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Does the “Zipless Dance” Exist? Leadership, Followership, and Sexuality in Social Dancing

James K. Beggan and Scott T. Allison

“Dancing is a perpendicular expression of a horizontal desire.” - George Bernard Shaw

What do you think of when you hear the word “dancing?” Lithe and supple ballet dancers in tutus and slippers moving with the rhythm of classical music? Musicals from the 1950s like *Singin’ in the Rain* featuring legendary performers like Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, and Ginger Rogers? The highly stylized routines featured on *Dancing with the Stars*? One important aspect of these examples is that the dancing they feature is choreographed and well-rehearsed ahead of time. Another element is that the people in these examples are well-trained professionals.

This chapter focuses on another type of dancing, social dancing, where ordinary people get together to express themselves at the local dance studio. Unlike what transpires in *Singin’ in the Rain* and *Dancing with the Stars*, social dancing is not planned out in advance and participants’ skill level can range from a first-time beginner to a seasoned 30-year veteran. Social dancing can be considered a form of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), with some participants spending thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours on lessons, costumes, and travel to and from dance events (Brown, 2007). Most people have heard of the main types of social dances, even if they have never done them or seen them performed. Examples of social dance styles include swing, salsa, foxtrot, tango, waltz, and cha-cha.

Although it might not seem so at first pass, social dancing is saturated with examples of leadership and strong overtones of sexuality. In fact, the leadership and sexuality elements are heavily intertwined on the basis of three social dance conventions. The first convention is that for a coordinated dance effort between two people to take place, someone has to be designated as a

lead and as a result the partner has to adopt the role of *follow*. The second convention is that during the dance, the lead and the follow usually hold each other in an intimate embrace, even if they are complete strangers to each other. Third, the role of lead and follow is assigned almost exclusively on the basis of biological sex: Men lead and women follow (Ericksen, 2011). Peters (1991) viewed couples dancing as a form of dance that "depends on the simultaneous execution of movement by two dancers locked in intimate body contact, but how those movements are performed and where the focus lies depends entirely and absolutely on whether one is male or female" (p. 147-148). Despite some efforts to challenge the sex-based conventions of social dancing (Johnson, 2005), in general the heterosexist perspective strongly dominates. One type of challenge is to permit or even encourage men and women to learn the opposing role. As such, sometimes women will learn to lead and men will learn to follow. Another way in which dance conventions are challenged is for same-sex couples to dance together.

We conceptualize social dancing as a form of non-verbal communication geared toward creating the coordinated movement of two people done in time, and over time, to musical accompaniment. Two key elements of this definition are worthy of comment. First, social dancing involves non-verbal communication that is carried out on the basis of the physical connection between the lead and follow. The main point of connection is the lead's right hand on the follow's left shoulder blade. The lead sends signals based on shifting weight from one foot to another and moving forward, backward, or to the side. The follow must decode the messages and respond in turn. Of course, as with any form of communication, there is a reciprocity and interdependence that develops as the dance, as an expression of a conversation, continues. If a lead realizes a follow does not have the skill level needed to perform certain moves, he should

not require the follow to attempt them. A good follow can stylize and a good lead will give her both adequate physical space and time to carry out those stylings.

Second, social dancing involves coordinated movements over space and time. The space can range from three square meters, as in the case of non-traveling dances, to fifty or more square meters, as in the case of traveling dances. These socially coordinated movements imply the use of a cognitive script that both the lead and the follow must share for the dance to proceed successfully. These scripts contain beliefs and expectations about what each person will do and how they will do it (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Dancers possess scripts for various dance steps, of course, but they also have a script for what constitutes a good dance partner. The lead has a script for a good follow and the follow has a script for what represents a good lead. These social expectations can be the source of either great satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the dance. Although a social dance need not imply any sexuality, the rhythmic, intimate, coordinated activity between a lead and a follow share many of the features of sexual intercourse (Riva, 2016).

The representation of what it takes to be a good lead is consistent with stereotypes about masculinity (Hoyt, 2014). A good lead needs to be *agentic* (Carli & Eagly, 1999). A 2006 film about ballroom dancing, featuring Antonio Banderas, is actually called *Take the Lead*. Traditionally, the man initially takes the lead by asking a woman to dance. Once the dance begins, a good lead has to be decisive about what move or pattern to lead next. Good leads are described as “strong,” though the use of the term “strong” can often create hardship for women. Beginning male dancers often view the term “strong” in terms of being forceful, which is not correct. In reality, in the context of dancing, a strong lead is “clear” because he sends a strong,

i.e., exact, signal. Weak leads send messages that are ambiguous and therefore create uncertainty among follows.

A good follow needs to be responsive to signals from the lead. In the film *Strictly Ballroom*, during a competition, a young and ambitious male ballroom dancer gets boxed into a corner. To escape, he carries out a series of unorthodox dance moves which are considered shocking to the audience watching the performance as well as his dance partner. Although an unwilling participant, she is constrained by the rules of dance to go along with his radical steps. She explains her acquiescence with the statement, “Where the man goes, the lady must follow.” The idea that a woman acting as a follow has to conform to requirements of the lead is consistent with stereotypes about women as passive and compliant. However, to be effective as follows, women also have to be sensitive to the signals they receive, a trait consistent with a view of women as sympathetic and empathic.

Sex enters into social dancing in two distinct ways. The first way is through the assignment of the lead and follow roles on the basis of biological sex (Marion, 2008). This arrangement is rarely challenged on the social dance floor (Beggan & Pruitt, 2014). In over a decade of dancing, neither author has ever been asked if he wants to lead or follow. It is always assumed he will lead. Most social dancers do not contest this conventional arrangement. When it’s talked about, the assignment of lead and follow on the basis of sex is often rationalized by the assertion that men are bigger and stronger than women. This is often the case, true, but even in cases when women are the same size or taller than a lead, participants do not rethink their roles.

Part of the reason that dance roles are rarely disputed or debated is that most male dancers do not know how to follow and most female dancers do not know how to lead. Because

of the specialized nature of what most men and women learn, there is a disincentive for the average social dancer to attempt to act out the complementary sex's dance role. Most women who dance as follows would prefer to have a male lead, partly because women often do not think that other women are as effective as men as leads. Given a choice between dancing with a man or a woman, most men would rather dance with a woman. As such, a dancer who chooses to dance against their role will be less likely to get dances, the *raison d'être* for attending a dance. Any concern over ideology is overruled by the desire to dance.

The second way that sex enters into dance has to do with the role of sexuality and sexual attraction (Hanna, 2010). If you observe what happens at a dance with the neutral eye of an anthropologist, social dancing violates many norms. Despite the importance that people place on personal space (Evans & Howard, 1973), and the ease with which violations of personal space can become unpleasant, in the idioculture of social dance, two people who have never met before can within seconds adopt a very intimate embrace (usually) without any discomfort or embarrassment. Of course, different dances have different standards of closeness. For example, waltz and foxtrot are danced much less closely than balboa, blues, bolero, or Argentine tango. In the film *Alive and Kicking*, Sharon talks about the origins of blues dancing, stating, "Historically, was more about the sort of thing you did late at night at a house party, when you'd been drinking, in a private juke joint....it was never a ballroom dance." Evita said, "Blues dancing was of course a very intimate dance that was supposed to be done with your sweetheart."

People who dance with each other may or may not even exchange names. In the classic novel *Fear of Flying*, Erica Jong (1973) coined the term the *zipless fuck*, which she defined as: "...absolutely pure. It is free of ulterior motives. There is no power game. The man is not "taking" and the woman is not "giving". No one is attempting to cuckold a husband or humiliate

a wife. No one is trying to prove anything or get anything out of anyone. The zipless fuck is the purest thing there is. And it is rarer than the unicorn. And I have never had one.”

We propose that this notion of the zipless fuck can be extrapolated to the concept of the *zipless dance*, a dance that is absolutely pure and free of ulterior motives, especially those of a sexual nature. Dancers promulgate the existence of the zipless dance among themselves as well as among non-dancers. For example, in *Alive and Kicking*, Andrea stated, “There’s an incredible intimacy that forms among strangers. You meet someone for the first and by the end of the song you feel like they’re finishing your sentences. If I had that kind of connection with someone I met in the grocery store I’d ask him for his number. But it’s not like that. In a swing dance, you just move on and find the next person.” John, another dancer in *Alive and Kicking*, said, “Frankie [Manning, one of the founders of Lindy Hop] always called it like three minute romance. You’re just going to be in love with this person you’re dancing with for three minutes and it’s going to be amazing. And you do it again, and again, all night long.” The key element of these quotes is that the connection is intense but brief and exists only on the dance floor. The attraction rarely moves to real life. It can happen, of course, but the unspoken code of the social dance world is that the 3-minute norm-violating intimate series of coordinated movements must only be viewed as temporary, platonic fun only.

From our perspective, we question whether the zipless dance actually exists or, at the very least, whether the zipless dance is as common as people present it. In other words, we inquire about the degree to which the “purity” of the lead-follow role is contaminated by real world sexual and romantic feelings. Especially female dance teachers acknowledge that part of their ability to attract customers, i.e., male customers relies on creating the appearance that they may be romantically interested without ever actually acting on that appearance (McMains, 2006).

Our inspiration for this analysis is the swing dance documentary *Alive and Kicking* (2016), which details the experiences of several dance couples, and includes candid interviews about their feelings about dancing.

The existence of the zipless dance is especially relevant for dancers with a spouse or significant other who does not dance. In these asymmetrical situations, there is a real possibility that the intimacy of dancing, which is experienced unilaterally, can lead to a psychological if not actual infidelity. In fact, it is possible that the non-dancer may think of the act of his or her romantic partner dancing with someone else as infidelity in and of itself. This possibility is consistent with the famous actor-observer difference in social psychology (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). Observers of behavior tend to assume that the behavior of an actor reflects the true desire of the actor, whereas the actor herself sees her own behavior as guided by norms and situational forces. Thus, a husband who is a non-dancer may mistakenly assume that his wife, dancing with a stranger, harbors positive feelings for the man. The wife knows that her close embrace with the stranger is the result of mere convention, whereas the husband is left watching the behavior and assuming emotional infidelity.

Some dancers acknowledge the intimacy involved in the connection that exists with two people dancing as a couple. In *Alive and Kicking*, Andrea stated, “I needed to hold people’s hand and I needed to like hug people....and I just wasn’t doing that before Lindy Hop.” Similarly, Evita said, “Physical contact and touch has got to be the most powerful gift that we could give to each other. I think people are afraid to physically contact each other because maybe it’s too intimate. And it’s really easy to distance ourselves.”

In *Alive and Kicking*, a dancer stated about the mental connection that can occur between dancers, “...It’s sincerely what happens all the time with this dance. You’ll find someone and

you'll just hit it off with them, and it doesn't mean you're going to marry them. But there is a sincere spark...." Evita commented on the closeness of blues dancing, "Lots of people are afraid of it because of how intimate it can be. There's a stillness while you're pressed up against someone else." Another actor stated, "Every dance feels like sharing a joke or having like a little secret conversation. And I think that connectedness to another person is enough to like break the doldrums...makes you realize that things are okay."

Although we agree that there can be a special magic that can occur between two people sharing a dance, we also suggest that this "magic" has an illusory quality brought about by the narrow parameters of the shared dance. When dancing, the real world does not enter into the equation. In *Alive and Kicking*, dancers note that when they dance they can forget about problems related to paying their bills and so on. A dance floor romance has none of the baggage associated with a real world relationship that might include mundane problems like who washes the dishes or takes the kids to the dentist. In this way, a zipless dance can be considered an erotic illusion, a situation that feels good, perhaps even great, because it exists in a bubble isolated from real world problems that would become inevitably attached to any real-world relationship. After the dance, there is also the allure of mystery, the possibility, however remote, that the person with whom you shared rhythmic intimacy harbors some forbidden attraction for you. Social psychologists have only recently begun to identify the processes associated with the allure of mystery in romance and in leadership (Goethals & Allison, 2018).

We can break down the possible situations for two people involved in a romantic relationship who are also connected to social dancing into four distinct situations. For simplicity and because of the heterosexist bias inherent in the social dance community, we refer to the two actors as husband and wife. The possible situations are presented in Table 1.

Wife Dances

Wife Does Not Dance

Husband Dances

Husband Does Not Dance

Unfortunately for the people in these relationships, the only condition that seems free of possible conflict is when neither party dances. With the other conditions, the interplay between certain aspects of dance as well as certain realities about men and women as sexual beings can lead to conflicts that may be difficult to resolve. What is perhaps surprising is that even the situation where both parties dance is not necessarily free of strife.

No Dancer is an Island

Dancers' comments in *Alive and Kicking* imply that the dance floor is an isolated space that remains unattached from the real world. It is possible, however, that the personal and romantic feelings that can be experienced on the dance floor can transfer to other aspects of a dancer's life. John states that a dance with someone is a three minute experience with a discrete beginning and end point. Although he states that the dancer moves on to the next experience with a different partner, in reality, people can cycle back to a previous dance partner. They can remember dancing with a previous partner and use that experience as a standard to compare new dances and dancers.

For dancers who pursue the hobby in a serious manner, the ability to dance becomes an important point of connection socially and emotionally. Dancers want to dance and because they do, they need to seek out other people with whom to dance. It only makes sense that dancers will

become friends with each other, seek out each other's company, and develop emotional attachments to each other. When one partner dances and the other does not, the non-dancing partner is excluded from a wide range of experiences. The couple then faces the problem of coordinating a romantic relationship between a dancer and a non-dancer.

Probably the strongest reaction the non-dancer has is jealousy related to the fear of missing out. As noted by Jane Austen (1813) in *Pride and Prejudice*, "To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love." The act of dancing with someone may create an emotional connection that could feel like romantic attraction, even love, and act as a lure that might take the dancer away from the non-dancer. Couples can engage in certain strategies to ameliorate the negative consequences of an asymmetrical relationship. The problem with these solutions is that they may work in the short term but then may create new kinds of problems.

Perhaps the most obvious solution is for the non-dancer to learn to dance. The problem with this solution is that the non-dancer may not want to learn. In our experience, the most common scenario is that a woman dances and her husband, boyfriend, or potential boyfriend does not. In this case, the man will often make an effort or, more likely, the illusion of an effort to learn. The woman, who might often be a very good dancer, makes a sincere effort to help him improve. As a result, she limits herself to dancing only with him, which then costs her dance opportunities with the better dancers with whom she intended to dance. An additional problem is that most women who act out the role of a follow do not possess the necessary skills to teach someone to lead. As a result, despite being well-intentioned, she can only help a little bit. A further difficulty faced by a male non-dancer is that learning to lead is quite challenging. There is a high cost of effort which represents a significant barrier to entry. The non-dancer loses interest

rapidly and says he is happy to watch. Of course, just watching further fuels his jealousy as he watches the woman he is interested in dance with other men who possess a skill that he lacks.

In our experience, the non-dancing partner tends to pull the dancer away from the dance scene. The process behind this withdrawal is difficult to resist because of the asymmetry of interests between the dancer and non-dancer. For the non-dancer, dancing represents an activity which does not interest him. For the dancer who wants to dance, there are other possible non-dancing activities that would be interesting to pursue. For the dancer, dancing gets replaced by other pleasant albeit non-dancing activities. Ultimately, the non-dancer pulls the dancer away from dancing. We suspect that the sexual and romantic aspects of social dancing are the root cause of the issue, and we leave it to future research to illuminate the leadership and negotiation processes that underlie this relationship conflict.

When the woman is a non-dancer, the dynamics of an initial exposure to dancing tends to run more favorably. A man, acting as a lead, can teach a woman, acting as a follow, a few basic principles of following, and then make her feel like she has accomplished something. Other men can show her new moves, either by explicitly teaching her or by just leading her through them. Overall, women seem more excited than men at the thought of a date that involves dancing.

Unfortunately, even when both partners in a relationship are dancers, there is room for discomfort. One reason is that it is likely that one member of the partnership is more serious about or better at dancing than the other. As with the frequency of sexual intercourse, the frequency with which a couple attends social dances may be an uneasy compromise between the levels of desire for each person. Unfortunately, the equilibrium that they reach, like any compromise, might be ultimately unsatisfying to both sides. The partner who likes dancing more

finds that his or her frequency of dancing is driven down by the lower level of dance desire displayed by the partner. Yet the partner is dancing more than he or she would like.

Another source of discomfort can stem from the personal characteristics of the two partners. One person may be less secure in the relationship than the other. Our experience tells us that in this case either the relationship doesn't last or the secure dancer stops attending dances to appease her insecure partner. At times a physical disability may prevent one person in relationship from dancing. We have seen instances in which there is no overt relationship stress when the physically able person continues dancing without the other, but we have also seen physically able dancers discontinue their dancing because of their partner's limitations. Again, additional research is needed to determine how these negotiations proceed among couples with an asymmetry in social dancing interest and ability.

Finally, the specifics of the dance scene itself may fuel potential dissatisfaction or discomfort. If there is an imbalance in the number of men or women at a social dance, the partner in the numerical minority will find himself or herself in greater demand. In the dance scenes we have experienced the numerical imbalance manifests itself with the male partner dancing as much as he wants with the female partner sitting out a number of dances because of a shortage of leads. Sitting around and waiting for a dance could be viewed as a chance to rest and recover or as an opportunity to fuel jealousy.

The Commodification of Dance

The commodification of dance refers to the benefits accrued to people who possess the ability to dance. We argue that having dancing skills can be viewed as a valuable resource that can enhance a person's perceived attractiveness. Our experience tells us that both on and off the

dance floor, women tend to gravitate toward males who are perceived to possess social dancing skills, especially strong ones. This attraction need not be romantic but it can be. Although ballroom dancing men are stereotypically thought to be gay (Stossel & Binkley, 2006), we have personally not encountered any negative fallout from such a stereotype. We should also note that we are both heterosexual – a fact that has served us well for unexpected reasons. Heterosexuals with social dancing skills are viewed by many as individuals who are especially bold, counter-cultural, and in touch (in a healthy way) with both the feminine and masculine sides to their personalities.

Women who dance, and especially those who dance (and follow) well, are also highly sought after by heterosexual male dancers. Most men like to lead (Baumeister, 2010), and they especially enjoy leading women who follow their signals well. As mentioned earlier, a social dance featuring a strong lead and a strong follow can be perceived as “magical” by one or both parties. As women often outnumber men at social dances, men’s choices about whom to ask to dance can reveal their primary motives for dancing. In our experience, there are three types of male social dancers: the *gentleman*, the *scoundrel*, and a *hybrid* of the two. Gentlemen dance with all the ladies, regardless of their level of attractiveness and their skill level of dancing. The gentleman is the true heroic leader (Allison & Goethals, 2013, 2016; Efthimiou, Allison, & Franco, 2018) on the dance floor, showing communion with all and no romantic motives for his dancing. The scoundrel chooses only young attractive women as his dance partners, revealing his sexual motives for dancing and also revealing his profound ignorance of the fact that everyone can see what he is doing and disapproves. The hybrid is the category of male social dancer that we see in the greatest numbers. The hybrid may be driven by romantic or sexual motives to attend social dances but possesses enough gentlemanliness to dance occasionally with less

desired women and also enough self-awareness to know to the importance of not being labeled a scoundrel.

We do believe that one's desire or need to have dancing skills *a priori* can be a significant barrier to attending social dances. Many of our friends will never attend dances because they lack the skills, and of course they lack the skills because they never attend. We've also noted that it is harder for neophyte men to learn to lead than it is for neophyte women to learn to follow. Men who overcome this initial barrier to social dancing reap rich rewards in acquiring leadership skills and in enhancing their social and romantic lives.

Why do more women attend social dances in greater numbers than men? There are several reasons for why this sex-based imbalance occurs. One reason is that women are more comfortable than men about moving their bodies gracefully and on dance floors. As children, more women than men have experience with forms of dance such as ballet, tap, and jazz dancing. Men also may associate gracefulness with weakness or homosexuality (Stossel & Binkley, 2006). Males may tend to avoid performing a task, such as ballroom dancing, that can threaten their masculinity. Worse yet, the idea of failing at such a task can only compound that threat.

Another but related reason is that many men see dancing as a feminine activity and therefore men who dance as effeminate and possessing a threatened masculinity. Of course an irony of this assumption is that men who dance socially encounter and develop stronger connections to more women than men who do not. As experienced social dancers, we both know of many male friends and family members who complain about how hard it is to meet women, yet these same individuals eschew social dancing as they would cyanide. Whether it is due to

shyness, homophobia, fear of failure, or an unconscious desire to be lonely, these men contribute to the gender imbalance problem seen in most dance studios.

One way to think about this gender-based barrier is in terms of the relationship between a *social fence* and a *social trap* (Messick & Brewer, 1983). A trap operates by the lure of a reward that then brings about misfortune. A mouse trap works because it tempts the mouse with cheese but in the end the quest for the reward brings about capture. In contrast, a fence represents a barrier to some greater good that must be overcome. A man who could overcome his pathological shyness with women could learn a skill that could allow him to start conversations with potentially many new women. In his analysis of shyness, Zimbardo (1990) discusses many ways that shy people avoid situations that could cure their shyness, thereby entering into a self-perpetuating cycle.

Attractiveness becomes a commodity that makes someone more likely to attract dance partners, which then increases the likelihood that someone will get dances and thus more opportunities to dance and learn more. The self-fulfilling prophecy, a robust phenomenon in the social sciences, is thus clearly at play here (Jussim, 2012). The norms of the social dancing world place women at a large disadvantage with regard to commodification. An undesirable male can have as many dances as he likes, as males are in shorter supply and as males are also expected to take the lead in asking women to dance. But an undesirable woman must wait for the few gentlemen in attendance to ask her to dance. She is destined to get fewer dances and thus fewer chances to hone her dance skills, thus perpetuating her undesirability. As social dancers, we favor the practice of encouraging men and women to be equally responsible for extending invitations to dance. While it seems reasonable for practical purposes to assign one gender the

role of lead and the other the role of follow, there is no practical reason for the convention of assigning one gender the role of inviter and the other gender the role of invitee.

Strategies to Reduce Jealousy

Perhaps the most common strategy to deal with the myth of the zipless dance is to accept the veracity of the myth without question. The dance community creates a shared reality and operates as if the shared reality is objectively correct. The implicit strategy here is that members of the dance community tell each other the myth and adhere to the myth without challenge. The problem with this method is that ultimately its adherents are living a lie which can lead to self-doubt as well as the doubting of a partner.

Another strategy is for dancers to only date or marry other dancers. The assumption here is that mixed marriages do not work. The problem with this strategy is that by attempting to satisfy this criterion, an individual severely limits himself or herself to potential partners. A further problem is that if there is a gender imbalance (and there most likely will be), then one gender has to go outside the dance scene to find a partner. A third problem is that when people meet, connect, and then partner up, they often ultimately separate. The question then becomes how do the people involved, as well as the scene as a whole, deal with the fallout of the breakup? Who gets custody of the dance scene?

Even if two people are both dancers, they still may have to deal with jealousy problems related to the number of dances they have relative to their partner. One solution is to create rules governing how often partners engage in extra-dyadic dances. Couples may create rules such as “we always dance the first (or last) dance together” or “we dance every third dance together.” At its most extreme, of course, is to only dance with one’s romantic partner. The problem with this

solution is its ultimate inability to provide novel dance experiences. Voluntarily cutting oneself off from possible dance experiences can fuel resentment especially if one partner sees himself or herself as making greater concessions. An underlying issue associated with creating these kinds of rules is that they serve as an indirect reminder of the underlying sexuality of dance. If there was not the problem of possible abuse, then why do we need to enact rules in the first place?

One solution to the myth of the zipless dance is to engage in voluntary restraint. The partner who wants to dance or who wants to dance more will cut themselves off from dancing. The limitation of this solution is that it can build resentment. This draconian solution can backfire because, paradoxically, the act of denying oneself the activity or a partner (“I won’t dance with that highly attractive other”) can make the forbidden or self-denied activity all the more attractive, a phenomenon we can term the *Romeo and Juliet effect*. It is a well-known psychological fact that the more one consciously suppresses a desired action, the more desirable the action becomes (Wegner, 1989).

Concluding Comments

As social scientists who have enjoyed social dancing for a long while, we have been struck by the paucity of research on the psychology and sociology of an activity that is replete with phenomena that have long attracted scholarly interest. We have seen in this chapter how social dancing creates a context for the unique expression of leadership skills and followership skills. As male leads, we have both experienced our fair share of women who are outstanding follows as well as women who are wretched at the task. Moreover, women tell us the same thing, namely, that some men are born to lead on the dance floor while others should never step on a dance floor again. What distinguishes good dance leads and good dance follows from poor ones?

What role do romantic and sexual motives and behaviors play in the development and expression of good leads and follows? We leave it to future research to sort out these issues.

Let us return to the concept of the zipless dance, a dance that enjoys freedom from ulterior motives, especially those of a sexual nature. Is it as rare as a unicorn? Inasmuch as males are more sexual beings than women (Baumeister, 2010), we suspect that men are more likely to enter the dance community with ulterior motives in mind. We also suspect that men are likely to publically endorse the philosophy of zipless dancing while privately hoping that their Argentine tango intrigues the woman they are embracing. Women are rarely so naïve as to fail to pick up on a dance leads' true motives, as research has shown that females are superior to males at detecting and decoding non-verbal communication (Gulabovska, & Leeson, 2014). Good leadership places the well-being of everyone ahead of the well-being of the self (Allison & Goethals, 2013). Social dancers who heed this general principle will undoubtedly prosper as dancers, in their romantic relationships, and as members of their dancing communities.

We have put forward an analysis of social dancing as a case study that applies to a broader range of issues associated with leadership and sexuality. Many of the issues at the intersection of sexuality and leadership, such as sexual harassment in schools or the workplace or the oppression of certain groups, have larger stakes than a leisure activity. One reason is that, in many instances, issues related to sexuality and leadership occur in a context where the people involved do not have the option to opt out. It might be quite difficult to quit a job, even in the face of sexual harassment, because of the financial dependence people have on their employment. At the same time, however, we feel the leadership and sexuality issues that percolate beneath something as seemingly benign as social dancing represent an important thin

slice (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992) of human behavior because they appear at first pass but in reality speak to important social issues.

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