



## Research Article

# Latin dance: a socio-cultural exploration of body and dance

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### Abstract

Any dance culture inherently carries the social and cultural values of the society in which it originated. Dance, as a performance-based art form, relies on the body, and thus, various dance styles and forms are influenced by and influence social norms and values related to the body. This article examines Latin dances such as salsa, merengue, bachata, and cha-cha-cha from a historical and sociocultural perspective. Latin dances, like other dance cultures, are not merely artistic practices but encompass much more. The sociology of dance seeks to illuminate how dance reflects and shapes and shaped by social norms and values by focusing on all these socio-cultural aspects of dance. Latin dances offer rich insights into the interplay between dance and society. They are not merely forms of entertainment but are deeply embedded with social meanings and cultural significance. The sociology of dance provides a framework for understanding these intricate connections, highlighting the importance of dance as a vital component of cultural expression and social life. Through this exploration, we gain a deeper appreciation for the ways in which dance both reflects and shapes the world in which we live. To understand the cultural and social dimensions of Latin dances, one must consider the historical context in which these dances developed. For example, salsa originated in the Caribbean with influences from African rhythms and Spanish melodies, merging into a dance that reflects the history of colonization, migration, and cultural fusion. The lively and expressive nature of salsa showcases a cultural narrative of resilience, celebration, and communal connection.

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## Introduction

What is dance? It is motion.

What is motion? The expression of a sensation.

What is a sensation? The reaction in the human body produced by  
the impression or an idea perceived by the mind.

A sensation is the reverberation that

the body receives when an impression strikes the mind.”

(Fuller, 1913: 70)

Dance, particularly in cultural and social contexts, is much more than an art form; it is a vibrant reflection of societal norms, values, and the complexity of human interaction. When we examine Latin dances such as salsa, merengue, bachata, and cha-cha-cha from a historical and sociological perspective, the significant role dance plays in expressing, conveying, and shaping culture becomes evident.

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Dance is a social and cultural phenomenon. Choreographers and dancers, just like other artists, are affected by the social institutions and the events occurring within their society. These influences are reflected in their creative works. Changes in art policies allow for a clear observation of the effects of social institutions on art. Examples such as the removal of ballet from operas in Vienna at in the past, and allowing belly dance to be broadcast on TRT only once a year on New Year's Eve, indicate how social cultural and political climate and social institutions of a period shape certain dance forms during particular periods. The semiological meanings in a dance reflect the symbolic and semantic world of the era and society to which they belong.

The meanings attributed to dance types, dance figures, dance styles, dance costumes, and dance choreographies vary across different societies, regions, and periods. These variations suggest that dance is a significant subject within the field of sociology, and the sociology of dance is a subfield of the sociology of art. Dance is an integral part of the society and culture in which it is produced, serving as one of the elements that represent a particular culture. Although the sociology of dance does not occupy as prominent a place in sociological studies as other subfields like the sociology of literature and the sociology of music, the sociological and cultural context of dance is increasingly attracting the attention of sociologists. Joy and love are the primary emotions conveyed by dance. Consequently, dancing is often associated with happiness, and the notion of "dancing from happiness" exemplifies this sentiment. Dance's relationship with love is also notably strong, as it has historically been used for courtship or to impress potential spouses. In theatrical dances that tell a specific story, such as ballet, emotions like love and passion are prominently featured, paralleling the expressive capacities of music. However, it is not only theatrical dances that convey a story. Social and folk dances also often embody narratives, emotions, and cultural traditions. For instance, social dances like salsa, tango, and waltz tell stories of romance, passion, and social interaction through their movements and partnering. Each step, gesture, and figure in these dances can symbolize a wide range of emotions and social dynamics, making the dance a powerful medium for storytelling. In partner dances such as tango, the rhythmic and aesthetic harmony of two bodies is accompanied by potent expressions of love, passion, and desire. These dimensions of dance highlight its profound ability to convey complex emotional and cultural narratives, underscoring its importance as a subject of academic inquiry within the sociological and artistic realms.

Folk dances, on the other hand, are deeply rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of the communities from which they originate. These dances often depict stories of daily life, historical events, religious beliefs, and community values. Furthermore, contemporary dance forms, such as hip-hop and modern dance, also serve as narrative tools. They often address contemporary issues, personal struggles, and social justice themes, using movement to communicate. Hip-hop dance, for instance, emerged from the streets as a form of expression for marginalized communities, narrating stories of struggle, resilience, and defiance against social injustices. Thus, across various forms and contexts, dance remains a potent means of storytelling, capable of conveying complex narratives and emotions without the need for words. This narrative aspect of dance highlights its significance as not only an art form but also a medium for cultural expression and social commentary. Through the stories told in dance, we gain insights into the lives, values, and histories of different communities, making it a vital part of our shared human experience.

To understand the cultural and social dimensions of Latin dances, one should consider the historical context in which these dances developed. For instance, salsa originated in the Caribbean with influences from African rhythms and Spanish melodies, merging into a dance that reflects the history of colonization, migration, and cultural fusion. The lively and expressive nature of salsa showcases a cultural narrative of resilience, celebration, and communal connection. Similarly, merengue, with its roots in the Dominican Republic, embodies the spirit of the Dominican people, their history and their joyous celebration of life despite hardships. Bachata, originating in rural Dominican Republic areas, was once considered a dance of the lower classes but has evolved into a globally recognized form. It reflects the socio-economic transitions and the blending of rural and urban influences in Dominican culture. The sensuality and intimacy of bachata express themes of love and heartbreak, making it a dance that resonates deeply with personal and emotional experiences. Cha-cha-cha, on the other hand, emerged from the Cuban dance halls of the 1950s, blending elements of

mambo and rumba with a distinct rhythm that created a new dance sensation. This dance mirrors the vibrant and dynamic nature of Cuban society and captures the essence of Cuban creativity, playfulness, and adaptability.

### **Dance and society: the sociology of dance**

Dance, as a form of non-verbal communication, plays a crucial role in conveying complex social and cultural messages. Through movements, rhythm, and gestures, dancers express emotions, ideas, and narratives that words alone cannot capture. This unique form of expression allows for the transmission of cultural knowledge and social values across generations and communities. There have been numerous attempts to define dance by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and theorists and researchers who study dance. However, it is extremely difficult to make a general and common definition of dance that embraces all dance cultures and all times. This situation, which is also the case for other types of art, is closely related to the abstract aspect of art, its unique world of meaning and emotion, and its cultural and social context.

Dance is a type of art that appears with a wide variety of functions in world history and world cultures, conveys different emotions and meanings, uses the body as an instrument, and is also an important part of social ceremonies. Traditional dances often embody historical narratives, myths, and legends, acting as living archives of a community's collective memory. For instance, the haka of the Māori people in New Zealand not only serves as a war dance but also as a way to honour guests, celebrate achievements, and express cultural identity (Karetu, 1993). Moreover, dance as non-verbal communication transcends linguistic barriers, facilitating intercultural understanding and exchange. In an increasingly globalized world, dance becomes a universal language through which diverse cultures can interact and appreciate one another's traditions and values. This aspect of dance highlights its potential as a tool for fostering cross-cultural dialogue.

The sociology of dance recognizes various social functions that dance fulfils within communities. Dance often marks significant life events and transitions. The Ndembu are an African cultural community in which ritual symbolism is elaborately developed. These peoples have complex initiation ceremonies, often characterized by the presence of masked dancers depicting ancestral spirits or gods. (Turner, 1969:4). Turner's in-depth description of dance is as follows:

*“Nor is communication through symbols limited to words. Each culture, each person within it, uses the entire sensory repertoire to convey messages: manual gesticulations, facial expressions, bodily postures, rapid, heavy, or light breathing, tears, at the individual level; stylized gestures, dance patterns, prescribed silences, synchronized movements such as marching, the moves and “plays” of games, sports, and rituals, at the cultural level”* (Turner 1982: 9).

Denis (2011) defines dance as the expression of spiritual beauty through movements and the natural progression of life and art without any obstacles. According to him, the word dancer; “One who expresses joy and the power of existence through bodily gesture”. It means (pp.100). According to Şişman, who states that dance can be performed by one or more people, with or without music, dance is a human activity in which thoughts, feelings, longings, desires and experiences are expressed through rhythmic body movements (2011: 24). German dancer and choreographer Marry Wigman (1886-1973), one of the important figures in the history of modern dance and the pioneer of expressionist dance and dance training without point ballet shoes, says that dance is a living language that allows people's voices to speak. According to him, dance is a living language that speaks of man — an artistic message soaring above the ground of reality in order to speak, on a high level, in images and allegories of man's innermost emotions and need for communication. and the transmitter is the person himself. The means of expression of this straightforward, direct communication is the human body (Wigman, 1966: 10).

Language is not just about verbal language. Music, painting and dance also have a language, and dance figures are actually the words of this language. Dance does not consist of a series of meaningless movements, it is a form of expression in which culture, beliefs, emotions, thoughts and events are conveyed. Poetry and literary arts are based on oral language, but various branches of art use visual and auditory motifs, patterns and expressions outside of verbal

language. Through movement, rhythm and gestures, he conveys emotions, thoughts and experiences that words cannot express. The body expresses cultural codes, social roles and identities through the language of dance.

Sociology of dance offers a perspective that can examine the concepts of dance and society together. This field not only explores the reasons for the existence and functions of dance but also focuses on the forms of relationships between dance and society, as well as between dancers and society. Dance has a social history, and while sociology of dance examines this history, it also seeks to reveal the current reflections of dance. Examining dance as a means of communication and the social elements that affect dance and dancers are also within the research area of sociology of dance. Additionally, institutions related to dance, folk dances, and the economic factors that influence dance production are among the discussion topics in sociology of dance. The sociology of dance attempts to relate the basic concepts of sociology to dance. In dance sociology research, it is important to use sociological methods. One of the reasons dance is an important field within sociology is that it originated in early human societies and evolves based on social factors and cultural influences. Dance emerges as an area in sociology worth examining within the contexts of social order, culture, gender, politics, power, the body, and many other social contexts. There are many classifications in the art of dance: ballroom dances, folkloric dances, narrative dances, Street dances...etc. In fact, these categorizations can be misleading. Many dances, not just ballet, have narratives to convey, and there are numerous examples of dances that have transitioned from the streets to the halls. It is a longstanding tendency to emphasize certain distinctions when categorizing art. Emphasizing these distinctions based on the notion that some types of art appeal to the whole society while others appeal to specific segments ignores the processes of acculturation and its effects on art. Art is a language, and to understand it, one must be familiar with the codes of that language.

Many typological categories that compare various features are used in dance research. Based on the identity of the recipient of the message conveyed in the dance, Nahachewsky defines four types of dance: reflexive, participatory, sacred, and presentational. The conceptual distinction between participatory and presentational dance is especially significant for ethnochoreologists. The intended recipient of the message influences the movement "text" and other components of the dance (Nahachewsky, 1995:6).

The sociology of dance also examines how dance reflects and sometimes reinforces social stratification. Different dance forms are often associated with certain social classes, ethnic groups or subcultures. For example, classical ballet has historically been associated with elite social circles, while street dance forms such as breakdance are associated with urban lower socioeconomic groups.

### **History, types, and social context of Latin dance**

Latin dances encompass a variety of styles, including cha cha cha, rumba, samba, salsa, mambo, merengue, bachata, cumbia, and bolero.. The origins of these dances are rooted in Latin American countries. While salsa, merengue, cha cha cha, and bachata are collectively referred to as "Latin dances". Argentine tango despite its Latin American origins, is not categorized under Latin dances and differs from other Latin dances in terms of its technique. Among the social scientific research and studies conducted on Latin dances, there are relatively more studies on tango. Tango is a type of dance originating from Argentina, but today there are also varieties such as Chinese Tango, Finnish Tango and American Tango. This dance, has transformed and changed style in different societies along with migrations. However, today the original Argentine Tango is performed all over the world and over time, it has ceased to be a national dance and has become universal. A similar example can be given for Latin dances of Cuban origin. Many of the folk dances that originated in Cuba are now performed by contemporary dancers worldwide.

On the other hand, within Latin dances, salsa stands out as much as Argentine tango. The word "salsa" literally means sauce. Salsa also connotes spiciness, and spiciness suggests sensuality. In Latin music, kitchen metaphors like those found in salsa are widely used. Words like "sabor", which means "flavor" or "taste" but also "emotion," appear in countless song and album titles. Salsa, with its gastronomic and erotic undertones, effectively reflects the vivacity of Caribbean cultures and their interest in taste and other sensory pleasures. Women who both cook and arouse desire are among the favorite subjects of Latin music (Leymarie, 2002:4). Leymarie mentions that the expression "Tiene salsa!" (She/He has sauce =

She/He has allure!) in Spanish is used to describe the attractiveness of a beautiful girl or a handsome young man (ibid). Salsa is a dance type in which appetite, provocation, and bodily desires increasingly become prominent.

One of the few cultural elements that slaves could bring with them of African culture is the polyrhythms of African music and dances. The interesting and complex polyrhythmic structure of African music has permanently influenced the music and dance of Latin America. The non-rhythmic accents, known as syncopation in African music, play an important role in this influence (Musmon, 2010, 22). In Cuban music, rhythms of African origin occupy a more prominent place than those of Spanish origin. The influences of African culture date back to the period of slavery. Cuban proverbs such as "who does not have Dinka stock at least has Mandinka in him" or "who does not have Congo stock at least has Carabali in him" emphasize the existence of acculturation and African heritage. Music in Cuba is dominated by the population of African origin. In 1831, musicologist Odilio Urfé stated that there were three times more musicians of African origin in the country than white musicians (Leymarie, 2002: 10).

Today, salsa has become so globalized that it can no longer be attributed to a single place, and new styles and trends have been developed in different countries. Salsa has become so universal that it has sometimes led to all types of Latin dance music being called salsa. Cubans react to this appropriation of salsa. However, just as it is not accurate to say that salsa is exclusively music produced by New York Latinos, it is also not possible to claim that Cuban music has simply adapted to modern times. Social life in the New York Barrio was very different from that in post-revolutionary Cuba, and the music produced in each place reflects these differences. Salsa is influenced by various countries and cultures, which provides wide-ranging opportunities for its evolution (Ospina, 1996:75). Salsa is not only a dance full of rhythmic movements and enthusiastic energy, but also has a rich sign system that reflects the depths and history of Latin American culture. The rhythm of salsa is a blend of Afro-Latin musical traditions. The influences of African music, as well as the musical genres of Cuba and Puerto Rico, are felt in the rhythm and movements of salsa. The reflection of these musical roots has influenced the energy, degree of mobility and expression of the dance.

Since the 1970s, salsa has transformed into a commercialized genre. Ospina points out that by the late 1980s, with the emergence of more erotic movements, the appearance of salsa shifted from rose-colored to red. Throughout the history of Afro-Caribbean and Latin music in general, the theme of love has always held significant importance. However, according to Ospina, this new wave of eroticism had nothing to do with the "love" that Latinos value, which emphasizes mutual desires and emotions. Instead, this new trend focused solely on the commodification of the female body (1996:107). Following the emergence of this salsa trend, salsa became even more commercialized heading into the 1990s.

Bachata, which originates from the rural areas of the Dominican Republic, literally means "party". It is known as a romantic music and dance genre with a 4/4 time signature from the Dominican Republic. The guitar is prominently featured, often accompanied by percussion instruments and bass guitar.

Merengue, a symbol of Santo Domingo, originated from the Upa Habanera dance, which was brought to Hispaniola by Cuban troops around 1850. However, some Dominicans dispute this origin. In a short time, merengue dethroned Tumba, the national dance of the colony at the time, but it was criticized for its dance movements, which were considered to have overt sexual connotations. The press of the period attacked men who danced chest-to-chest with women, shaking their hips. In 1918, the first piece mentioning merengue was published. By the late 1970s, merengue had spread to New York (Leymarie, 2002: 306-307). Following the rise of "erotic salsa" which emphasized sexual connotations, merengue emerged onto the scene in the late 1980s. Some people found merengue, which originated in the Dominican Republic, so similar to salsa that they claimed it was simply another form of salsa. As a result, salsa groups included merengue songs in their repertoires. Merengue has a different style that makes it easier to dance, which is why it is a strong competitor to salsa today (Ospina, 1996:111).

Cha cha cha is known as a Latin American dance and music genre of Cuban origin. According to Ospina, in 1948, a violinist composed a piece titled "Engañadora" at a Havana club named 'Prado y Neptuno.' Enrique Jorrin added a son section to danzon music while the instrumentalists played a Montuno. Jorrin himself stated that the name of this rhythm came from the 'cha cha cha' sounds made by the dancers' feet while dancing. Thus, "Engañadora" became the first cha

cha cha to be played. The first recording was made in 1953, and this new dance quickly became popular (Ospina, 1996: 34). The cha cha cha rhythm was achieved by altering the fourth beat in Danzon dance.

As in most partner dances, the distribution of roles between men and women in Latin dances has a male-dominated dynamic. It is the man who gives the first command and plans the woman's next step. The woman simply follows the man's movements and responds. It is the man's responsibility to present the woman in the best light, to shape the dance, to use music effectively, and to arrange the combinations in the dance. The woman surrenders herself to the music and to her partner, following his lead and focusing on her own expressions and the technique known as "lady style".

### Latin dances and body image

Dance is a performance art performed with the body, and naturally the body has a central place in dance art. For this reason, the dancer's physical characteristics such as age, gender, height and weight come to the fore. The aesthetics of dance movements are closely linked to the aesthetics of the dancer's body and, consequently, to the aesthetic values of a society.

In the dance scene, it is mostly the female dancers who attract more attention at first glance. However, according to Adair, this is not actually the main issue. Because it is more important how women are portrayed on stage rather than how they stand out more. For example, Ninette de Valois, one of the important names of classical ballet in England, opposed the ideal female image, especially in ballet, in the early 1900s and performed on stage while she was 7 months pregnant. (Adair, 1992: 48) The elderly body is generally not accepted on the dance stage. Martha Graham, one of the founders of modern dance in America, continued dancing for many years, which sparked debates among critics. While some critics argued that Graham should no longer perform on stage, others who supported her continued presence argued that she should not dance in outfits that exposed her arms and neck. All of this points to a clear attitude of hiding Graham's elderly body (ibid. 57). According to Desmond by analyzing dance, we can examine how various performance styles are imbued with codes that surpass everyday bodily movements. When we comparatively study the kinesthetic systems of dance and their historical and geographical changes, we can explore the symbolic systems contained within dance and how they are expressed through visual representations and movements. (Desmond, 1993: 34)



Figure 1. Latin dance and body image-I

In Latin dances, as in other dance forms, the visual signs involve a process of bodily signification through clothing, hairstyles, attitudes, movements, and expressions. Figures 1, 2, and 3 present images related to the Latin dance body image. Male dancers exhibit the image of an attractive Latin man with masculine clothing, polished shoes, and well-combed hair. Female dancers wear outfits designed to amplify the effect of movement, highlighting neck and head movements with neatly styled buns, skirts that accentuate hip movements, and adorned with embellishments and necklines that enhance visual appeal. The indicators related to the male body include primary-level signs such as maintaining balance, carrying, showcasing, directing, and managing



**Figure 2.** Latin dance and body image-II

The male dancer not only manages his own body but also controls the female dancer's body. He supports, lifts, and spins the female dancer, who is the focal point of the performance. The male dancer acts as the director of the show. He is responsible for maintaining balance and providing support. As in many partnered dances, in Latin dances, the female dancer trusts that her partner will maintain balance and provide the necessary attention to ensure the successful execution of movements. The female dancer plays a crucial role in amplifying the movement. She achieves this by utilizing the curves of her body and her clothing. When the same spinning movement is performed by both the female and male dancers, the movement of the female dancer's body will be perceived with greater volume. The flowing extensions of her clothing, such as the edges of her skirt, create a greater sense of movement compared to the stillness of trousers.



**Figure 3.** Latin dance and body image-III

The Latin aesthetic idealizes a curvaceous female body, but also emphasizes the female dancer's body to not only be easily maneuverable but also convey a sense of lightness to the audience. Agility is important in the male body, while flexibility is more desirable in the female body. The male dancer represents strength and discipline, whereas the female dancer embodies softness and harmony.

In addition to the symbolic meanings conveyed by the art of dance performed with the body, we should also consider the physical limitations highlighted in dance art.

Dance is considered an art with an age limit. Since it is performed with the body, and the physical performance of the body weakens as it ages, a dancer who was very successful in their youth will eventually be unable to dance as they once did. A dance career, like a sports career, is seen as one that cannot be sustained into advanced age, and there is some

truth in this view. However, the age barriers present in dance and sports can sometimes lead to age discrimination, as seen in the example above. Yet, many dancers do not sever their connection with the art of dance and, when they become too old to perform on stage, continue their dance careers in less physically demanding branches such as dance instructor, director or choreographer. Similarly, in sports, some of the professionals who quit active sports continue their sports careers in branches such as coaching, commentator or technical director.

According to Foster, dance education produces two different types of bodies; the first is the visible and tangible body, while the other is the aesthetically perfect body. These two bodies are constructed together and influence each other's development. The formation of both bodies results from the processes of taking dance lessons, watching dance, and discussing dance. As a result of the accumulated experience, all these activities help the dancer to notice, replicate, repeat, and remember bodily movements. Emerging as a third type of body, the demonstrative/exposed body facilitates the acquisition of these skills by exemplifying correct and incorrect movements. The use of mirrors during dance training encourages a narcissistic gaze at one's body. However, when individuals focus on their bodily inadequacies and begin to critique these shortcomings in front of the mirror, narcissism loses its power. This shift allows the dancer to focus not on their body but on the dance itself and to work on improving the specific aspects of their dance movements that need correction. Each dance technique is based on a comprehensive terminology, and in conveying these techniques to the dance student, instructors sometimes use metaphorical expressions to illustrate the key points and connections of the body (Foster, 2011: 175-179)

During dance training, dancers stretch, relax, tense, or tighten their bodies. Instructors, while explaining a dance technique, often ask them to become like puppets, surrendering control of their entire bodies to the instructor and the dance itself. Dancers are expected to use their imaginations, based on the bodily images created, to perform the movements. For example, in Argentine Tango, when explaining how to maintain balance, instructors ask dancers to imagine a line running straight through the center of their head down to the ground. This line represents the dancer's axis. Dancers who visualize this line through the center of their bodies can more easily understand their balance center. These examples illustrate that using metaphorical expressions in explaining dance techniques is one of the methods used to guide the body.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Dances with Latin origin represent different styles with their unique movements, rhythms, and emotional and expressive elements. Tango, which is of Argentine origin and is considered a separate category from Latin dances, is a passionate and dramatic dance type that usually includes a lot of hip movement, close embrace, sharp movements, and dramatic storytelling through dance. Popular Latin dances such as salsa, known for its fast-paced, energetic movements and complex footwork, bachata, which has a slower tempo characterized by close embrace and fluid movements, merengue, a lively dance of Dominican origin with a strong beat and a distinct rhythm, and cha-cha, a lively and playful dance with its distinctive "cha-cha-cha" rhythm, all have different characteristics, spirit and style.

Throughout the history of dance, numerous dance forms have developed, and in almost all these forms the "ideal body"—particularly the female body—has been defined within the framework of aesthetic values of that dance culture. Dances reflect the norms and ideals of body in different cultures and typically, have a gendered structure, which, along with cultural influences related to social gender, leads to the assignment of different roles and movement styles to male and female bodies. Dances often reproduce specific gender roles. Female dancers are trained to highlight characteristics such as grace, flexibility, and delicacy, meeting societal expectations of femininity, while male dancers are encouraged to display traits like strength, athleticism, and control, reflecting masculinity.

Ballet, which has been dominated by white-skinned dancers, particularly promotes and demands a body for female dancers that is elegant like a swan, delicate, slender, and as light as a feather. In contrast, Latin dances emphasize tanned skin for both male and female dancers and highlight a curvy, hourglass figure, with a broad pelvis being prominent for female dancers. In Latin dances, the focus is on the beauty and allure of the female dancer, while the male dancer's strength and leadership are highlighted. The female dancer, who attracts more attention, is in the foreground. The male



dancer, as the one who guides the woman's body and dance, is visually more in the background. Because they need to make more and fluid movements, female dancers are expected to have a more flexible muscle structure. Male dancers generally exhibit stronger, more dynamic, and more dominant movements. Female dancers, on the other hand, adapt to the leader's movements with more flexible, fluid, and delicate motions. This distinction reflects values related to social gender roles, such as strength, control, and bravery for men, and grace, harmony, and beauty for women.

The prevailing ideal body perception in Latin dance culture increases societal pressure on female dancers. Nowadays, women who dance also strive to conform their bodies to this ideal female dancer image in Latin dances through intensive exercises, body contouring, and using corsets and clothing that accentuate their body lines. Sometimes, the performance of female dancers is hindered by wearing high-heeled shoes and tight clothing that make it difficult for them to move during the dance.

The current body image in Latin dances reflects the culture of Latin America, where the dance originated. In Turkey, it is observed that female dancers sometimes try to physically resemble Latin American women. Because Latin American women typically have curvier figures, clothing that accentuates these curves is often preferred. Additionally, in Turkish Latin dance competitions, it is notable that some female dancers attempt to achieve a "darker skin tone". There is a strong emphasis on evoking the Latin vibe through costumes, makeup, and hairstyles, and some fair-skinned competitors use a lot of bronzers and foundation to appear tanned. In these competitions, the ideal "Latin dancer model" significantly influences the dancers.

The sociological look into Latin dances and body image reveals a complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors that shape dancers' relationships with their bodies and their art. By promoting body diversity and challenging restrictive beauty standards. On the other hand it means Latin dance communities have the potential to contribute significantly to broader societal shifts towards body acceptance and positivity. As researches in this field continues to evolve, it promises to offer valuable insights into the role of dance in shaping social attitudes towards the body, identity, and self-expression.

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