and my solution for this boy was to put him to work with a girl. The girl would tell him the next step because he could not memorize the next step, and he got distracted easily. (Interviewee B)

“A friend had an accident, he was an alcoholic, and as rehabilitation he was sent to dance. He came to this Cuban bar and he enjoyed dance, he said it was very beneficial for coordination, among other things” (Interviewee B). From personal observation and as two of the interviewees commented, it is unusual to see drunken people dancing rueda casino. Dancers may drink three to four beers but in general they leave the venue sober. The interviewees mentioned that people at parties who do not know how to dance generally end up drinking alcohol. They saw this as an indication that dancing rueda casino has further psychological and social advantages.

Physical Effects of Rueda Casino

The three interviewees and my personal experience agreed that the physical condition of the participants improves depending on how frequently casino is practiced. Interviewees B and C recognized that people who start dancing from 10 P.M. until 3 A.M. without stopping improve their respiratory and their physical condition. As Interviewee B mentioned, and I observed from personal experience, dancing without resting for more than a couple of minutes is very common for women as they are constantly taken out to dance, while men have more resting time between dances.

I am 51 years old and what keeps me healthy is dance. The only exercise I do is dancing, for an average of four hours per day, every day of the week except Monday. Dancing provides a sense of physical, but also emotional wellbeing, if I don't dance for a week I feel strange. (Interviewee C)

Two of the interviewees agreed it is possible to improve physical condition by dancing rueda casino, but if the body is not taken to its physical limit, then endurance and muscular resistance will not improve further. Based on the comments from Interviewee B and personal observation, resistance in rueda casino is related to training the muscles based on bodyweight in different turns and arm movements, or even by lifting the partners as some figures demand. The three interviewees confirmed that endurance, affecting the cardiovascular system, is improved by the frequency and duration of dancing rueda casino.

Dancing produces other observable physical changes. The three interviewees concurred that dancing rueda casino improves coordination and general feelings of health:

I do not know exactly how, but it must have an impact on physical condition because sometimes when I'm sick, I have a headache, I have not eaten, I am in a

bad mood, I am hungry or thirsty, I start to dance and the headache, hunger, and thirst go away and I can even go home to sleep easily. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee A mentioned that people dancing rueda take care of how their body looks and their physical wellbeing. This expert explained that dancers in rueda casino want to be accepted so they make sure they are not moving lazily or do not smell unpleasant. Rueda casino also improves the physical expression of sensuality through the movements, especially in women (Interviewee A). Interviewee A and B agreed that women and men want to look attractive or want to be accepted; they want to look different when they dance compared to their daily appearance.

“A different state of being is observable in rueda casino. I have observed euphoria in the dancers” (Interviewee C). Interviewee B and C mentioned that spectators and beginners are initially surprised to see partners in the group dancing in synchrony. But as beginners join and participants continue, the dancers start enjoying and entering a euphoric state of being (Interviewee C). As two interviewees mentioned, and from personal observation, it is noticeable that when people exchange partners and make the figures at the same time, the euphoria in the dancers can be observed in their appearance.

The three interviewees recognized that when one dances well, one emanates something and others can actually feel it, smell it, or somehow respond to it. They mentioned it as something indefinable, but apparent, regardless of the age of the dancers. From personal experience, I observed how this contagious feeling to dance took hold of me as I watched a group of rueda casino dance. I felt the need and desire to dance with them even if the dance or the specific figures were unknown to me. “People say, *Look how he or she is dancing*” (Interviewee A), either because they felt it was enjoyable or attractive.

I don't know precisely if there is a specific neurosubstance liberated while dancing, but it makes sense that it exists. The sensation is different when one runs by oneself to running against someone. When one dances casino, it is the same. If you want to show that you're enjoying the dance, there must be a substance that you emanate and that it also pushes you to dance with more emotion, more effort, with a particular energy. (Interviewee B)

Physiological Effects of Rueda Casino

Interviewee B remarked that it is common when dancing rueda that there is a need to be seen, so ego comes into play and there is a higher effort to show enjoyment.

However, Interviewees B and C mentioned that changing partners in casino also leads to humility. The three interviewees, and I from personal experience, agreed that casino permits people to show who they are as a person, more than showing off what they have.

The three experts concurred that initially people start dancing rueda casino timidly. They mentioned that dancing rueda casino increases the expression of emotions through other senses beyond speech and facial expressions. Interviewee B and Interviewee C remarked that men work on their confidence and leadership, and this is learned through movement. The three interviewees agreed that, generally, leadership has to be learned and self-confidence encouraged because men in Mexico are not used to it. I observed that they physically learn to lead by practicing the figures, by testing the force for the movements, by learning how to stand, how to hold their body, as well as how to guide with all their body the movements and the direction women need to take.

Interviewee C observed that it is through these aspects of movement in rueda casino that men absorb the psychological elements of leading and increase their self-confidence.

The three interviewees agreed that dancing rueda casino reduces the fear of dance and increases confidence. "When you're afraid of dancing, dancing takes the fear away" (Interviewee B); the fears are step by step released with the dance. Interviewees B and C

recognized that repetition in rueda casino reduces the fear of dancing. They mentioned that people are more confident as they progressively learn to dance. “The moment a person observes he or she is noticed by the way he or she dances or when a person is asked to dance, it contributes to increasing personal self-confidence” (Interviewee A). As described by the three interviewees, rueda casino is a group dance and this also increases confidence:

When people dance rueda they feel they are in a secure environment. Since there is constant partner exchange, all can come to dance in the circle, and participants will not be rejected, which reduces fear. When dancing rueda, men don’t ask, *Do you want to dance?* or *Would you like to dance?* Thus, all men know that women cannot give a negative or a positive answer. In rueda casino, men and women have to dance with all, they dance a short period and then dance with the next person and the next person. It has a reassuring effect. (Interviewee C)

“Shouting as you dance liberates stress, so in rueda casino we encourage all dancers to shout” (Interviewee B). The three experts agreed that rueda casino reduces stress. They also suggested that many people dance rueda casino to liberate tensions from work. All three mentioned that many people say they cannot function if they do not dance rueda, as dancing rueda relaxes them and helps them forget stress from work. I observed and the experts concurred that even if people have to wake up early the next day for work, they happily enjoy dancing rueda casino late in the evening. “I don’t know if with every dance the effect is the same, but for me rueda casino is the answer to reduce stress” (Interviewee C).

It has been observed by the experts that rueda casino can reduce depression. Interviewee B mentioned that people dance rueda casino because while dancing their thoughts are not focused on negative experiences. “One possibility for how rueda casino is effective is that depression is linked to solitude and rueda casino is a way to socialize

and meet people. Sometimes just by watching other people enjoy the dance, one's mood changes" (Interviewee B). They concluded dancing rueda casino is a way to unabashedly express oneself, without any detrimental consequences.

Psychosocial Effects of Rueda Casino

All interviewees concurred that dancing rueda casino has a socializing effect. Individuals must have contact with the partner they are dancing with at the moment and with the group, and by exchanging partners each person dancing as a male meets all the female dancers in the circle. One expert's description: One day a person may dance with a particular person; in the next round, it is possible they will not coincide again. But as people frequently dance in the group they come across each other again and begin to form friendships. "We know people for a long time, we may not know our names, but we dance or share a drink as friends" (Interviewee C). "Dancing in a group is very helpful, it is the best that has been invented" (Interviewee A).

Interviewee B and C confirmed that people who stay for one or two years change considerably from how they were when they joined. From personal observation and as Interviewee A and Interviewee B said, people change from being shy to sociable and they start greeting each other in a friendlier manner. "Rueda casino is like group therapy, there is no fear, no shyness, and all people dance more or less at the same level" (Interviewee C).

Socialization in rueda casino is individually driven but the dynamics and the enjoyment of the group as a whole encourage people to increase social interaction.

The rhythm moves people, it changes people, and they socialize. Forming groups is the maximal expression of rueda casino; it means forming a family and it can even become an addiction because people are interested in socializing. In the group there are always people you like, people you don't like as much, people you

are attracted to, or people with whom you have something in common.
(Interviewee A)

By having an unspoken approval to dance with the other person, it opens up the possibility for friendship. Marriages, godparents, trips with friends, and parties have come out of these relationships that start by dancing rueda casino; it is like being part of a family. (Interviewee C)

The three experts agreed that rueda casino is an integrating activity. They noted that socioeconomic differences in the recreational place where they frequently dance rueda casino are sometimes immense. It is possible to find people that work as mechanics or as tailors, and people who are the owners of companies or high executives in enterprises (Interviewee A). The key for socializing, even with these differences, is that rueda has the dynamics of exchanging partners.

People come from different socioeconomic levels to dance rueda casino, and beginners are generally surprised at the diversity of the participants. “In the beginning people sometimes come with very elegant clothes, but they change their clothing the next time to dance more comfortably because they appreciate clothing can limit their movements” (Interviewee B). Interviewee B mentioned that the change to comfortable clothes, for example using jeans and shirt, may reduce the ego of the dancers in the group as well.

I taught rueda casino in a private university in Mexico City, and in the social parties we organized people wanted to dance with the best dancers independent of whether they were a doctor or a maintenance employee. They wanted to express what was learned with the person that could do it better. Here it doesn't matter what you do, it's about dancing. (Interviewee A)

I taught rueda casino to a group of men and women with a high socioeconomic status in Mexico City. A peculiarity in the parties we organized was that men who were beginners were more resistant to integrating themselves into the circle. Eventually, it was possible for some men or women integrate into other rueda casino recreational groups. (Interviewee B)

Two interviewees agreed based on what they have been told that possibly in other countries such as Germany and Finland, participants are less resistant to integrating themselves into rueda casino.

There was a Chinese, who lived in Mexico, and came to dance rueda. Even though I did not speak English and he did not speak Spanish, he understood without a common language and learned complex figures by looking at my feet and following my movements. (Interviewee C)

The three interviewees considered that dance is an expression of the body, and rueda casino reduces ethnic barriers. The experts mentioned, and I have observed, that people from Australia, China, Korea, Colombia, and Brazil have come to the recreational place where rueda casino is danced in Mexico City to investigate what it is about. They come once or twice, integrate into the group, and dance.

By dancing rueda casino, women and men learn about relationships and gender dynamics.

I learned to follow the lead by dancing rueda casino. I had a relationship with a Mexican for 20 years, and I used to wait for him to tell me what to do so that I could do it, if I agreed to his wishes. In the three relationships I later have had with Cubans I do not wait, I learn and I follow. I have learned to follow my partners in various aspects of life and that has worked out perfectly. The fact that I follow him and I guess his movements keeps him very close to me, attentive, very much in love with me. It is strange. It could even be perceived as submissive, but it is a form to control a relationship because he becomes very docile as well. Mexican women do not believe me, but for me it has worked out perfectly. (Interviewee C)

Interviewees A and C noted that in rueda casino it is possible to be somewhat daring or mischievous, and people like it. All the experts concurred that in Mexico there is some resistance to being mischievous when dancing, but in Cuba it is different. "I have seen Cubans dance rueda with more audacity as people touch each other more, they kiss,

or even touch each other's genitals" (Interviewee C). But there is always consensus within the group that allows such behavior without considering it rude.

Difference Between Dancing Casino and Teaching Casino

The three interviewees mentioned rueda casino is not generally taught in the school of arts. "I learned to dance rueda casino in the streets" (Interviewee A).

Interviewees A and B mentioned that at the school of arts, dance programs include studies of swing, rock and roll, danzon, contemporary dance, Afro-Cuban, modern dance, and different types of expression through body movement, among other topics. The methodology used to teach rueda casino in most groups and recreational places in Mexico City is a hybrid of knowledge from professional dance studies and Cuban son. But interviewees A and B mentioned that learning to dance casino is not only about learning the figures or copying the steps. Both experts acknowledged that dance teachers teach how to coordinate the body. "The only thing that teachers cannot teach, and students need to learn by themselves, is that dance is about experiencing emotions and feeling the physical body" (Interviewee B).

The three experts gave a similar description of the particularities between dancing recreational rueda casino and dancing rueda casino in class. They said both are mainly the same, but in class music can be stopped, explanations can be given slowly, and figures can be demonstrated. In particular for beginning and intermediate levels all partners face the same direction to teach the figures and the steps. The circle is formed again to execute what has been learned. During class, dancing is more methodical: Someone explains, participants learn. But once on a social level, participants actually enjoy and use other levels of communication. This level of communication is observable

when partners guide without telling or forcing a figure, women easily flow into the figures by following the man's lead, the group keeps the rhythm and the caller is part of the dancers and in tune with the rhythm of the group.

The three interviewees mentioned there is a lot of resistance or barriers to work with when teaching rueda casino. However, as participants improve their dancing and they appreciate what they have learned, they join the groups more committedly. Interviewees B and C considered that the dynamics of partner and group dancing in rueda casino help most people to learn. I observed as a participant that by constantly exchanging partners, women and men have the opportunity to practice the figures repeatedly, and it is common to see them ask for explanations. I also observed that with the constant exchange of partners, men learn to measure the adequate force needed, and women learn to follow the movement with different men guiding them. "With the line or circle formation, participants easily copy the people next to them. Participants see people with more experience as well as participants that are beginners in rueda casino, and this is encouraging for them" (Interviewee A). During class, students socialize because part of the dance is to exchange partners. Each man meets all the women, and each woman meets all the men in the group.

It is easier to lower one's barriers and concentrate on the dance when one is exchanging partners. "Since participants don't know with whom they will be dancing next [expert or basic dancer, friend or new acquaintance] they concentrate more on learning the figures" (Interviewee B). I observed men and women concentrate on learning because they do not want to cause the disruption in the flow of the group's dance. It was also observable that men apologize to women when they do not know the figure that is

being executed. “Dancing with the romantic partner can be a challenge, because men and women are more judgmental about the mistakes their romantic partners make”

(Interviewee B). Since partners in rueda casino constantly change, one does not dance with the same person for more than a couple of figures before changing again.

Mostly all of the students I teach on an individual level are men, 80% are recently divorced or finished with a relationship or are going through a drastic change in their life. They start with individual lessons, and before I know it they come to this Cuban bar to dance. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee B mentioned that when dancing in a recreational setting people that are learning rueda casino look for partners to dance with who have a similar level of knowledge. Two of the interviewees agree that the most important step for people that are learning is to start looking for people to dance with. This is an encouraging way to meet new people and inspires them to return the next time. There are also a few people who come to a class once and do not return:

In these cases, it is possible they came to the class driven by curiosity, and they left because they are too shy. If there is not an interest or the predisposition to the experience, people will not be caught up with rueda casino, and they may even be stressed by the experience. (Interviewee B)

The man who was my husband came to two or three rueda casino classes because of me, but afterwards he said, “*I don’t want it, I don’t like it.*” He did not return, and there was nothing to be done. (Interviewee C)

Methodology for Teaching Casino

The three interviewees agreed that there must be different methodologies to teach rueda casino. They pointed out that in Mexico City, Luis Martínez was considered the first to teach rueda casino with a structured methodology. Interviewee A mentioned that rueda casino is similar to ballroom dance, and in Mexico *cumbia* is the closest style to dancing casino. Cumbia was taken as a basis for the adaptation of the methodology. “Luis

Martínez adapted the methodology because, as opposed to Cubans, Mexicans have more difficulty coordinating and adding to their dance the mischievousness that Cubans naturally have” (Interviewee C).

Other methodologies have some variations. Interviewee C mentioned that the main difference is the way of counting and the way to start dancing (Interviewee C). Depending if the methodology used for teaching a group addresses their needs and background, the three interviewees concurred that all interested people can learn how to dance casino. In some cases, the classes can be massive, and for this the teacher cannot be very specific and he or she focuses on the majority of the participants.

The main methodology to teach is through repetition so corrections and detailed explanations are kept to a minimum. For some people this method of learning is difficult because they need more detailed explanations or they need to better understand the rhythm. (Interviewee B)

The three interviewees considered that while teaching participants to move, one is teaching how to listen to the music as well. “The class becomes a class of musical appreciation in which one learns to find and follow the rhythm, and to identify the moment to start dancing” (Interviewee A). The experts mentioned that initially the timing to mark the steps is slower than its normal tempo; it is later accelerated to twice the beat, then to thrice the beat, like Cuban son. Lastly, it is accelerated to a beat with four counts, to match the timing used for rueda casino.

Each part of the body is warmed up separately, as in Cuban son. Interviewee A and interviewee C explained how a rueda casino begins: knees, hips, torso, head, and arms are moved in rhythm to the music separately and later all together. During the warm-up phase, all face one side and dance with simple basic steps, their variations, and combinations.

It is important from the beginning to explain the steps specifically, because there is a tendency to be lazy, to do the steps in a more comfortable way, and the result is that the step or figure may not match with the others. (Interviewee B)

The three experts gave an explanation of the methodology they follow to teach rueda casino. From their descriptions and from personal observation, it became clear that first the rhythm and the basic steps are taught, showing how to position the feet. Then, the basic steps are practiced in partners and subsequently people learn how to move arms and feet within the sequence of steps. Figures are taught afterward with partners. The next step is to teach how to exchange partners and how to keep the circle formation characteristic of rueda casino. Rueda casino is a dynamic and friendly way to dance. Thus, people can learn to dance very complex figures or even learn to dance with two or three partners in the circle. The evolution of rueda casino is not yet finished; it is important to consider that the figures within the circle evolve all the time (Interviewee A), so learning in casino rarely has an end.

It is possible to observe some barriers and difficulties students have at the beginning of the learning process:

When partners are set up in the beginning and they join hands, it is possible to see women have some resistance to touching hands. Men are eager to be close to women, and women want to dance but have some barriers of their own. Even from the warm-up phase it is also noticeable who has more coordination difficulties. Mexican men always find it more difficult to dance rueda casino in the beginning. Within the first lessons, the main objective is to work with these barriers and difficulties. In the beginning, a circle is not formed. As time and practice increase there is more coordination and trust for touching. (Interviewee C)

The three interviewees mentioned that men in particular start to learn casino with apprehension. “Some come in saying: *I can’t do it*, and I always tell them: *Yes, you can, everybody can do it*” (Interviewee C). After some time students learn, improve, and then

want to move to the next level. The three experts have been surprised because some students start without being able to move a foot, and after some time they are dancing with the advanced group, and they have no fear of dancing.

There was one man that couldn't make one right step, he was my *lost cause*. However, he continued to go and he lost the fear to dance. He now follows the rhythm and makes some figures. But most important, he is not scared of asking anyone out to dance. His process is surprising, as many people have difficulties dealing with such challenges. (Interviewee C)

A couple of the interviewees said that in some cases people are resistant to dancing with a group so they ask for individual classes.

Sometimes I have been asked by women to teach a group of high socioeconomic level. In those cases they generally ask me to teach at their home. These groups show an initial resistance to go to the social places where there are lessons and recreational casino dance. After some private lessons, they sometimes show up at this Cuban bar and may end up joining the group. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee B noted, and I have seen this as well, that for a class with one or two participants the process of teaching can be slower. There is a particular focus on the rhythm. It is very important that people understand the rhythm to be able to dance appropriately. "I sometimes ask them to clap the hands repeatedly to the rhythm if I see they have more difficulty with following the rhythm" (Interviewee B). It is possible within smaller groups to work on particular aspects that need improvement.

Interviewee B also mentioned that people who have coordination problems need a different class than people with a disability (Interviewee C). The aim is to have the most homogeneous class possible; if there are people with special needs, a pause and detailed explanation is generally needed. Anyone can learn how to dance but some people need more help than others to achieve this.

Interviewees A and C considered it is also important to include humor when teaching rueda casino. From personal experience, it was possible to observe men and women become more flexible and relaxed when humor and jokes were made.

I used to be very serious, and I was considered very strict among the students when teaching casino. The past two years I have started to include jokes and comments with a sexual connotation, taking care not to be rude. With this people enjoy the dance more, they laugh, and they follow me. Students accept this attitude and mischievousness, as if there is permission to enjoy and have fun. (Interviewee C)

Discussion

As detailed in this thesis, rueda casino is one of the latest folkloric group dances to develop, and it has permeated worldwide rapidly in the last twenty years. The origins can be traced to ballroom dancing, but the Afro-Caribbean influence and the Cuban culture endow rueda casino with unique qualities. These qualities are part of the essence of rueda casino as mentioned by the interviewees and by Balbuena Gutiérrez (2010). One of these unique qualities mentioned by the experts is the communication between the partners and within the group: Rueda casino promotes social integration, encourages awareness of gender identity, and supports cross-gender interaction. It sometimes even goes beyond the dance floor and influences personal views of life regarding socioeconomic differences, ethnic differences, and cross-gender interaction. The experts stated that in Mexico City dancing rueda casino, particularly the circle formation, changed the perception of the participants concerning gender identity. It also enhanced their ability to express themselves. Additionally, the experts mentioned that rueda casino creates an undefined special effect linked with euphoria or contagious energy for the viewers and dancers. However, the literature on Latin social dance (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010; Domene et al., 2014) only mentioned that dancers and observers find rueda casino an attractive popular dance to watch and to dance. Further research may be needed to define this special feature and how it is manifested.

As mentioned in the literature review (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010; Martínez, 2012), even if it is practiced worldwide, understanding and practicing rueda casino varies by locale. The findings in this thesis provide some evidence that rueda casino dance maintains certain foundational characteristics (e.g., the rhythm of the music, the tempo of

the steps, dancing and continuously exchanging partners, the circle formation, and a few basic figures), but local culture continuously influences the figures and the steps integrated into the salsa rhythm (e.g., reggaeton). The findings also suggest that the methodology to teach rueda casino was partially adapted in Mexico City based on a local dance. This adaptation facilitated learning but kept all the elements of the original Cuban dance. Further research could explore how dancing rueda casino affects cultural or ideological concepts for individuals in other communities.

Forcini et al. (2013) mentioned that for folk dance the value of cooperation is greater than the benefits of physical or mental activities carried out individually. Even activities in a small group are not as beneficial when compared to socially practiced folk dance. Studies on dance (Birks, 2007; Domene et al., 2014; Lovatt, 2011) have mentioned there is a need to study dancers at recreational venues as studies of this sort might provide detailed psychological and psychosocial information, for example regarding development of self-confidence during social dance. However, only Domene et al. (2014) reported on gender specific intrinsic motivation and the perceived benefit for Latin social dance. As opposed to salsa en línea and other Latin dances, the description of rueda casino that emerged in this study clearly points out that rueda casino originated and is taught and danced in recreational settings. This qualitative description focused mainly on rueda casino as a recreational dance. Nonetheless, the study's findings also include an overview of the experience of teaching and learning rueda casino in order to understand the difference between the experience of social dance and the experience of a rueda casino class.

Forcini et al. (2013) noted that folk dance is universal and uses nonverbal communication, thereby overcoming cultural and social barriers. Just as in folk dance, the findings in this study point out that communication in rueda casino is different. The findings from this study mention that communication between partners and within the group is through touch, sight, and other senses besides the voice. The experts mention an additional indefinable way of communication that others can feel, smell, or somehow respond to. As reported by interviewees and personal experience, it is important to mention at this point that women and men dancing rueda casino experience cross-gender interaction and communication differently. This alternate experience of communication in rueda casino can even affect communication in intimate relationships outside of the dance floor (Interviewee C).

Rueda casino is a safe exercise for all ages, and it can be danced simply or with very complex figures and forms. Pusnik and Sicherl (2010) and Granacher et al. (2012) pointed out salsa in general has a positive physical effect especially for seniors; the description in this thesis also seems to indicate this could be the case for simple rueda casino. Nevertheless, as mentioned in this thesis, some figures in rueda casino can be very complex to the point of captivating the spectators and nonprofessional dancers in search of a challenging dance or of a shared experience of this kind.

Findings in this study agree with the results from Domene et al. (2014) and Emerenziani et al. (2012) that rueda casino has different physical effects on males and females. Emerenziani et al. (2012) confirmed that females dancing rueda casino experience high energy expenditure and high heart rate. Unlike the results presented by

Emerenziani et al. (2012) and Domene et al. (2014), the interviewees proposed that dancing rueda casino may promote improvement of physical condition.

Soriano and Batson (2011) obtained findings regarding coordination and movement in patients with Parkinson using modern dance. And Kreutz (2008) obtained mobility results with tango Argentino. Although it had not been previously mentioned in studies in Latin dance, the interviewees mentioned an important positive change in coordination and agility for people dancing rueda casino. Further studies might be needed to analyze the impact in coordination and agility. It could even be of importance to study the difference between healthy and physically impaired or partially impaired populations.

Findings indicate rueda casino improves self-confidence, self-esteem, and social abilities in addition to promoting a feeling of safety for the participants. Similar to the experience reported for rueda casino, people who dance Latin social dance (Domene et al., 2014) or tango (Kreutz, 2008) appreciate a beneficial impact on social fitness and stress reduction. But contrary to the results regarding Kreutz's (2008) tango study, which mention social fitness and stress reduction, the experts participating in this study reported that rueda casino also has a high emotional impact on social feeling and intimacy. In Lovatt's (2011) results, participants between 25 and 55 years of age considered their levels of confidence to diminish when dancing. However, the experts in this study suggested that rueda casino positively influences participants' self-esteem, confidence, and expression regardless of their age or gender. It is possible that dancing in a group could positively influence participants in this sense. Other folk dances with a similar circle formation could probably convey further knowledge. However, the unique tempo

and characteristics of rueda casino may also contribute to influencing self-esteem, confidence, and expression, therefore further research is needed.

Studies reporting a reduction of psychological stress, anxiety, and improvement of mood have been limited to tango (Pinninger et al., 2010; Kreutz, 2008) and salsa dancing, for women with mild to moderate depression (Birks, 2007). The findings in this thesis also suggest that rueda casino reduces stress, anxiety, and depression by promoting a positive experience of emotions, movement, and social interaction. Further studies could be made to quantify these positive effects for rueda casino.

Even though dancing rueda casino is about the individual experience of the body and the letting out of emotions, unexpected findings in this thesis revealed that watching rueda casino awakens in many people a desire to experience and feel the dance (see Interviewees A, B, and C). Comments from this study's experts pointed out that in rueda casino, there is a psychological feeling of attractiveness, of euphoria, as well as other changes linked with emotions which have an effect on the dancers and the observers, but the exact definition or identification of these emotions remains vague. It was mentioned, however, that the feelings may slightly differ by gender. As mentioned by the three interviewees and based on personal observation, there is energy in a rueda casino group that is difficult to find in other dances.

Only Bosse (2008) considered ethnic identity in a qualitative study and the participants found salsa en línea did not narrow social gaps. The experts mention from their experience and some of their students' comments that the experience of dancing rueda casino can make the individual aware of some personal psychological and psychosocial concepts related to ethnic or social background. For example, the experts in

this study mentioned that Mexican women do not know how to move the hips with the same cadence as Cubans do (Interviewee B), and they may not dare to move in a more daring way. Findings also point out that Mexicans are used to dancing rueda casino with more complicated figures. Two interviewees mentioned that the ideology Colombians and Cubans have is the reason they are not affected by social opinion in respect to the appropriateness of a woman's dance. Further studies may be needed to clarify if all participants dancing rueda casino experience consciously an intellectual understanding of personal psychological and psychosocial concepts related to ethnic or social background.

Balbuena Gutiérrez (2000) and Renta (2004) mention rueda casino is a dance that portrays Cuban social concepts: historical, political, and even religious standpoints. From the findings, Cubans seem to purposefully and naturally surrender to the physical sensation of rueda casino. Different from the findings regarding Mexicans, Cubans seem to dance with an intentional sensuality or sexuality, and they intentionally want to share the experience in a group. It is possible that Cubans, through rueda casino, want to bring in the physical enjoyment of dance instead of the intellectual, elegance, and refinement that can be perceived in salsa en línea or other dances. Alternatively, findings report that Mexicans have a particular interest in dancing casino with complex figures. This could possibly indicate that Mexicans seek an intellectual challenge in rueda casino. It is possible that the experience of rueda casino is different depending on the social concepts of the practitioners. This might even be observed in the embodiment of the dance. Further research is needed in these aspects of this dance form.

In the literature review, Bosse (2008) mentioned that salsa en línea practice was not successful in promoting identity for the group. Even though the dance is similar in

rhythm, music, and some figures, it did not have the socializing and grouping effect that the findings in this thesis suggest rueda casino has. Folk dance (Forcini et al., 2013), and specifically rueda casino (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010), is considered a socio-cultural event. Contrary to rueda casino, salsa en línea is a dance made for shows. It is possible that the lack of social support and a common group goal caused participants in Bosse's (2008) study to be more sensitive to the exigencies of the steps and the routine for salsa en línea. In that study, the group of participants did not experience dancing as a social event and it could seem this resulted in a lack of identity for the group. The findings confirm that children from families that like to dance, including teenagers, adults, and the elderly, enjoy dancing rueda casino. The findings of this project indicate that people dancing rueda casino experience comradeship and social integration.

Balbuena Gutiérrez (2010) also mentioned it is common for a particular group of rueda casino dancers in Cuba to add ritual gestures and erotic gestures to casino dance, possibly related to the Afro-Caribbean influence. All the experts interviewed for this study agreed that in Mexico there is some resistance to being mischievous when dancing rueda casino, but in Cuba it is different. "I have seen people in Cuba dance rueda casino with more audacity. People touch each other more, they kiss, or even touch each other's genitals" (Interviewee C). However, there has been a strong Cuban movement to dance with style and elegance, and express masculinity with sensuality and femininity without aggressiveness "because salsa is to give and receive emotions" (Balbuena Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 90). Considering the literature and the findings of this study, it is possible to conclude that sensuality to a certain degree has been adopted by the international practice of rueda casino. But as mentioned in these findings, movements, gestures, or steps

considered obscene, even by Cuban standards, have not permeated the international practice of rueda casino. It is possible that a resistance to embody sensuality in the dance beyond what can be accepted by the group of participants inhibits the permeation of these movements. Future research could explore the evolution of the Cuban expression of rueda casino within different ethnical groups.

Granacher et al. (2012) mentioned the importance of the music, how the instructor is liked, and salience of the exercise to maintain interest for the participants. Birks (2007) mentioned the importance of having the appropriate approach for a dance intervention, as the methodology should consider people with perfectionistic traits and with low self-esteem. Interviewees mentioned the methodology for teaching rueda casino involves constant partner change and group formation from the beginning. They point out that this methodology provides a supportive environment for the participants to learn, feel integrated, and be taught individually or in smaller groups if needed. The findings indicate that rueda casino has the appropriate methodology and approach to maintain interest for the participants.

Conclusion

With my experience dancing rueda casino, I found it fascinating that a recreational partnered and group dance, largely unexamined, could change my physical and psychological way of being. Previous studies have demonstrated that dance is beneficial for physical health (Domene et al, 2014; Granacher et al., 2012; Soriano & Batson, 2011), supporting people with stress and depression (Birks, 2007; Domene et al., 2014; Emerenziani et al., 2012; Pinniger et al., 2012), and a few have demonstrated the psychosocial consequences of certain dance techniques (Kreutz, 2008; Lovatt, 2011; Pusnik & Sicherl, 2010). The findings in this study suggest rueda casino, a recreational folk dance originally from Cuba, provides the benefits previous studies have mentioned for other types of dance.

Nowadays, rueda casino dancing has expanded beyond Cuba's borders, and diverse individuals have the experience of socially dancing rueda casino. This thesis described aspects not previously considered in the literature including the physical benefits related to physical coordination, movement patterns and exertion, the psychological changes such as improved self-confidence, self-expression, and cross-gender interaction. This study also examined casino rueda's beneficial psychosocial aspects related to social integration including reduction of socioeconomic and ethnic barriers. This qualitative description of rueda casino establishes a foundation of knowledge for the definition and effects of rueda casino. This foundation of knowledge presents rueda casino as a form of dance that benefits the participants' body, mind, emotional, and social being. Moreover, this study opens up future possibilities for further

research in which rueda casino might be considered to be an essential part of an integrative approach to wellness.

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APPENDICES

A. Questions for the Interview

Experience of phenomenon

What are the typical factors that influence your experience of rueda casino dancing?

What is your explanation or definition of rueda casino?

Are there different methods to teach casino? Where could I obtain further information on this?

How is teaching a casino class different to dancing *casino* at a venue?

Which is the structure of how would you describe a *casino* session?

Have you practiced or do you know of other group or partner dances that convey similar reactions as rueda casino?

Are the steps in *casino* particular to a group?

Do you consider the experience of a casino session is the same for men as for women? And in the long term are there different gender responses to dancing casino?

Do you consider it as a safe exercise for all ages and conditions? Literature mentions benefits for static and dynamic control, what are your comments?

Do you consider *casino* has different effects on participants depending on their age, gender, or ethnic background?

Physical aspects

How are movements in *casino* dance different to daily movements? Would this relate to physical changes in the body?

Have you detected physical changes in yourself and the group while dancing? Could you describe them?

Literature mentions an increase in heart rate and energy expenditure for women practicing *casino*. Do you believe it is only physical demand or does it have a psychological aspect to it?

Have you thought of or know of studies evaluating heart rate or cortisol levels related to dancing to a rhythm similar to casino? Do you know of neurosubstances liberated during dancing? Do you have any suggested research I should look into?

Psychological aspects

Does casino promote a different experience of the body and the environment compared with daily experience? Is time and space experienced differently? If so, in what way?

Are there abilities such as attention and concentration required for *casino*? Why? Does dancing casino modify the mental state of participants?

Do you consider practicing *casino* increases the expression of emotions? Which emotions? Are they positive or negative emotions?

Does casino reduce stress and depression for the participants?

Psychosocial aspects

Literature says casino developed from the influence of African communities. Do you agree with this? Do you believe this influences the experience of the dance for people with different ethnic background?

Have you taught groups with participants with different ethnic background? Is *casino* similarly understood and danced?

Do you consider casino reduces ethnic, gender, age, or socioeconomic barriers? How and why?

Is there an increase on social interaction after a casino session?

Does the environment while dancing casino increase or reduce fear of dance? Why and how?

Appendix B: Transcription of Interview 1

Interviewee A, May 5, 2014

Te conocen en el medio como el Indio pero tu nombre completo es...

Mi nombre completo es Luis Rafael Martínez Cancio. Soy cubano nacionalizado mexicano, llevo 16 años viviendo en México.

¿Por qué la salsa casino o esta forma de baile te llamó? Yo no llegué a la forma de baile, la forma de baile llegó a mí. Yo nací y era parte de la música popular cubana y del baile popular del momento. Crecí con el baile. No me acerqué al baile por una razón sino que nací con el baile. Fue natural, como aquí vas a las fiestas al punchis punchis, mi fiesta era con unos amigos bailando casino, de forma natural. De forma más avanzada, nos juntábamos un grupo de amigos que nos gustaba bailar casino y empezamos a hacer una rueda de casino ya formal de adolescentes un día estábamos en mi casa otro día en la casa de una amiga, así de cuates. Pero bailar casino solo fue natural, en las fiestas, en mi casa, en el barrio. Veía a los adultos bailar y los imitabas, fue por imitación.

¿Seguiste en algún tipo de estudio o profesional?

El casino yo lo traje a México, llega conmigo a México. No había casino, tiene que haber habido intentos anteriores de cubanos pero de forma masiva yo fui el iniciador, hace 15 años y tanto. Año 99, como Junio de 1999 es la fecha que le pongo aproximada, porque estaba dando clases en varios lugares.

El casino realmente lo aprendo en la calle no lo aprendo en la escuela de arte. Sí me lleva a la escuela de arte. Empiezo bailando casino en la calle, y a través del casino descubro que hay una escuela de arte. Yo negado a que la escuela de arte era de niñas, de gays, un día un maestro de casino nos dijo que nos llevaba a la escuela de arte a

enseñarnos la escuela de arte. Negado, pero fuimos y en la escuela de arte no se aprende nada de casino, el casino se bailaba en la calle era el baile de moda. En la escuela de arte me enseñaron contemporáneo, afrocubano, danza moderna, otras cosas, expresión corporal. Pero cuando entré a la escuela ya bailaba. Cuando llegué a México aprovecho los conocimientos de danza profesional e implemento un método, hago un híbrido con el son y empiezo a enseñar casino. Veo que hay buen movimiento salsero y que les gustaba la salsa, pero no conocían la salsa casino, ahí aproveché y enseñé la escuela cubana.

¿Qué estructura tiene la experiencia de salsa casino?

Es muy sencillo. Es empezar a mover el cuerpo. Lo que hacemos es separar las partes del cuerpo, es un calentamiento sencillo que se hace para el son cubano donde comienza por rodillas, cadera, torso, cabeza, brazos. Las partes por separadas, después juntas todas. Primero se hace a un tiempo después vas agilizándolo, después lo haces a dos tiempos, y después se hace a tres tiempos, como el son cubano, hasta que vuelvas a encontrar los pies en cuatro tiempos como bailamos casino. Pero es enseñar a mover y escuchar la música al mismo tiempo que estás moviendo el cuerpo estás dando una clase de apreciación musical, al mismo tiempo ellos están escuchando el tiempo en que se comienza a bailar. Es muy sencillo. Pero es increíble cómo la gente no logra coordinar, y con esto van coordinando. Y con un ejercicio tan sencillo, hasta tonto lo veo, como este la gente aprende a coordinar. Yo siempre digo que los maestros los que enseñamos a bailar enseñamos a coordinar para una disciplina. Eso es bailar, coordinar.

¿Cuál es el término salsa casino es correcto?

El nombre correcto es casino. Los cubanos no utilizamos la palabra salsa. La palabra salsa es globalizada, es la que el mundo conoce. Ya le pusieron a la cubana “salsa

cubana” o “salsa casino”. Un cubano dice te invito a bailar casino, como el son, chachachá, mambo, el nombre es casino. Pero la palabra salsa no está dentro del baile, lo que pasa es que el mundo lo conoce como salsa. Pero el cubano no identificamos la palabra salsa. Hoy en Cuba ya llegó la palabra salsa y ya se usa para invitar a bailar a extranjeros. En los años 70s, 80s, 90s el cubano te invitaba a bailar casino. A finales de los 90s, 2000, ya la palabra salsa penetró en Cuba. Ya te encuentras quien diga, vamos a bailar una salsita o pon una salsita. En Cuba nadie baila salsa en línea, la salsa cubana es nuestra y es casino.

¿Cuál es el método de casino? ¿Hay alguien más que ha desarrollado otro método?

Seguramente hay gente que ha desarrollado otros métodos para casino. En México, la ciudad de México, todo mundo aprendió a bailar por este método. Ya se baila casino en otros lugares de México. Muchos de mis alumnos han salido Otros cubanos que han salido, los mexicanos piden las clases de salsa. Empiezo a dar la clase y termino diciendo, los cubanos no le llamamos salsa, le llamamos casino. Le pueden llamar como quieran, casino, salsa cubana pero al final es casino. A nivel internacional le llaman salsa cubana, salsa casino. En Venezuela también le llaman salsa casino. La palabra comercial es “salsa”, la palabra que todo mundo conoce es “salsa”, la palabra “casino” se asocia con los juegos o ruletas. Hasta cierto punto es inteligente ponerle el sobrenombre “salsa”. Salsa ayuda a identificarlo como baile, aunque a mí no me agrada. Baile de casino es exclusivo de los cubanos.

La salsa es lo mismo que hacemos nosotros. Es un nombre que surge en los 70s, y le pusieron “salsa” para no ponerle un nombre cubano. Por eso es algo molesto, porque

viene del son cubano. La música cubana es el son cubano. Salsa sale cuando un grupo de músicos, que ya no estaban viviendo en Cuba, y se reúnen. Unos estaban haciendo mambo, otros chachachá, otros son cubano, otros plena, otros bachata, otros cumbia. Entonces, hacen como un team, una agrupación y deciden llamarle salsa porque tiene varios ingredientes, tiene un poco de todo esto. Le pusieron salsa por eso. Pero la base de todo eso es el son cubano. El casino es la evolución del son cubano, como baile es la evolución del son cubano.

El son tiene ciertas figuras particulares, el casino es un híbrido de todo, de mambo, chachachá. El casino se llama casino porque surgió en el Casino Deportivo de la Habana. No hay otra razón. Empezamos a bailar algo nuevo y empezamos a decir “vamos a bailar al Casino”, “vamos a bailar al Casino”, ¿qué estamos bailando? pues vamos a llamarle casino. Y en la música, el son cubano como música fue evolucionando, cambiando la sonoridad, fueron metiendo instrumentos y frases de otros géneros, dentro del son fueron metiendo partes de mambo, de chachachá, partes de rumba. Todo eso dio origen en la música al movimiento que se llama timba, y la palabra timba es la “panza” ‘que hay dentro de la panza? Hay comida tripas, fusión. La timba es fusión. Que todos los géneros musicales dentro del son cubano. Casino surgió como baile en los años 50s, 1955 ó 1954, y el son fue evolucionando también de manera que surgió la timba. Para no ponerle timba, le pusieron salsa fuera de Cuba en los 70s. El lanzamiento de la salsa se conoce por eso. La salsa en línea se baila igual que el son Cubano, un vaivén para adelante y para atrás, porque lo que traían era del son cubano, del mambo, chachachá. El casino es un parteaguas, es un baile diferente con otras intenciones, aunque los pies estaban haciendo algo muy parecido al son cubano, en los brazos estábamos dándole otra

intención, la fusión de rock and roll, de swing, de todos estos bailes de los años 50s. Se agarró mucho del rock and roll, todas las vueltas del casino son alusivas a rock and roll.

¿Y dónde entra la parte grupal?

Como la línea, comenzaron a bailar algo nuevo que no sabían, comenzaron amigos, eran cuates. Se paraban en una fila y a alguien se le ocurrió una vuelta, y la enseñaba y decía a ésta le vamos a poner “70”, le ponían los nombres según lo que querían ponerle, quizás el nombre de una chica o de un chico. Yo tengo una vuelta que se llama Marquís, se llama Marquís porque la creé cuando estaba dando clases en el Hotel Marquís Reforma. Otra que se llama Tania, una cubana que estaba dando un beso, y la del beso se llama Tania. La Mami, se la regalé a la Mami, una señora que fue a Cuba y bailando allá unos cubanos le empezaron a decir “baila Mami” y se le quedó el sobrenombre o apodo de “Alicia La Mami”, un día de su cumpleaños hice una vuelta y una amiga me dijo “¿por qué no le pones “la Mami”?” y se la regalamos como la vuelta de ella. Otra que se llama Rodolfo, porque un alumno que se llama Rodolfo le puse una vuelta e hizo otra cosa y lo vi y dije eso está bueno, vamos a ponerle Rodolfo, y se le quedó Rodolfo. Y así va la vuelta según el lugar o contexto.

La rueda. Comenzaron una pareja y daba una vuelta y se ponían una pareja y decía “a ver enseñamela” a lado de la otra, y así cuando eran 2 o 3 parejas sí se escuchaban, pero cuando se juntaban más parejas el que estaba en la punta ya no escuchaba entonces se dan cuenta que el círculo es la mejor figura para verse todos y escucharse. Y eso además da la posibilidad de continuidad, porque la rueda es infinita. Da la posibilidad de cambiar pareja. Sin embargo, en una fila, se acababa y tenían que correr a la punta para seguir bailando y no era la figura idónea para bailar en team. Con el casino podían bailar

una fila sin parar. ¡Gracias al que se le ocurrió eso! Imagínate 20 parejas como las que tenemos en el Mama Rumba bailando en fila.

Mencionas dos cosas, una en clase y otra bailando en la fiesta. ¿la dinámica es distinta?

No, es lo mismo. En la clase podemos parar la música, explicar más tranquilo, demostrar la figura o la vuelta. Sí a veces utilizamos a todo el mundo con un mismo frente para enseñar las vueltas. Porque para que todo el mundo aprenda los pasos y todo, no utilizamos la rueda. Volvemos a la rueda para ejecutar eso, ya la rueda es la máxima expresión del Casino, ¿Cómo es posible que 20 personas estén bailando lo mismo y que un solo tipo diga una palabra o una frase pequeña? Es decir los mandos tienen que ser muy cortos, directos para que la gente entienda rápido, capte rápido. Se requieren nombres cortos “70”, “75”, “Tania”, “caracol”, “caracol con alas”. Los nombres pueden ser cualquiera, pero tienen que ser muy directos y muy concisos, para que la gente responda rápido a la voz del líder y así puede trabajar.

¿Es igual la experiencia de un hombre o de una mujer bailando casino?

No sé. Pero en los alumnos lo que veo es que las mujeres lo aprenden mucho más rápido, porque la mujer es muy sencilla pues es “flojitas y cooperando”. A medida que la mujer se deja llevar, el hombre es el que tiene la responsabilidad de guiar. En el baile, en cualquier tipo de baile, no puede haber dos personas guiando, los dos piensan pero uno guía al otro.

Sí la mujer ayuda al hombre. La mujer ayuda al hombre con su estilo. Si la mujer está dura y se resiste dificulta el baile, si se deja llevar y ya entiende permite el baile. La comunicación está en las manos, en el contacto, a través de las manos transmitimos lo

que queremos hacer. Yo le digo a la mujer muévete para aquí o para allá a través de las manos, es increíble, yo no necesito hablar para nada. Llega un momento de comunicación tal en el casino que no hay que hablar, tú la mueves, la giras según para donde tú hagas la intención del movimiento. Porque la mujer responde al hombre. El hombre es el creativo, no el creador, en toda la salsa incluso en línea.

¿Es un ejercicio o tipo de baile para cualquier edad, o condición física?

Sí, indiscutible. Mi compadre que baila con mi niña tiene setenta y tantos, y mi niña tiene seis años, y ahí está.

¿Sabes de algún grupo que haya trabajado con personas con discapacidad física o mental?

Sí he tenido una, dos o tres personas, pero un grupo en específico no. La experiencia con esas personas es que responden muy bien. Un niño autista, nunca entró a la clase, era un niño que le gustaba la salsa. La oía. Era niño y hoy es un hombre. Este niño era autista y con los primeros acordes o notas de la canción reconocía, se la poníamos al principio o se la poníamos al final y se quedaba concentrado, y decía es fulano de tal y la canción es fulano de tal. Amante de la salsa, la salsa en general. El papá y yo nos hicimos súper amigos y cuando cumplió la mayoría de edad hablé para que escuchara. Yo pedí que no le cobraran en el mama rumba. Se paraba a bailar solo y escuchaba la música y cantaba todas las canciones él solo.

¿Lo hubiera hecho en su casa? ¿Qué diferencia hacía que fuera contigo a la clase?

Que le gustaba el lugar. Le gustaba la música que ponían en “mama rumba”. Yo creo era su terapia, eso lo relajaba. El papá decía, esto es su pasión. Cuando alguien tiene su pasión, tenga lo que tenga, eso libera todo. Ahora tengo una niña que tiene unos dedos

unidos, y a veces hace gestos como que le duele, pero no le duele ahí está feliz. Es una niña, va a cumplir 15 años y baila el ritmo. El ritmo no tiene nacionalidad, no tiene género, no tiene edad. El ritmo se lleva o no se lleva. El ritmo es algo que te dan o no te dan. Y no importa que seas autista, que tengas un pie o no, porque con un pie puedes bailar. El otro día vi a uno con una muleta y estaba bailando. Eso no tiene nacionalidad, género, ni nada. El ritmo está dentro de la persona.

¿Se puede desarrollar?

Hay unos que creen que tienen dos pies izquierdos, lo que sucede es que esos son descoordinados. Pero eso es vital, los maestros lo que enseñamos es a coordinar. Tú crees que tienen dos pies izquierdos... no, tú lo que tienes es que eres descoordinado. Cuando yo llego a la primera clase, y les digo esto mismo: lo que enseñamos es a coordinar los pies, con la música, con todo. Un sencillo ejemplo de coordinación es: los siento en una silla y lanzo cualquier cosa hacia atrás, me volteo del lado derecho y no lo veo, me volteo del lado izquierdo y lo veo. Pero hay gente que da la vuelta por toda la derecha para tomar la pluma con su mano derecha, cuando pudieron haber estirado la mano izquierda y tomar la pluma. Coordinación es simplificar todo el movimiento, eso es coordinar, hacerlo lo más sencillo posible. Hay gente que no tiene coordinación. Hay gente que es arrítmico que pueden mejorar con el ejercicio, ejercitando e insistiendo. Que siempre van a tener un problema en su vida, sí es cierto, pero ejercitando lo llegan a mejorar. Hay otros que son arrítmicos pero tienen una captación increíble, y contamos y están haciendo algo diferente con los pies ven la figura y hacen el braseo completo pero eso no es bailar. Y lo hacen porque ya saben. Bailar es coordinar todos los pies con los brazos. Ese no está bailando, está moviendo los brazos y ya sabe lo que va a hacer.

¿Cuáles son los cambios físicos del casino?

Yo he notado en las mujeres. Primero coordinas mucho mejor, te ayuda a coordinar. Hay una cuestión social, y la gente se preocupa por su cuerpo, por su bienestar, por su personalidad, por como luce, por cómo me veo. Quiero verme bonita, quiero verme guapa, quiero agradar, y quiero ser parte de, y para ser parte de no puedo ser fodonga, no quiero oler mal. El ritmo mueve a la gente. Sí cambia a la gente. Y socializan. Es el punto máximo del casino, que se armen grupos, se hacen grandes grupos, se hace una familia, se hace un grupo y se convierte en casi una adicción porque a la gente le interesa socializar. Hay el que te gusta, el que odias. Si yo sé que el que me gusta está ahí voy a venir todos los días, a lo mejor coincidimos en algo, o estudiamos lo mismo y no sabíamos. Se hace grupo. Las mujeres y los hombres queremos lucir diferente. La vanidad nos gana. Y sí, físicamente las mujeres se nota la coordinación, el movimiento, el cachondeo a la hora de bailar, la sensualidad, que eso es lo que el baile permite. Sacar ese yo interior que tienen guardado en su oficina, eso lo sacan a la hora de bailar.

¿Qué diferencias ves en la parte social cuando llega a bailar una persona y luego cuando acaba de bailar casino?

Hay pocos que se van, la mayoría se queda porque es cuando comienza la parte social. Durante la clase estamos socializando porque estamos obligados, pero después de la clase socializas tú como individuo. En la clase estamos socializando porque estamos obligados, estamos cambiando de pareja, al cambiar de pareja socializas con todos. El hombre socializa con todas las mujeres que hay y la mujer con todos los hombres. Terminada la clase empieza la socialización puede ser con el hombre más guapo, con la

misma gente. Ya eres tú como individuo. Ahí ya no te lleva nadie, es individual. Tú decides a dónde vas.

El cambio de pareja te abre el espectro como dijiste ¿qué puedes decir del cambio de pareja en cuanto a diferencia cultural, clase social, nivel educativo, edad?

El casino es integrador. 100% integrador. Las diferencias sociales en el “Mama rumba” a veces son abismales, gente que trabaja de sastre, de mecánico, de talachero, hasta el dueño o dueña de la empresa, o el alto ejecutivo de tal empresa. Encuentras todas y tienes que socializar y no te queda de otra porque en la clase una de las reglas es cambiar de pareja. El baile en sí lleva implícito el cambio de pareja. Puede encontrarse el que trabaja en el metro con el dueño del metro. Interesante. El dueño de la empresa con su empleado. Yo di clase en la Universidad Anáhuac. Los doctores en ciencias con los empleados de servicio, y muchas veces los que mejor bailaban eran los empleados de servicio, es una lección de vida. Cómo es gente aunque a lo mejor nunca habían platicado de nada, como dentro de una clase llegaron a socializar, y los días que teníamos fiesta como bailaban entre ellos. No bailaban doctor con doctor, querían bailar con el que mejor bailara. Si la dueña no sabe bailar, con la dueña no voy a bailar. Es una cuestión de lucimiento y de expresar lo que aprendí con él o la que mejor lo haga. Aquí no importa lo que hagas o lo que seas, vamos a bailar. Con quien me guste.

Varios estudios relacionan movimiento o lo social con cierta liberación de neurosustancias. ¿Sabes de algo en ese sentido?

Sí se ve el cachondeo... No conozco alguien que trabaje en ese sentido. Pero indiscutible que cuando uno baila desprende algo es seguro. Cuando bailas bien, desprendes algo. Y lo respiras también. He tenido alumnas que me han dicho el de aquí

me está echando los perros, el de allá mira qué guapo está pero usted que está bailando aquí enfrente tiene algo diferente. Y eso pasa con hombres y mujeres. Incluso hombres hacia hombres. Y me ha pasado estaba yo bailando con una compañera concentrado en un punto y había un grupo de gays y el comentario fue “hay mira qué rico baila”. Lo sintieron muy cachondo, muy atractivo y eso pasó. Sí desprendemos algo, sí provocamos algo. Independiente de edad, tú provocas y no hay edad. Provocas o no provocas.

¿Practicar bailar reduce el miedo?

Sí claro, te da seguridad porque estás en público. Sacan esos miedos que tienen dentro, se liberan. Poco a poco, no es que superen por completo, hay quien lo logra superar por completo pero sí va sacando. Y si destacas al bailar con mayor razón, y si alguien se interesa por ti a la hora de bailar o notas una diferencia tú mismo notas que hay un interés y eso mismo va aumentando la autoestima.

¿Y eso se relaciona con el estrés?

Sí claro, eso mismo libera estrés. Se te olvida, se te olvida la oficina.

¿Con el casino se tienen ventajas a tener menos miedo a bailar que otras formas de baile?

Sí, porque es grupal. A veces la gente quiere en privado para aprender y para impresionar. Yo tenía caso que han venido... “Mi esposa bailar muy bien”, “mi esposa es cubana y baila muy bien, quiero sorprenderla”, “quiero sorprenderla y que sepa que ya bailo” “o quiero ir a Cuba y quiero que me lleven a bailar casino”. Sí vienen a la clase grupal o bailan en privado. Pero si vas a la clase en grupo el baile en grupo te ayuda, es lo mejor que han inventado. Y pocos bailes son en grupo. Hay pocos bailes grupales.

¿Cuál es tu punto de vista al comparar el casino con ballroom dancing, o kilting u otros bailes grupales?

Todo tiene una influencia. El casino viene de la corte francesa, tienen cosas de por allá. Lo único que cuando llegan a Cuba esa fusión entre lo español y el africano le da una sabrosura que no le quita nadie. Esa sabrosura. Los europeos los estamos reconquistando con la salsa. Están redescubriendo y los tiene apasionados. El casino en Europa es todo un boom, cuando le ponemos todo el sabor del americano, del latino. Somos especiales, ese sabor que le pusimos ese toque latino superamos toda la esencia del baile. Sí tiene orígenes lejanos en la corte, pero esto es muy criollo, muy cubano, muy nuestro.

Va a seguir evolucionando y cambiando en diferentes países ¿a nivel mundial cómo ves el casino posicionado?

El casino está en segundo plano, por debajo de la salsa americana o salsa en línea que es Nueva York o Puerto Rico, dónde hay más, Los Ángeles. Le dicen salsa americana, estilo de Nueva York, o de Miami. Pero en el casino, no hay casino estilo de Miami, estilo de México o estilo de otro lado, el casino es un solo estilo y es de Cuba. Lo que pasa es que la salsa en línea comenzó para los espectáculos y se hizo popular. Esto es un baile popular Cubano.

¿Alguna otra cultura o alguien más puede expandir el casino o sólo cubanos?

La palabra salsa es muy fuerte, el bloqueo económico que tuvo EUA a Cuba fue en parte responsable que este baile no saliera al mundo, que estuviera bloqueado. Sí el mundo, hemos viajado y lo hemos puesto en el mundo. Yo lo puse aquí en México. Es increíble que un baile de los años 50s se implantara en México en los años 1999-2000,

estando a dos horas y media en avión En Europa lo conocen más, hace mucho tiempo. También algunos cubanos no les interesó promover el baile, yo lo promoví por necesidad. Por economía o cuestión económica. Estaba bailando en un show y al ver que pedían “salsa” empecé a dar clase de casino.

¿Sugieres algún tipo de literatura en el tema?

Hay un libro de la maestra Graciela Carbonero, se llama “Bailar casino“ o “Para bailar casino”. Es la historia del casino en Cuba, cómo surge. Y tiene que haber otros libros sobre casino. Lanzaron otro libro de otra cubana sobre casino, que fue una tesis de una alumna. Pero busca como salsa casino, o casino, o rueda de casino. Yo hace ocho o diez años trabajaba en un colegio y les pedí a los alumnos que buscaran todo sobre el casino, hasta los nombres de las personas que iniciaron con casino. De hecho yo conozco a los fundadores de salsa casino, ese grupo que inició con el movimiento en los 50s. El baile en Cuba es el evento, es en Noviembre, a finales.

¿Y la música tiene otro ritmo?

La salsa suena diferente a la timba. Nosotros bailamos casino pero es diferente. La timba, que todo el mundo conoce como salsa cubana. En esto se han hecho muchos estudios, Miguel Arnét. Sobre la música sí hay más estudios. Sobre la influencia de la timba. Irakere. Son como la vanguardia latina. Hay muchas otras en timba, sobre la timba. Para un cubano la timba es “ate de guayaba con queso blanco”, ¿qué cosa es?, es moreno con el blanco, es la fusión.

En cuanto a expertos puedes platicar con Caro, con Denise, a un venezolano que daba clase, a Edgar que también fue a Cuba, a José Luis.

Appendix C. Transcription of Interview 2

Interviewee B, May 6, 2014

Mi nombre es Edgar Zepeta Silva

¿Qué te llama de la salsa casino?

A mí en particular, cuando empecé en el medio, fue yendo a bailar a Mama Rumba. Y me sorprendió mucho la habilidad y la complejidad para dar las vueltas. Y fue un reto para mí y dije que quería aprender a bailar así. En México hacemos vueltas muy sencillas y muy básicas, a parte bailamos todo igual. La cumbia, la salsa y el rock and roll se baila igual en México. El hecho de llegar a Mama rumba y ver cómo se cambiaban de pareja, cómo hacían las vueltas, fue un reto ver y aprender cómo se hacía.

¿Has practicado otro tipo de baile?

Sí, soy egresado del INBA. Bailarín de folclor mexicano, de ballet y baile contemporáneo. De ahí me fui a practicar folclor colombiano, y un poco de folclor peruano y terminé en casino. La escuela me dio conocimientos de muchas otras cosas y conocimientos básicos de swing, danzón, rock and roll. Pero soy experto en casino, o sea salsa casino. Casino no fue parte de los estudios profesionales, pero los estudios me ayudaron analizarla y aprenderla. Como bailarín estudiado es más fácil enseñarlo y transmitirlo, porque lo puedo desmenuzarlo, analizar y estudiar de una forma diferente y poder enseñarlo a otra persona. No es sólo aprender una vuelta, y repetir pasos, tiene más allá que sólo copiar los pasos.

¿Cómo describes el método de enseñanza?

El método de enseñanza no sé si es piramidal o gradual, no sé cómo llamarlo específicamente, empiezas con lo básico y depende de cada maestro. Trabajo con Luis

Martínez y al ser la clase masiva, con mucha gente, no puedes ser tan particular, y el método de enseñanza es básicamente de repetición, no puedo detenerme a explicar los detalles o corregir. Todo eso, se enseñan las bases, se enseña el primer tiempo, el ritmo, cómo se acomodan los pies, en algo muy rápido que a veces si hay gente que le cuesta trabajo y no pueden con ese tipo de clase. Ya después pasan el nivel de aprender a mover los pies, se empieza a aprender secuencias básicas y como mover los brazos y los pies, y viene el siguiente nivel donde se empieza con pareja donde se hacen secuencias de pasos y vueltas y van aumentando de dificultad hasta llegar al cambio de pareja en la rueda de casino y figuras más avanzadas. Incluso a llegar a bailar con tres o cuatro parejas o cargadas o más avanzado. Yo en una clase particular, 1 o 2 personas, el proceso es más lento y me enfoco más a que entiendan el ritmo. Según lo que yo entiendo el ritmo es el tiempo que marca la música, en chachachá el ritmo es pa-pa-pa pa-pa, el ritmo de la salsa es un-dos-tres un-dos-tres y tiene una pausa que marca la diferencia. Cada baile tiene un ritmo y eso me interesa que lo aprenda la gente porque si no sabes el ritmo no vas a poder bailar bien. Una cosa es aprenderte los pasos y otra es bailar. Es muy importante que aprendan los pasos y aprendan cómo se mueven los pies. Enseñar que tienen que levantar la rodilla, hacer el paso más específico, porque por tendencia somos muy flojos y tendemos a hacer todo muy cómodo y a los dos minutos los cambiaron. Soy muy específico con personas que tienen problemas de ritmo o de coordinación. Yo trabajo mucho con esas personas lo que necesiten. Si son problemas de ritmo a veces les pongo a trabajar con las manos, algo sencillo, y que repitan para desarrollar, igual para problemas de coordinación.

¿Has trabajado con personas que tienen discapacidades motoras o psicológicas?

Ahora soy profesor de danza en una escuela, y antes trabajé en una escuela donde tuve un niño con síndrome de Down, 2 niños autistas, y otros con capacidades diferentes. ¿Cómo se trabaja? No fue difícil trabajar con personas así, es tenerles un poco de paciencia, lo aprenden muy bien y lo absorben muy bien. Son un poco más lentos pero sí lo hacen. En el caso de los autistas no era un grado avanzado de autismo, sólo había un niño con un grado más avanzado y mi solución para este niño con mayor grado de autismo fue ponerlo a trabajar con una niña y ella le decía qué paso seguía pues no tenía la capacidad para memorizar el paso que seguía o se distraía. En particular no trabajé salsa casino fueron otros bailes, pero esa es la experiencia que tuve.

¿Casino pudiera ser una opción?

Yo creo que aquí el casino, es una danza o un género que puedes tener cierta afinidad. Su función como danza. Los beneficios que te puede dar salsa casino te los puede dar cualquier baile en su mayoría que es la coordinación, la agilidad, la sociabilidad, confianza. Eso te lo dan todos los bailes. Simplemente tú eres más afín a cierto tipo de baile. EN particular el casino, ahora que trabajo con preescolar y con secundaria no es un baile que les llame la atención por no ser moderno. Aunque está de moda en los antros, para ellos no es rap, no es rock, no es tribal. Entonces no les llama la atención. La forma es por ahí, acercarlos por lo que les guste y después ponerles el baile que sea. Es el hecho de aprender a bailar.

¿Qué rango de edad?

Sí, cualquier persona o cualquier edad pueden bailar casino. En edades entre los 16 y 17 descubren que quieren descubrir con las chavas, empieza esa cosquilla de aprender cómo a bailar, ya que es una forma de cortejo. Es una forma de pavoneo, es una

forma de decir aquí estoy mírenme, véanme. En México tenemos el problema del machismo, está estereotipadísimo que los hombres no bailan, eso me ha costado cambiar con los alumnos de secundaria. Y esto afecta mucho a la mujer. Ves a las colombianas, cubanas y tiene que ver más con la ideología que con la capacidad. Cuando le dices a una mexicana baila, le llegan a decir que no es la forma, hay una represión que una mujer no puede ser muy burda porque se puede relacionar a una mujer de moral ligera. O sea también hay esa represión de la mujer, aunque es más permitido que bailen, es como muy restringido lo que pueden hacer. Por lo que no se atreven a hacer un movimiento más atrevido o mover más las caderas por el qué dirán. EN el hombre es más evidente, es muy criticado. Todo esto influye mucho en México. EN otros países donde son menos afines al baile es diferente. Pueden no tener esa cultura de bailar como parte de la fiesta. Bailar es muy fácil sin necesidad de cruzar otra palabra o socializar. ¿Cómo me acerco a una cultura que no bailo si en la fiesta es nuestra forma de contacto? Es algo particular.

¿Distintas culturas, raza o estado socio-cultural en una clase de casino?

En razas y posición socio-económico no tiene que ver la diferencia. Es más cultura. Algo increíble del “mama rumba” es que ves que llega gente muy arreglada y entran a la clase y ven que la ropa les estorba, entran a la siguiente clase con jeans y tenis y el ego se les baja automáticamente. Es muy padre ver que una persona baila con otra y les preguntas a qué se dedican y uno gana mucho dinero por tener una compañía, y el otro es conserje en un hospital, o uno trabaja en McDonald’s y la otra tiene un despacho importante. Y no importa cuánto dinero ganas, el baile lo que vas a disfrutar y pavonearte y vas a hacerlo simplemente por cómo bailo y cómo me muevo.

¿Condiciones se presentan para que cualquier persona baile?

El casino es muy llamativo porque puedes bailar con una pareja sólo y al mismo tiempo estar haciendo intercambio con tus amigos. Se cambian pareja, no sólo coordinación en dos personas sino a 8 o 10 parejas. No sólo mi coordinación sino otra gente y es aumentar el grado de dificultad. Y cuando ves que no es tan difícil, está padre que todo mundo vea como bailamos en grupo. El casino luce mucho y no es tan complicado como otros bailes.

¿Baile en grupo?

No, puedes bailar en coreografía pero no es lo mismo. El casino te aprendes el nombre de las vueltas y las vas cantando durante la rueda, y vas ejecutando. Siempre hay un guía. En los demás bailes es solos. Si alguien estuviera cantando o gritando las vueltas se podría llegar a esa coordinación grupal, improvisada. Pero casi todos los bailes son de pareja y tienes contacto con las manos y las mujeres que dejan llevar con las manos. El baile de pareja es que tenga contacto con las manos. Y al combinar esto con varias parejas, no sólo me divierto yo sino se divierte uno en grupo. Y ayuda a socializar mucho más, porque socializamos entre varios del grupo. Aumenta la confianza para sacar a bailar a otra persona.

¿Cambios físicos al bailar casino?

La condición aumenta dependiendo qué tanta lo practiques. Si llegas a las 10 pm y te vas a las 3 am y no paras de bailar, la capacidad respiratoria o tu condición física aumentan. Es muy común en las mujeres, las mujeres se sientan e inmediatamente las saca a bailar otro. EN los hombres, es un poco menor porque descansan más fácilmente. Sí hay un beneficio si eres constante, pero si realmente vas y bailas una canción y descansas dos. Digo, sí tienes una mejor condición que otro pero no va a aumentar cada

vez porque ejercitas y descansas. Llegas a un límite y ya no avanzas. Tienes que llevar al límite tu físico para aumentar tu capacidad.

Movimiento se libera neurosustancias. ¿Has visto estudios o sabes algo?

No, realmente no sé. Pero sí es, no sé si es endorfina o qué es. Pero es lógico, cuando estás corriendo no es lo mismo cuando corres solo a cuando corres contra alguien. Lo mismo cuando bailas, si te quieres lucir sueltas alguna sustancia que te haga lucirte o bailar más padre. Se nota quien está bailando como siempre y quién lo hace tratando de lucir. Por ese nivel de competencia. Como estas en un lugar y te están viendo, y quieres que te vean y te aplaudan si se puede, por lo que te entra ese ego y te esfuerzas más de lo común. Al esforzarte sueltas ciertos líquidos o sustancias, por lo mismo de la competencia te empuja a hacer más.

Hablaste sobre psicológica: confianza, lucirte ¿algo más o cambios en el tiempo? ¿Personal e interpersonal?

En cuanto a la confianza, llegan muy tímidos y siempre las artes se tratan de hacer que desarrolles tu expresión. Que te aprendas a expresarte por otros sentidos, no sólo del habla y de gestos. Entra a una clase y tuvo el valor de llegar a la siguiente. La gente que no está acostumbrada a socializar, ya te ve una vez y otra y la siguiente te saluda. Te va ayudando sin querer a conocer gente. Después de cierto tiempo ya tiene confianza de saludar o hablarle a otras personas. Conforme aprende a bailar, va tomando confianza y se va sintiendo mejor consigo misma. Al grado que pasan uno o dos años y ves que es totalmente distinta a cómo llegó. De Tímida a sociable, que te saluda. Cambios muy fuertes, aunque no quieras socializar. Porque como tienes que tener contacto con pareja y tienes que cambiar de pareja. Para la timidez ayuda bastante.

Un amigo tuvo un accidente, incluso creo tenía problemas de alcohol y como rehabilitación lo mandaron a bailar. Fue al mama rumba y agarró mucho el gusto por el baile, y dice que le ayudó mucho para coordinación y muchas otras cosas-. Una ventaja psicológica y social, el que va a las fiestas y no sabe bailar se pone a tomar. Y aquí aunque tomes el alcohol aunque estés tomando lo procesas casi inmediatamente. Eso les digo a mis alumnos, aprendan a bailar, porque no es lo mismo. Los que no saben bailar se ponen muy mal. EN la clase la mayoría se toma 3 o 4 cervezas, es muy raro que los que van a la clase salgan mal. El 90% sale con las capacidades físicas para manejar e irse a su casa.

¿Depresión o estrés hay beneficio en el casino?

Sí hay mucho beneficio. En el caso de estrés, por eso les digo que griten porque eso ayuda desestresar. El poder socializar y conocer otras personas te ayuda mucho a no estar deprimido. Como todo, la salsa no es cura mágica, si realmente no vas dispuesto a tomarte en serio las cosas no hay poder humano que te ayude. Si llegas a la clase con la mentalidad de yo no quería venir, yo no quería hacer esto, me cae mal, terminas estresándote. Hombres que los traen a fuerza, no cooperan, por más que trates hacer la clase amena o les dediques tiempo ellos no quieren aprender. Con tantito que vengan con la disposición los atrapa la clase. Hay mucha gente que sale del trabajo y llega a la clase sale súper contento. ¿Cómo le hacen que salen a las 9 de la noche se van a las 1 am y se levantan a tiempo para trabajar al día siguiente?

¿En depresión o alguien que está pasando por un duelo?

Van a la clase para no estar pensando en lo que les acaba de pasar o en algo negativo. Es obvio que sí funciona, yo creo que gran parte de la depresión es parte por la

soledad. El hecho de ir a bailar y por ese medio te expreses y desfogues, es manera de que no te haga daño. En el medio conoces gente y socializas, o simplemente bailando. A veces con sólo alguien que baile súper padre te hace el día.

¿Se desarrolla atención y concentración?

La atención se desarrolla pero tiene que ver con el maestro. Si no te sabe llevar o enseña a aprender esto es muy difícil. Hay gente que va en el plan de echar relajo y no hay poder humano para que aprenda, se la pasan súper bien pero no aprenden. En México no hay una carrera o certificación que te valide para ser maestro de este tipo de bailes. Hay mucho maestro que se aprende los pasos y cree que por eso ya puede dar clases. Alguien con problemas de coordinación no le puedes dar la misma clase o al guíen que tienen problemas de atención o discapacitados. Debes intentar hacer la clase lo más homogénea posible, si tienes gente especial tiene que hacer la pausa y la manera para enseñar. Hay gente que sí necesita clase individual, cualquier persona puede aprender a bailar pero hay unos que necesitan más ayuda que otros.

Barreras se reducen cuando baila uno casino comparado con otros tipos de baile o circunstancias sociales. ¿Cómo se relaciona con el nacimiento del casino?

Casino nace en Cuba, de esa idea de no sólo bailas solo sino en grupo. Y sale de la intención de enseñar una vuelta y luego otra, para no correr de un lado de la línea al otro se hizo en rueda. El baile, que se inventó hace poco, lo iniciaron en el casino en Cuba. Hay otra versión que tenía que ver con la ruleta. En Cuba, los que se hacen llamar los fundadores, o cuando menos estuvieron presentes cuando se inició el casino, relataron esa la historia. Ellos bailan muy sencillo, en aquel entonces el que se cambiaran de pareja

era lo máximo. Con eso te das cuenta de cómo ha evolucionado el casino de 50 años hasta hoy.

¿Por qué crees que ha cambiado?

Por la necesidad del pavoneo. Yo no me voy a quedar atrás, yo voy a hacer una vuelta mejor. Siempre hay esa necesidad del humano de no quedarse atrás y como es un cortejo. El baile es cortejar una pareja es irle buscando. Es totalmente sexual. Y aquí el que baila mejor es el más atractivo. De eso se trata, cómo soy más atractivo, pues si lo hago más complicado o vueltas más desarrolladas.

No es lo mismo un casino en Cuba que un casino en México. ¿Cuál es tu perspectiva?

El casino es un baile folklórico, y al ser este tipo de baile, tiene mucha penetración en los lugares y lo van cambiando. Respetan ciertas reglas y bases pero va cambiando según región.

Lo que varía entre Cuba y México, es lo sociocultural. Cómo se mueve el cubano y cómo se mueve el mexicano. El cubano es más alegre, más habladores, más presumidos, más chistoso y los disfrutan. EL mexicano y sobre todo el chilango, es más payaso, se siente más farol, más presuntuosos, más presumidos, con cierto tono engreído. Cambia en pasos, en estilo. Las mujeres en Cuba mueven más la cadera en cierto estilo, las mexicana como no saben mover la cadera no tienen esa cadencia.

¿Al resto del mundo?

Hay mucha influencia, la salsa es una mezcla de varios ritmos. Al ser mezcla de ritmos, se van usando pasos de ese tipo, pero igual lo fusionan con reguetón y

dependiendo de la región y del país le van fusionando a su país. En Venezuela tienen mucho la influencia de salsa en línea en el casino, hasta parece más en línea que casino.

La salsa en línea viene de lo que es el ballroom dancing, se baila igual y cambia dos o tres pasos. Es más de presentación. Es más elegante, el hombre se ve más femenino, no se nota tanto la habilidad de hombre bailando. Tienen diferencias en energía, presencia, en pasos.

¿Has visto la influencia de cubanos en otros países para desarrollar el casino?

No en particular. Pero todos los bailes alguien los tuvo que traer. Como el contemporáneo Guillermina Bravo fue con Graham y así llegó a México la danza contemporánea. No sé quién sea el líder en otro país. Luis Martínez se considera como el pionero de la salsa casino en México, quizás en unos años en la historia se marque. EN su momento nadie lo admira o lo aprecia como tal, en su momento no son alguien importante. Hay otras personas que dan clases pero el movimiento sale a partir de las competencias, de los congresos y es un movimiento que está en pañales. En México hay cerca de 15 escuelas de casino, y los integrantes pueden ir de 2 a 20. En el DF hay mayor penetración, pero hay en distintos estados: Guadalajara, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, Mexicali. En ese sentido, el casino no se compara con la salsa en línea pues este último tiene mucha mayor cobertura. Llegar a más compañías y competencia permitirá que el casino evolucione. Un movimiento social y cultural es difícil

¿El casino reduce el miedo al baile?

Porque ya lo estás haciendo. Tienes miedo a bailar, bailas y te quita el miedo. Al hacerlo, quitas miedo. La repetición te quita el miedo. La dinámica de grupo y pareja, la mayoría le ayuda a aprender. Quitas las defensas y ayuda a concentrarse porque como no

conocen con quien bailan se tiene mayor atención para aprender. El bailar con la pareja sentimental es complicado pues van viendo en qué se equivocan, al rotar con todo el grupo eso cambia.

Algo importantísimo para que aprendan es cambiar el casete, no aprendes igual que aprender a leer, a contar o medicina. Es totalmente diferente algo mecánico que algo práctico. Cuando estás usando tu cuerpo tienes que sentir. EL baile es de sentir. Muchos se voltean a ver el pie derecho cuando tiene que moverlo, pero tú puedes mover el pie sin tener que verlo. Eso es sentir, sentir el cuerpo. El concentrarte demasiado puede hacer que no sientas el cuerpo y es algo a lo que no estamos acostumbrados. Eso es algo que los maestros pueden no enseñarte.

¿Literatura que sugieras?

No hay mucha literatura en México, de hecho no vas a encontrar nada aquí. Hay un libro, que yo sepa es el único que existe. Quizás sirva más investigar sobre el baile en el ser humano. La gran diferencia es que es más social, te baja las barreras, te hace socializar. En un principio te hace más incómodo pero después más cómodo. Más aún porque el cambio es forzoso con todos, eso te hace hasta humilde. Ese es una gran ventaja del casino, la gente va a bailar no va a presumir lo que tiene. Incluso no te das cuenta quién tiene dinero o quien no tiene, la gente va a bailar. Se hace un vicio pero un vicio sano, conoces a mucha gente y socializas. En cuanto a pareja, sí hay algo psicológico muy fuerte, porque uno baila y el otro no baila. Es algo que te funciona porque en las fiestas vas a bailar, te quita los vicios, conoces mucha gente, tiene muchas cosas a favor.

D. Transcription of Interview 3

Interviewee C, May 15, 2004

Mi nombre es Carolina Ruiz Lugo. Soy mexicana.

¿Por qué te llama esta forma de baile?

Siempre me ha gustado bailar y porque hay algo del Caribe que me atrae, ese sabor latino, esos ritmos.

¿Y tienes experiencia bailando otros tipos de baile?

No, latinos no. solo bailes mexicanos por cinco años. Soy maestro de primaria y en la Carrera me enseñaron folclore desde que estudie. Después me casé y dejé estudiando pero seguí bailando folcklore.

¿Cómo llegaste al casino?

Hace muchos años fui a Cuba y me llamó mucho la atención lo que bailaban ahí y pensé que nunca iba a poder bailar así. Después transcurrió mi vida, me casé, y un día en el Sport City me encuentro a una chica que enseña casino. Entré a tomar clases con ella y después entré con Luis Martínez.

¿Cómo explicas o defines el casino?

El casino yo creo que es un baile que tiene una especie de coreografía que da vueltas que todo mundo tiene que saberse, una especie de coreografía se baila de manera circular, no sólo por la rueda sino también porque la pareja baila de manera circular. Y es un baile de pareja primero, de grupo después. Que además tiene mucho que ver con los ritmos afrocaribeños, principalmente que vienen del son y del danzón.

¿Lo identificas algún baile particular de un país?

Sí, es particular de Cuba.

¿Con qué otros nombres lo conoces?

Algunas personas lo llaman salsa cubana.

¿Qué diferencias y relación tiene con el son cubano?

El son cubano es el origen del casino. El son cubano es el ritmo cubano por excelencia que le da origen al casino, la diferencia es que el son se baila a contratiempo y el casino se baila a tiempo.

¿Y la diferencia entre bailar casino en una clase y a nivel social?

El casino en clase es como más metódico, te explica, aprendes y practicas pero ya cuando pasa a un nivel social ya lo empiezas a disfrutar. Ya llega a otros niveles porque bailas con la pareja, bailas en grupo y empiezas a disfrutarlo.

¿Consideras que hay distintos tiempos de enseñanza y cuáles serían?

Sí, hay distintos métodos. El casino que yo aprendí, en primera instancia, es el casino que trajo Luis Martínez, el primero que trajo casino a México. Tiene una manera de enseñar que adaptó a los mexicanos, porque los mexicanos no tienen, como los cubanos, ese ritmo, a los mexicanos nos cuesta un poco más de trabajo coordinar y meter ese sabor, es un poco una adaptación a lo que tú y yo bailamos aquí que es la cumbia. El casino es un baile de salón y en comparación, la cumbia se equipara. Y la cumbia aquí, la que se baila en los barrios, es lo que más se equipara al casino. Luis Martínez hizo una adaptación para que los mexicanos pudieran aprender a bailar casino. El otro método que conozco también es una adaptación pero como para el mundo en general, es muy parecido, tiene muy poquitas diferencias, en esencia es lo mismo. Nada más hay poco de diferencias en la manera de contar y en la manera de empezar.

¿Este otro método permite enseñar a distintas culturas?

Así es, dependiendo de la cultura todos pueden llegar a aprender a bailar casino.

Y dependiendo del método todos pueden aprender a bailar casino.

Mencionas que el casino se parece al baile de salón y cumbia ¿otro baile en grupo que pudiera relacionarse con la experiencia en casino?

No se me ocurre otro. El casino tiene una característica particular, todos los demás bailes son en pareja y el casino es el único que es grupal.

En cuanto a la parte física, ¿qué efectos identificas al bailar casino?

Como maestra, el primero que identifico es euforia porque la gente siente sorpresa que esto se puede bailar en grupo y se sincronizan las vueltas. Entonces, primero se sorprende, después entra como en una euforia, te empiezas a divertir porque el hecho que todos den las vueltas al mismo tiempo, los cambios, en los “dames” que se cambie de pareja que tú has visto tiene esa diversión muy extraña. La gente empieza a divertirse y disfrutar mucho de las ruedas.

¿Lo ves diferente en hombres que en mujeres?

Sí, el efecto es un poco diferente porque las mujeres se divierten más. En mi experiencia las mujeres tienen un poco más de coordinación, los hombres se tensan un poco porque tienen que cambiar de pareja y tienen que saberse la vuelta y las mujeres se divierten un poco más porque reciben esa energía. Los hombres la tienen que transmitir y las mujeres la reciben.

¿Es normal que me haya costado trabajo encontrar mujeres expertas en casino?

Sí, generalmente hay más hombres que se dedican a casino, pero sí hay mujeres también.

Y ¿Por qué si las mujeres se divierten más?

Lo que pasa es que el hombre es el líder, o sea es que en el casino y en los bailes en general el hombre es el que debe guiar a la pareja y la mujer es la que se deja llevar. A lo mejor esto influye también. Es más fácil que tú encuentres un líder hombre porque él es el que lleva que la mujer. Extraño, porque la mujer en el baile es la que es sumisa, la que se debe callar, se supone. Porque hay mujeres que son líderes aunque no debe ser.

¿Y diferencia en edades, casino tiene algún rango de edad?

No, el casino puede bailar cualquiera. En la compañía CMV con ritmo y en la nuestra hay niños. La más pequeña debe tener 10 años entonces cualquiera puede bailar casino. Yo tengo alumnos que rebasan los 70 años.

¿Hay una edad afín al casino?

Yo pienso que el casino tiene la cualidad de reunir a cualquiera. En una rueda pueden estar desde niños hasta personas mayores de 70 y pueden congeniar muy bien.

¿Te ha tocado trabajar con personas discapacitadas mental o físicamente?

Sí, tengo una persona que tiene un nivel de parálisis entonces le cuesta un poco de trabajo coordinar el cuerpo y sin embargo lo logra. Y tengo otra persona que tiene un nivel bajo de sordera, tiene que usar aparato, en ocasiones no me escucha la instrucción pero le tengo que hablar de frente y me entiende muy bien. En un nivel no avanzado, intermedio y baila bastante bien.

¿En caso de autismo o síndrome de down has oído o trabajado con casos así?

No me ha tocado.

Lo pregunto porque pensando en que el casino tiene ciertas características que ya mencionaste, se pudiera usar en poblaciones así o incluso con gente que tenga Parkinson u otro tipo de enfermedades.

Yo creo que sí.

¿Consideras que es un baile seguro? ¿No tiene riesgo?

Sí es seguro, no tiene un riesgo mayor, y todo mundo lo puede bailar a nivel de sus condiciones.

¿Crees que desarrollas condición física bailando?

Yo creo que sí, yo tengo 51 años. Y yo pienso que lo que me mantiene a mí es el baile. Hasta ahora estoy muy sana y no hago otro ejercicio más que bailar. Pero a mí me proporciona no nada más un bienestar físico sino también un bienestar emocional. Yo sino bailo una semana me siento extraño.

¿Con qué frecuencia bailas? Supongo que no es lo mismo bailar en una noche dos canciones de 3 minutos a bailar 3 horas seguidas. ¿Hay una relación entre el ritmo y la frecuencia?

Sí, yo bailo todos los días de la semana excepto lunes. Un promedio de 4 horas. Hay días que bailo una hora y otros que bailo toda la noche. Además he comprobado con mis alumnos que hay personas que les cuesta mucho trabajo la coordinación o el ritmo pero conforme son constantes y mejoran su coordinación, mejoran su respiración y emocionalmente también les beneficia.

En lo emocional, ¿qué cambia en el casino? ¿Qué permite el casino?

Yo pienso que antes que nada da seguridad. Una persona que ya sabe bailar casino se siente con la seguridad de acercarse a otra para pedirle que baile. En mi experiencia, casi todos mis alumnos de clases particulares son hombres, el 80% vienen de divorcios o terminaron o tienen un cambio drástico en su vida. Se acercan a mí me piden clases particulares, yo les empiezo a dar clases particulares en la semana y de pronto ya

llegan a mama rumba y regresan porque ya conocen a más gente. Tengo alumnos que se han casado con personas que han conocido en mama rumba. Tengo alumnos que las muchachas van y los sacan a bailar. Entonces el nivel de seguridad en sí mismos y autoestima cambian de forma dramática. Se dan cuenta que llegan a un ambiente seguro. Yo creo que es el hecho de bailar en rueda, el hecho de que puedes cambiar de pareja, que puedes bailar con una y con otra y con otra sin tener que ir a decirle “me das permiso”, “quieres bailar”, “te gustaría”, sin miedo. Ahí no hay miedo todo mundo entra a la rueda. Ya saben que, los hombres saben que las mujeres no les van a decir que no, ahí le toca, ahí bailan, un momentito contigo y luego con otro y otro y otro. Tiene un efecto de seguridad. No hay que pedir permiso, no te van a decir que “no”, tampoco te van a decir que “sí”. A lo mejor puedes bailar con una persona o a lo mejor no. La próxima semana te lo vuelves a encontrar, y empiezan a hacer amigos. Tenemos personas aquí que tenemos años de conocernos y no sabemos nuestros nombres. Pero nos conocemos, nos saludamos nos tomamos algo. Vaya para mí el casino es como mágico, es una terapia de grupo. No te da miedo, no te da vergüenza, todo mundo baila más o menos en un mismo nivel.

Ahora esto que menciona de “no te da miedo”, ¿te refieres a un punto en el que avanzaste en el aprendizaje de casino?

Así es. Los muchachos, sobre todo los hombres, llegan con un poquito de miedo. Un poquito, porque ya el hecho de ir a una clase y pararte ahí yo creo que ya es un gran logro. Así es que unos llegan diciendo, “no puedo” y en eso yo les digo, “claro que sí, todo mundo puede”. Y de pronto empiezan a avanzar y ya quieren pasar de nivel, ya quieren seguir al siguiente nivel. Empiezan a avanzar y tengo alumnos que empezaron de

no poder mover un pie y ahora bailan en avanzado, llegaron con miedo y se les quitó y van y sacan a bailar a cualquiera o se sientan y vienen las muchachas a sacarlos a bailar.

¿Te han tocado alumnos con depresión, estrés o que están pasando por un duelo?

Sí, así es. Sí hay alumnos que vienen del trabajo nada más a la clase, porque es liberar las tensiones del trabajo. No se quedan porque tienen que trabajar temprano al día siguiente. Pero ellos mismos dicen “Si no vengo, no puedo funcionar. Mejor vengo, me siento bien, me relajo y ya me siento tranquilo”. No sé si con cualquier baile, yo supongo que sí. Que a la gente que le gusta el rock and roll, lo use así, me imagino que sí. Para mí el casino.

Y en la parte de emociones ¿el casino tiene cierta sensualidad?

Claro. Sí totalmente, en el casino no tienes que pedir permiso para ir a bailar o para estar cerca de la mujer o del hombre. Hay un acuerdo entre todos que se puede bailar cerca y no va a pasar nada. Como una complicidad que no está mal vista. Yo creo que sí tiene un gran efecto. Incluso, yo he comprobado cuando yo empecé a dar mis clases yo me ponía muy estricta y muy seria, los dos últimos años yo he empezado a hacer bromas, aunque no se pasan a ser groseras, que sí tengan un contexto un poco sexual y la gente se divierte, se ríe, me siga. Porque es lo que ha hecho que la gente me siga un poco, antes decían no es que Caro es muy estricta, muy dura y exige mucho y ahora me he dado ciertas libertades como el Indio se las da. Y yo creo que la gente acepta esa actitud y esa picardía como que hay un permiso. Ya fuera de la clase a lo mejor ya se portan en otro contexto. Ahí, en la rueda hay un permiso de ser un poco atrevidos y la gente se siente bien.

¿La cultura mexicana tiene cierta resistencia a diferencia de la cubana?

Sí, en México hay cierta resistencia. En Cuba no, es diferente, si entras en una rueda a Cuba hay mucha más picardía. Se tocan, se dan besos, incluso se tocan el pene, la vagina, los senos, pero hay como una complicidad que da permiso. Claro que es una cultura muy diferente.

¿En otros países pudiera ser percibido muy diferente?

Tal vez, no lo sé.

En la parte social mencionas mucho el sistema de grupo. ¿Qué cambia en una dinámica de grupo?

Como te había mencionado hace rato. Hay como un permiso de poder bailar con el otro sin tener que pedirlo, como en cada clase las personas van y ven a las personas del grupo, eso lo he notado desde que empecé a bailar, me doy cuenta que los que van a la clase que han bailado con todas las parejas en el grupo se empiezan a hacer amistades fuertes, tan fuertes que incluso son compadres, o hacen viajes juntos, u organizan bautizos, o comidas, como una familia. Hay grupos muy fuertes en mama rumba, el grupo de José Luis se van de vacaciones, son compadres, familia, amigos, salen noviazgos, se han casado. Hay relaciones bastantes fuertes.

Para llegar a ese tipo de relaciones, ¿crees que el casino rompe barreras estatus socioeconómicas, razas o ese tipo de barreras?

Estoy segura que sí. También lo he visto. Vienen a mama rumba de otros niveles, vienen a mama rumba a curiosear y se sorprenden. A veces les voy a dar clases a bosques de las Lomas, y un día vienen acá y empiezan a venir a la clase de grupo. De pronto tengo alumnos que se hacen asiduos a venir a mama rumba. Tengo señoras que me piden clases porque al esposo se le hace lo más naco o vulgar y me piden que vaya a su casa.

Una vez que sale una fiesta algunos hombres se empiezan a integrar, no todos pues a los hombres de este estrato más alto algunos no les gusta. Pero alguno que otro se llega a integrar con los grupos de mama rumba o van a fiestas a otro nivel donde no están acostumbrados. En otros países se ve mucho más. Yo no eh estado en otros países pero mis amigos cubanos me hablan de eso, me hablan de países como Alemania, Finlandia que son países donde se vive esto.

¿Has tenido grupos con gente de distintas razas?

He tenido en mama rumba. De pronto sí, pero son de una o dos clases, de Australia, de China, de Corea, de Colombia, de Brasil. No sé si es la curiosidad, turistear, o la novedad, pero vienen, se integran y bailan. Sólo había un chino que vivía en México y venía a las clases, pero nos entendíamos aunque él no hablaba español y yo no hablaba inglés. Él me entendía a señas, sin un lenguaje en común él llegó a hacer varias vueltas incluso bastante complicadas, yo le mostraba mis pies y le decía sígueme, y así aprendió.

El baile es una expresión con el cuerpo totalmente... así es

Luis Martínez comentaba que la comunicación entre pareja es totalmente con las manos. En tu opinión como mujer, ¿cómo vives esa comunicación?

Como mujer, como mexicana, te cuesta mucho trabajo. Porque la mexicana no es de dejarse llevar, ella quiere llevar. No sé si es el hecho que los hombres mexicanos no bailan tanto como los hombres cubanos, no sé pero yo creo que sí. La mujer a veces quiere tomar la batuta, y en el casino no debe ser así el hombre es el que debe llevar. Al principio a mí me tocó mucho trabajo adaptarme, yo tenía que ser la sumisa y no estamos acostumbradas. Con el tiempo vas aprendiendo también hay un lenguaje de señas, de movimientos y la mujer va aprendiendo que cuando la mano va para acá la vuelta va para

el otro lado. Es difícil pero también es un aprendizaje. Y efectivamente el hombre no te va diciendo nada, el hombre te guía con sus manos.

¿Y eso tiene un efecto en tu vida saliendo del baile?

Sí, yo me he relacionado con mucha gente de Cuba. Los cubanos, al menos los que yo conozco, son medio machos y dominantes y el hecho de que uno los siga a mí me ha dado un resultado maravilloso, no nada más en el baile. Uno aprende a seguirlos en muchos aspectos de la vida y me ha funcionado de maravilla. Al menos la relación que tuve 20 años con un mexicano yo esperaba que él me dijera las cosas para poder hacerlas, si me parecía. Con los cubanos yo no espero, adivino y los sigo. Es extraño. Puede parecer sumiso, pero es una forma de dominar también porque él se vuelve como un corderito. Las mujeres mexicanas no me creen, pero a mí me ha funcionado muy bien. He tenido tres relaciones con cubanos y han sido maravilloso, todavía me llaman se preocupan. La que tengo actualmente también. Y el hecho de que yo lo siga y le adivina el movimiento a él lo mantiene cerca, muy pendiente, muy enamorado de mí. Y aprendí eso en el baile.

El hombre también trabaja otras cosas como confianza o ser líder y lo aprende a través del movimiento y lo tiene que aprender porque no está acostumbrado. Y es a través del movimiento que aprende lo psicológico, sí así es.

¿Cómo es una clase de casino y cómo se da un baile de casino a nivel social?

¿Cuál es el proceso?

En una clase, la gente llega, uno se pone e inicia con un calentamiento. Pasitos sueltos que son el básico y las variantes que tiene el básico y un par de combinaciones. Desde que uno empieza con el calentamiento uno se da cuenta, sobre todo en un grupo

pequeño, a quién le cuesta trabajo y quien puede. En general, al hombre mexicano siempre le cuesta un poquito más de trabajo que a la mujer, hay distintos niveles pero en mi experiencia todo mundo puede hacerlo. De ese calentamiento ya se ponen en pareja, y empiezan a bailar en pareja, y desde ahí también te das cuenta que la gente pone sus barreras, desde la primera vez que le toman la mano a la pareja, hay niñas que no quieren poner la mano para tocarla, sobre todo las niñas, ahí sí más la niñas. Los hombres vienen como ávidos de acercarse a las mujeres, las niñas quieren bailar pero tienen sus barreras. Esas primeras clases se rompen esas barreras, no se hace rueda en esas primeras clases. Conforme pasa el tiempo y bailan el básico ya se sienten más en confianza de dejarse tocar por los otros sobre todo las mujeres, y así se llega a las vueltas complicadas y a la rueda. Me impresiona como la gente empieza a ver que puede hacer cosas complicadas y les gusta. Hay unos pocos que vienen a la una clase y se retiran, esos son casos perdidos pues es gente que llegaron por curiosidad y traen mucha carga de timidez, y se retiran. A veces piden clase particular para aprender y luego integrarse. Las clases de grupo al principio hay muchas barreras, con el tiempo van viendo que puede y conforme avanzan se integran a las clases de rueda. Tiene esa dinámica, los pasos básicos, luego los pasos básicos en pareja, luego las vueltas, y al final es la rueda. Así es la evolución. Y además en la rueda las vueltas evolucionan todo el tiempo, la rueda tiene desde los años 50s y 60s y todo el tiempo va evolucionando. Más acá en México. Acá es donde más nos gusta complicarnos la vida, yo pienso que porque el hombre acá tiene la necesidad de lucirse en todo lo que sabe. Porque allá en Cuba, la diferencia es que lo disfrutaban más, es más sencillo, pero es más compenetración de la pareja. Acá es más complicado pero siento que el hombre es como que se quiere lucir en todo lo que sabe, es extraño pero así es. Es

complicado. Llegan los cubanos de fuera y dicen es que ustedes baila diferente, yo no me sé todas esas vueltas. Ellos saben “dedo”, “70”, “71”. Esa es la evolución y esa es la clase. Cuando acaba la clase y la gente empieza a bailar ya hay seguridad, hay amistad, hay disfrute. Las mujeres quieren bailar con los hombres que sí saben, las mujeres con los que sí saben, los que no saben empiezan a buscar la gente que está más o menos en su nivel pero ya se acercan. Es increíble ver que la persona que no bailaba nada o que tenía miedo de ir a bailar, ya se acerca. Hay un chavo que no daba un paso, era mi caso perdido, sin embargo él va, y no le da miedo ahora ya hace el paso y saca vueltas, sin embargo ya tiene la seguridad de sacar a bailar a cualquiera. Él ya no le tiene miedo a nada, no se rindió. Hay gente que le cuesta mucho trabajo salir de eso. Él es un caso admirable.

¿Se puede hacer algo por los casos en que se rinden?

No, es como todo. Si no sientes un gusto por eso, no lo vas a lograr. En mi caso particular el que era mi marido, vino a dos o tres clases por complacerme pero luego dijo “no quiero”, “no me gusta”. Ahí no hay nada que hacer, no quiere y ya.

Aprendiste casino por experiencia según lo que comentas, como maestra tomaste folclor, pero ¿sabes de algún estudio o la parte fisiológica o la parte química al bailar casino?

Algo debe ser porque hay veces que estoy enferma, vengo con dolor de cabeza, no he comido, vengo de mal humor, siento hambre, siento sed. Yo empiezo a bailar, se me quita el dolor de cabeza, se me quita el hambre, se me quita la sed, a veces hasta se me olvida tomar agua, se me olvida todo. Es increíble. Cuando estoy muy a gusto en la clase y se me olvida todo. Acaba la clase y me regresa el hambre, me regresa el dolor de

cabeza. Yo creo que sí porque algo debe pasar en ese nivel porque yo me siento bien. Incluso cuando no me toca dar clase, estoy en mi casa y me siento mal, me duele la garganta o algo, me visto, me vengo a bailar y se me olvida todo. Y luego regreso a mi casa y ya puedo dormir.

¿Y en pareja hay algo químico que se da?

No sé. Yo pienso que la misma sensación de disfrute de euforia influye en las personas. No me ha tocado una pareja en particular que me hable de eso. Se ve un ánimo diferente.

¿Tiene alguna sugerencia sobre literatura?

No se me ocurre algo en particular ahorita. Pero hay cosas muy interesantes de casino, hay un estudio ... será Bárbara Balbuena.. . Es cubana, tiene un estudio importante de casino, ha estudiado mucho. Busca a Leslie Vázquez, una mexicana, tiene mucha experiencia y trabaja en la compañía CMV con ritmo, es de las mejores maestras de México. O Busca a Reiner Fernández Arnesto, él es el director de CMV, trabajaron con Luis Martínez y luego se independizaron en otro grupo. Él no estudió baile pero como cubano llegó a trabajar y tiene mucha experiencia.