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ARTICLE

Soviet bodies in Canadian DanceSport: identities and culture in four competitive ballroom dance studios

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the processes of cultural transfer and cross-pollination within four diasporic DanceSport studios located in major cities in Canada. It focuses on first- and second-generation Soviet-Canadian competitive ballroom dancers and their experiences with identity as a diasporic community. Through an ethnographic study, it explores the adaptations of these dancers to the Canadian DanceSport industry and the roots of their teaching methodologies in Soviet physical culture. Using narrative vignettes based on fieldwork and examined through a Dance Studies lens, this article shows how the participants navigated the expectations of their parents' and coaches' traditional Soviet upbringing and used multicultural identities in their approach to dance practice and daily interactions. This analysis is tied to the parallel yet divergent evolution of educational methodologies in the former USSR and Canada and illustrates how the DanceSport industry was nudged by these migrant dancers toward a focus on athletic excellence, while the dancers themselves adapted to social dance pedagogy and commercialization of ballroom dance in North America. Using interview excerpts and observations, this research gives voice to practitioners and aims to increase awareness of migration flows and cultural influences in DanceSport.

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"Try Please to Hate Yourself . . . " - Vignette 1

Having driven to a desolate location in an industrial district of the city, I climb up the steps of Toronto DanceSport, a studio run by immigrant dancers from the Soviet Union. I shake off the snow from the cold Toronto winter and hear a remastered and electronically enhanced version of Tito Puente's Latin American musical classic Oye Como Va playing inside. As my ears absorb the slightly too strong bass of the music,[1] I feel a wave of heat and a smell of sweat engulf me, while I enter the dimly lit space. Upon entering I see several young couples in their teens and early twenties, dancing the Cha Cha Cha[2] under the watchful gaze of their teacher. Dressed in the unofficial DanceSport uniforms of black trousers and tops for males and black skirts and blouses for females, they are focused on their movements, their bodies working hard to synchronize with the complex technique of the form, their partners, and the music. The effort in each step and the

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gravity of their facial expressions betray the intense concentration required for the execution of all the required elements. The younger ones still appear mechanical in their movement, but I know from experience that it is only a matter of time and consistent effort before their dancing becomes as smooth and as fluid as that of the older couples. They are the future of Canadian DanceSport.

The teacher, a short stern Eastern European man in his 60s sporting a moustache and wearing black trousers and a white t-shirt tucked into his pants, stops the music and shakes his head. He begins his usual speech – 'I am telling you again . . . You have to have a lot of power in your dance. Because if you will not be making yourself physically more attractive, you will look like babies that just started to crawl. And this is what your dancing is today compared to what I saw at the competition in Europe! You're too weak! You're too spoiled! You're too, too, too . . . Try please to hate yourself, because when a person hate himself that person comes to be better. If you hate how you look, you will make yourself to look better. If you hate how you are dancing, you will make everything to make yourself better in the dancing. If you don't know how to do this, and hate that you don't know this, you make yourself do it. It's just life . . . But if you love yourself and are thinking "I'm so pretty! I'm cute! I'm cool! and I'm dancing ballroom dancing!" (mimics a girl looking in the mirror and dancing, stops abruptly then walks away while shaking his head) it is Canadian dancing'.

The dancers chuckle at this parody and quietly return to their places to restart their dance routines. I can see a marked difference in their intensity output, their movements are sharp and tightly placed, performed with competition-oriented exaggerated positioning of body, the torso complementing the foot and hip actions to produce a stronger presentation. They carry on as their muscles fatigue, movements start to slow down, and their faces begin to show effort again. However, besides being physically tired, they all seem to be in good spirits and it is hard to imagine them 'hating themselves' right now . . . (Author's fieldnotes, Nov. 2015)

Introduction

The above vignette describes a typical weekday evening at Toronto DanceSport and illustrates the pedagogical methodologies practised by DanceSport (competitive ballroom)[3] coaches from the former Soviet Union republics. While some individual differences exist in each studio, overall, the four studios I observed during my research appeared remarkably similar in their approach to teaching and learning. They employ what is typically termed authoritarian pedagogy in the West (Smith 1998), which places the teacher in a position of power and does not allow the student to develop autonomy until much later in the learning process. This atmosphere in the studio contrasts with the critical pedagogy employed elsewhere in the North American general education and most private dance studios. As a result, the students in this environment develop dual cultural identities, which mediate between these two dissonant approaches. These cultural identities and their relationship to the development of Canadian DanceSport form the core of my research questions in this article.

This article illuminates the relationship between the ideological methods of education and training in the former USSR and the resulting cultural identities visible in the Soviet-Canadian immigrants involved in ballroom dance as teachers, learners, and parents of

students. I investigate the historical roots of this community's cultural identity in the former USSR and outline the migration of Soviet educational strategies to Canada. Through my reflections on the interview responses within a larger socio-political context, I aim to give immigrant dancers a voice that is echoed in the writing of dance scholars worldwide. I relate my arguments to theories in dance and performance studies by authors, such as Diana Taylor (2003) and Julie Malnig (1997) and base my ethnographic methodologies on previous research conducted by dance researchers including Tomie Hahn (2007) and Juliet McMains (2006). In particular, I use direct observation, movement analysis, and interviews to develop a picture in time of this unique community in their specific cultural context. Ethnography allowed the study to present the current state of practical and theoretical understandings of the topic as it is seen and understood by dance practitioners and for me to build 'hypotheses and theories in an inductive manner' (Thomas, Nelson, and Silverman 2005)

I argue that the disciplinary formation of Eastern European second-generation immigrant children stems from the political and cultural policies of the Soviet Union, which are then transmitted through the parents and coaches to their children as a form of bodily capital. However, with the children growing up in Canada, these processes of cultural transmission are disrupted and transformed to adapt to the new socio-political context. The children demonstrate subtle actions of resistance[4] to counteract the influence of their families' authoritarian education to establish their own cross-cultural identities as Soviet-Canadians through development of their own creativity and autonomy in their behaviour and training. Interpretations of the interviews conducted with parents also show how the perception and approach of these first-generation immigrants to the education and behaviour management of their children has changed over the years they spent living in Canada to reflect the Canadian ethos of inclusion and holistic approach to education (Stephen et al. n.d.; Gnosh and Abdi 2004; Johnston et al. 2009).

In the process of this research, I conducted a literature review covering topics including the development of Soviet and Canadian concert, folk, and ballroom dancing; pedagogical strategies in Eastern Europe and North America; the changing priorities of sport and physical education during the 20th century; dance as a site of immigrant identity formation; as well as the concepts of embodied knowledge and cultural narratives. For the ethnographic portion of the research, I carried out qualitative interviews with young ballroom dancers from Soviet-Canadian backgrounds living in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, as well as with their parents and coaches (see Table 4). All of the participants signed informed consent forms, and ethics approval was granted by York University. The participants were made aware in advance of my arrival and understood the purpose and process of my study. I observed their classes and practices and video

Table 1. DanceSport categories and dances.

Standard	Latin
Waltz	Cha Cha Cha
Tango	Samba
Foxtrot	Rumba
Viennese Waltz	Paso Doble
Quickstep	Jive

recorded some sessions for subsequent analysis with the permission of the coaches and dancers. All of the participants were given pseudonyms and were assured that their participation and responses would not affect their relationship with the researcher or the studio management. The procedures of the fieldwork were explained, and they were free to retrieve their data at any time.

A preliminary research trip to Montreal took place in February 2013. The studio visited for this pilot study was DanceSport Etc. Two years later, visits were made to three additional studios: Toronto DanceSport, Ottawa DanceSport, and Montreal DanceSport[5] between August 2015 and April 2016 (see Table 3). These locations were chosen due to the large presence of DanceSport studios in their areas, their statuses as metropolitan

Table 2. British and North American levels in DanceSport.

Levels	Typical time frame	Steps allowed at competitions
Novice	0–3 Months	Basic steps
Beginner	3–6 Months	Basic steps
Pre-Bronze	6–12 Months	Preliminary Bronze syllabus
Bronze	1–2 years	Bronze closed syllabus
Silver	2–4 years	Silver syllabus
Gold	3–5 years	Gold syllabus
Gold Star	4–6 years	Advanced gold syllabus
Pre-Champ	5–7 years	Open choreography
Champ or Amateur	Over 7 years	Open choreography
Professional	Over 10 years	Open choreography

Table 3. Fieldwork trips schedule and activities.

	Interviews	Observations
DanceSport Etc		
19 February 2013	Coach – Interview	
20 February 2013	Senior couples – interview	Class observation
21 February 2013	Children – interview	Class observation
22 February 2013	Parents – interview	
Ottawa DanceSport		
16 September 2015	Children – focus group	Class observation
	Senior couple – interview	Note taking
November 11, 2015	Coaches (a) – interview	Class observation
		Video recording
February 17, 2016	Coaches (b) – interview	Informal observation
April 20, 2016	Parents – focus group	Informal observation
Montreal DanceSport		
September 17, 2015	Parents – interview	Class/practice observation
	Senior couple (a) – interview	Note taking
November 12, 2015	Senior couple (b) – interview	Class observation
	Parents – focus group	Video recording
February 18, 2016	Children – focus group	Informal observation
April 21, 2016	Coaches – interview	
Toronto DanceSport		
August 25, 2015	Parents – interview	
	Children – interview	
September 1, 2015	Children – interview	Participant observation
September 2, 2015	Senior couple – interview	Informal observation
November 4, 2015	Parents – interview	Informal observation
December 9,2015	Children – interview	
March 7, 2016	Coaches – interview 1	
March 8, 2016		Participant observation
		Video recording
April 18, 2016	Coaches – interview 2	

Is it possible to space the studio names out? if not it is fine, just looks a bit crammed with the dates

centres of Canada, as well as their accessibility for this research project. In each chosen city, the participating studios were selected based on the large population of Soviet Canadian students as well as the highly competitive ranking of the teachers and students at various level categories (see Table 2).[6]

My positionality within this research stems from my identity as a diasporic ballroom dancer from the former Soviet Union. I immigrated to Canada as a child and had similar experiences to the children in this study. My professional and personal connections in the Canadian ballroom dance community allowed my initial access to these studios and gained me the trust of the participants. The journeys of these dancers from professional competition, to teaching, and finally studio ownership in a new country, are exemplary of the cultural shifts undergone by many Soviet immigrant dancers of their generation.

In order to give a voice to my participants, I begin each section with selected topics brought up during the interviews by the participants that initiate a conversation to each subject I discuss and dissect further. While these are only selected excerpts, similar views and opinions were present throughout most of the locations and with the participants in my research.[7] Furthermore, my own experience confirms these views from a lifelong participant-observer perspective.

My studio and competition observations form the basis of the narrative vignettes in this text where I aim to present to the reader a sense of context and sensational experience through my description of the events. These vignettes begin my discussions on several topics of analysis and allow the reader to engage with the material on a deeper sensory level. Such ethnographic writing strategies were first developed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), in his 'thick description' of a night at a Balinese cockfight and were used by dance studies authors including Tomie Hahn (2007) and Juliet McMains (2006) to preclude their analytical writing on Nihon Buyo and Ballroom, respectively.

Table 4. Studios and participants.

	Toronto DanceSport	Ottawa DanceSport	Montreal DanceSport	DanceSport Etc
Studio Owners/Coaches	Alex	Yan	Olia & Misha	Mirco
Coaches	Leo & Anna	Kostia & Alla		
Students – Over 16 Couple interviews	George & Maya	Vova & Laura	Eva & Erin	Francois & Carmen
			Stan & Alesia	Gregory & Katia
Youth focus groups and interviews	Rick	Youth group:	Youth group:	Alex
	Vikka	Maxine	Paul	Masha
	Ron	Ernest	Jack	Mark
	Lili	John	Kasia	Dina
		Harry	Mara	
		Sania	Daria	
		Janna	Luke	
Parent Interviews	Jim		Irina & Vlad	Evgenii
				Inna & Julia
	Larissa			
Parent focus groups		Parents group:	Parents group:	
		Dina	Asha	
		Rita & Tom	Louisa	
		Sergei		
	Keira			
		Paulina & Ryan		

Here, I aim to use these methods to further enliven my research findings through the use of my own voice in narrating my observations during fieldwork at studios and events attended by Soviet diaspora dancers.

Learning to be me: nurturing cultural attitudes through physical education and dance

'It's not for fun' – vignette 2

Upon entering the DanceSport Etc . . . studio, I see a couple in their early teens, taking a private class. They are dancing the Samba (a ballroom version of the Brazilian national carnival dance) to the sounds of a remastered 'Brazil' track by Antonio Carlos Jobim, while their teacher observes them intently from the side of the room. They are focused on their movements, working on the Locksteps (a step where one leg crosses in front or behind the other, executed in '1 & 2' timing with complimentary hip actions). Their movements are sharp but not fully connected to the body through the centre as they are still learning to maintain a unified relationship in their limbs and core at high speed. Their parents are watching quietly on the edge off the dance floor. Gregory, the male partner, seems a little hesitant in his leading and misses a connection, Katia, his partner, looks at him with a cold menacing stare as she proceeds to complete her action on her own, she seems fierce and determined in her movements despite some technical gaps. They start bickering as they try to continue dancing and the teacher, Mirco, grunts as he tells them to start over pointing out that they should focus on their own dancing rather than blame each other because they are both dancing with their feet only, and must learn to incorporate their whole bodies into the movement. The students listen attentively and recompose themselves. As they try the movement again, Katia seems tired and is panting, but does not complain, Gregory stops and tells the teacher that they might need a quick break, Mirco gives him a questioning glance but complies. As they go off the floor, their parents rush to get them water and towels to wipe their sweat while muttering apprehensive remarks regarding discipline and communication in Russian.

Many dancers in my research expressed a tension between their identities as children of Soviet parents and their identities as Canadians in regard to their activities and schooling. For example, Gregory, a dancer from DanceSport Etc, depicted above, comments that while he tries to give his complete effort in the studio he does not make it his sole priority as is expected of him by his parents and teachers. In doing so, he is negotiating the potential tension of dealing with a dual identity by choosing his own approach to training and attempts to reconcile the Soviet philosophy of a discipline-focused and career-oriented approach to physical activity with his desire to have a multi-dimensional range of personal interests and individual needs, as is commonplace in Canadian education. In his interview, he comments:

> Well yeah, I find the Russian way is just really strict going, practice, practice, practice. I see it that way but I was also brought up here in Canada, so when I am here I am concentrated but I don't have it as my sole priority, putting my life into it. I want to do other things as well

His partner Katia is less diplomatic and displays a stronger adherence to the Soviet form of training and mentality. She states that she does not do dancing for the purposes of entertainment and wants to achieve a proficiency and potentially a title if she is to pursue this activity. In her own words:

> Me yes, I think it does affect, in our culture when you start something you don't give up, it's not entertainment, it's more like you start and you have to continue to get to a certain point, it's not for fun.

As reflected in Gregory's attitude, ideological differences are commonplace between first-generation immigrants and their children, and immigrant parents often act as partial gatekeepers of old values, while their children test their boundaries (Ziff & Rao 1997); the manner in which these differences are expressed in this community is unique in their juxtaposition of Soviet cultural education and traditional Canadian values.

Gregory's resistance to his parents' old-world values stems from his exposure to Canadian physical educational philosophy, which, over the last few decades, developed an emphasis on holistic pedagogy, individuality, and a focus on inclusion (Duncan et al. n.d.; Gnosh and Abdi 2004; Ingrid et al. 2009). In contrast, Katia's attitude exemplifies the Soviet cultural view of physical education still held by her parents and many immigrant coaches from that region. In the USSR, the approach to athletic training encouraged commitment and results, which were facilitated by a state-supported physical education program for children and meritocratic selection for national teams, which would represent the Soviet Union to the world during competitive events (Bobrova 1986; Kondratyeva and Taborko 1979; Shneidman 1978). The coordination between political ideologies and embodied cultural practices that enabled the discipline and conviction of the Soviet bodies required early indoctrination of the population. By the 1970s, the Soviet government instituted initiatives rooted in the concept of *fiskultura*, a physical culture, through which children were trained in many physical activities from a very young age. The parents usually enrolled them in various extracurricular activity clubs, such as hockey or football for boys or dance and gymnastics for girls from primary school onward. Each of these activities was heavily filled with ideological propaganda, which promoted excellence in the name of 'the People' (see Figure 1). (Kondrat eva and Taborko 1979; Bobrova 1986). In schools and universities, communism-based political courses were taught alongside the history of the Soviet republics, both with a nationalist slant glorifying Lenin and the USSR. A brief examination of any school or university textbook of the era can testify to that effect (Bakhrushin 1973; Shneidman 1973). Many of the Soviet athletic coaches had post-graduate degrees and have passed through the country's education system and its ideological indoctrination processes into the Marxist-Leninist philosophies, which they were expected to pass on to their students along with the athletic skills (Marx 1932; Shneidman 1978, 81) This approach nurtured a sense of communal responsibility to state in the students, who were groomed to be potential national representatives of the USSR.

In Canada, the physical and general education at the primary and secondary levels have been based on the promotion of holistic education, diversity and inclusion through a democratic vision of society (Gnosh and Abdi 2004, 14; CIC). Through a gradual development since the 1950s the educational policies in-line with this mandate came to emphasise the adaptation of the dominant group to minority needs and health and well-being over pure academic achievement, competitive results and physical fitness for its own sake (Stephen et al. n.d.; Gnosh and Abdi 2004, 17–18). As a marginal discipline in

Figure 1. Peter Marlow – Soviet Union. Ukraine. Odessa. learning to disco dance at red banner pioneer camp. 1981 (National Observer blog, http://no.ua/blogs, 20 December 2012).

the Canadian educational curriculum, dance was often absorbed by physical education faculties and followed a similar path. For example, in Manitoba, dance was included in the provincial physical education curriculum in 1981 with the goal being to 'to express ideas, thoughts and feelings with confidence through physical activity' (Hoad 46). Similarly, ballroom dance in Ontario was often categorized as social dance and emphasized "dance as affirmation of group identity, as a form of celebration and as a recreational activity, and dance in courtship" (Canada, Ontario Ministry of Education, part b, 1998). While the policies did not always directly reflect the reality on the ground (Fraser 2004; Cornell 2004), the experience of my participants as well as my own does show these trends to be applied in many schools throughout the country. Some notable exceptions might be general education private schools and classical dance conservatories such as National Ballet School of Canada and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens where a more authoritarian structure similar to that employed in the former USSR persists (Berg 2015; Fisher-Stitt 2010; Tembeck 2004). These institutions, like others including the American Ballet school in New York and the Paris Opera Ballet School, were at least partially inspired by the Soviet model and developed by former Soviet dancers, such as Rudolf Nureyev and George Balanchine.

Sensory teaching in a diaspora: the sights and sounds of champions in the making

'He'll be corrupted soon!' – vignette 3

I am sitting inside a stuffy studio room with low lighting and several young couples sitting on the floor by the walls chatting and putting their dance shoes on. The majority are very young, probably between 10 and 14, but some are also in their late teens. I notice a young boy in the corner by the mirror practising by himself, he seems quite serious compared to the rest of the bunch who are busy telling each other about their weekend and school gossip. I was later told by their coach that the boy only recently arrived from Ukraine and so still has the Soviet 'work ethic', followed by a humorous remark that 'he

will corrupted soon'. The coach, Misha, comes in and puts on the Rumba, a slow Latin American dance, He simply says 'Let's go' and goes back to his chair. He's young and fit young man in his late twenties, with a physical demeanour that shows that he is in top physical shape, commanding respect through his demeanour and poise, highly regarded by his students. The couples begin get up and start warming up to the sound of Andrea Bocelli's 'Somos Novios', a Latin-American ballad about love. I wonder how many of their peers outside of the studio have even heard this track. They dance with conviction, some are doing basic movements in the closed categories with restricted step syllabi, others are moving through very complex combinations in open choreography. The boy who was practising earlier seems to be the most coordinated of his age group, yet also the least expressive in his face making it difficult to gauge his level of enjoyment in practice. I can see that the coach is watching him with special attention and can't help but wonder if he is being groomed to be the next national champion in a few years.

In my interview with the two main coaches at Montreal DanceSport (see Figure 2), Misha and Olia, we discussed the differences in discipline, concentration, and maturity of kids who recently immigrated from the former Soviet Union and those who grew up here to immigrant parents. They pointed out that 90% of their students are from Eastern European background and that they notice marked differences in how the new arrivals absorb and implement information compared to those who have gone through school in Canada and have become acculturated into Canadian educational systems. They stated that while others might find positive benefits to the Canadian system, they do not find it beneficial and much preferred those children coming out of Soviet schools. They argue

Figure 2. Lobby of Montreal DanceSport studio with picture and trophy of Misha and Olia. photo by author.

that even those who went through kindergarten there are already easier to teach. Borrowing from dance scholar Tomie Hahn's auto-ethnography, we can see the new arrivals as performing their Soviet identities in a Canadian context, while those who grew up here are performing their Canadian identity through their Soviet bodies (2007, 11). Both performances are conducted in the context of the Soviet-Canadian DanceSport studio, a space where the dancers are immersed in the Soviet-style school environment similar to the one described in the previous section[8] and are constantly fed by sensational knowledge aimed at indoctrinating them into the discipline of DanceSport.

The coaches at Montreal DanceSport aim to transmit the aspects of Soviet-based training to their students by means of an immersion in sensory experiences, which form the basis of their training. As Hahn illustrates in her expose of *Nihon Buyo*, sensational knowledge acquired through years of training is vital to the transmission of embodied and psychological skills. The manner in which these stimulations are used serves to create the dancers they would like their students to become. In my observations, aurally, some of the coaches would often be very demanding of the students during class time and would often employ negative motivation by saying phrases such as 'you need to hate your body, then you will want to become better and improve!' (Alex, Toronto DanceSport), in tactile stimulation, they would at times employ unorthodox methods such as (lightly) poking the students with a needle in the buttocks to encourage them to tuck into their pelvis while humorously taunting them in attempts to escape. Visually, the younger students were constantly exposed to their older peers who are world-class competitors and compared themselves to them as role models while maintaining a friendly rivalry with their age and level mates. However, as Misha points, out not all of the students are equally receptive to their way of organizing and running the training. Because of their relatively strong adherence to the Soviet-style methodology, first-generation immigrants from that area of the world seem to 'be easier to teach' for them. The second-generation children of immigrants, in turn, tend to resist such an acculturation because they have not grown up within such a system and have been educated in the context of Canadian pedagogical philosophy described earlier.

Creating a new 'self': developing Soviet-Canadian identities in the studio environment

'If i wasn't russian i would probably not have danced at all' – vignette 4

The students in Ottawa DanceSport are slowly gathering into the ballroom, they chat among themselves as they warm up, speaking a hybrid of Russian and English. They are fewer here than in the other studios because this is the first Soviet club style studio in this city and, there is a smaller Russian-speaking population in the area, which creates a more intimate atmosphere and a hybrid of Canadian and Russian cultures. The students are dressed casually, wearing different colours and clothing styles contrasting the other studios where black was the norm and there are several non-Russian-speaking students. Alla, the teacher, a very athletic woman in her late twenties, says in a strong Russian accent and a hint of sarcasm in her voice 'Okey, I see you are strong today, we start with the Jive'. She blasts 'Jack is Back' by the Clan on the speakers and claps her hands to signal everyone to begin. The Jive, is a derivative of East coast swing and the fastest of the Latin-

American category. When the dancers are finished after two minutes they are already sweating, but Alla points to the mats in the corner and says 'no breaks', They all rush there to do curls and planks as a break between dances (see Figure 3). While it is apparent to me that several of the couples here are a lot more immersed in Canadian culture, most state that they identify with their USSR roots as the core of their identity. During a focus group later in the day one of the students, Harry, explains to me:

'I find that when the people in studio, if they're Canadian and they start dancing, a lot of them tend to not have the same like motive of trying to do your hardest and doing it cause if you don't do you're going to be yelled at so they end up being more easy going and they're not trying as hard so they end up doing worse and also I feel like if I wasn't Russian I would probably not have danced at all . . . it really influenced my life.'

Such self-essentialization was common among many of my second-generation participants who wanted to maintain identity while still fitting into their current cultural context. When the young Soviet-Canadian dancers use codeswitching (Hahn 2007) and mediate their behaviour between their vocational schools and the Soviet-style dance studios, they attempt to insert trans-national scenarios for themselves, which allow them to function in both cultural contexts. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor discusses immigrant identities in the USA and points to the fact that the cultural identities of immigrants and their offspring are always divided between their old and new homes (2003, xv). She argues that in order to resolve these dualities, immigrants tend to negotiate their hybrid identities through their actions and attitudes. The dancers in my research are already negotiating their dual identities by participating in a marginal dance form in Canada and doing it in a Soviet-style dance studio. Since much of the rest of their daily lives exist in a scenario of a Canadian lifestyle, this is one of the ways they express their immigrant roots. As another student, Ernest, at Ottawa DanceSport pointed out:

> "Being Russian in dancing and living in Canada . . . like I said before you tell people you dance and they just say, 'why don't you play hockey?' Just like any other normal kid, so it kind of plays a big role but in the end it helps because we speak Russian here, and it's kind of in order to preserve the culture as I said,because we live in Canada and we should respect that but we kind of like to keep our own culture and not lose where we come from. "

In my case studies, subtle resistances visible in discrepant scenarios to cultural norms were often multi-directional for the second-generation dancers whereby the dancers would neither fully accept typical Canadian values nor the Soviet-style upbringing of

Figure 3. Students at DanceSport Ottawa doing crunches between dance rounds. photo by author.

their parents or coaches. A fluid approach to their identities where they could adjust their behavior according to their context allowed them to negotiate their own unique cultural positionality based on selected characteristics of both of their worlds. This hybrid identity was embodied by these dancers who do not only perform this identity in dance but also have adopted it in their daily interactions and behavior. Diana Taylor further states that 'performance and aesthetics of everyday life vary from community to community, reflecting cultural and historical specificity as much in the enactment as in the viewing/reception' (2003, 3). Accordingly, some of the participants pointed out that in contrast to other immigrants from Eastern Europe, their Canadian vocational school peers did not comprehend their interest in DanceSport nor connected well with them on social communication level.

Preserving the old ways: authoritarian pedagogy within immigrant communities

Parents focus group – Montreal dancesport

David – And how do you think your children are different from how you were growing up in the Soviet Union?
Keira – They have more choice here, for us over there we had to do it a certain way and that's it . . .
Louisa – I remember trainers came from the stadium and chose the sportiest kids, and I was very sportive so I went to train also . . .
Keira – Yes, we lived in such circumstances where we had to do it whether we want to or not, here, we as parents give them an idea and they choose themselves.
Louisa – Yes, I just gave him (son) the idea and then he went for it himself . . .
Keira – Yes, it is a free choice here . . .
Asha – For us it is more difficult psychologically, because in Russia family is first while here the child is always right and everybody will find out if there is a problem. Eventually you start to wonder if maybe it is better like this, maybe they don't need so much pressure, maybe they don't need to know every capital of the world, we don't need this information in our life now . . . so here they are more relaxed. They grow up later; there is a maturity difference of about 5 years.

Similarly to the dancers in my research, their parents experience a sense of social isolation due to the contrast in values in the upbringing of their children within a new cultural environment. In my parents focus group with at Ottawa DanceSport, the participants expressed their difficulty adjusting to the Canadian parenting style and child rearing practices. They stated that in contrast to the strict family hierarchy in the former Soviet Union, where the parents had the ultimate authority over the children, in Canada, the child and their perspective are often prioritized. They also mentioned that the Soviet approach put a lot of pressure on them while growing up there to excel in any pursuit, whether academic or athletic, which forced them to gain maturity quicker than Canadian children and pondered which approach was really better for their kids.

The socio-political stance of the Soviet Union resulted in an authoritarian pedagogical approach, which exerted a strong pressure for excellence in results and performance within both athletic and academic fields. However, after spending years in Canada, these

parents are questioning the value of their own experiences within such an environment and reflect on the potential benefits of the holistic approach in Canadian education (Gnosh and Abdi 2004; Ingrid et al. 2009). As members of a diaspora, they function within what Benedict Anderson (1991, 6) termed an 'imagined community' that is 'distinguished not by [its] falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which [it is] imagined.' For example, even though these parents are no longer living in the Soviet Union, they have retained many of its ideologies, such as the strong emphasis on children's extra-curricular activities and the traditional gender role divisions in family life. These perspectives, re-enforced by their expat cultural community, make it difficult for them to assimilate to their adopted environment. While Asha is re-considering the traditional values of USSR education, her reflection is still mediated by her imagined community's framework of possibilities for self re-invention in this new environment. This tension can be felt in her hesitant response, where she says that '*maybe* they don't need so much pressure'. In deference to their roots, these parents still choose to involve their children in ballroom dancing, a practice traditionally associated with an intense athletic pursuit in the Soviet Union but do not necessarily pressure their children to train to become professionals. The two conflicting scenarios of achievement (Taylor 2003) create an area of tension for these parents, which is visible in their interviews and forces them to compromise in their decision-making processes. In a different interview, a parent from the Toronto DanceSport studio, Larissa, discusses the parents' adaptations to the cultural shifts and their various reactions to seeing their children relive their experiences from the former USSR.

Larissa – I think this is coming from the Soviet style, for sure . . . because it was everywhere . . . not being politically correct, not being sensitive and stuff like that . . . there are different people but overall, it's a little bit of army. You know . . . I imagine you sitting and thinking what do you know about army? Have you been in the army? But it should be a little bit softer I think, a I little more considerate . . .

David – But the children are able to handle it right?

Larissa – Some do some don't, because as you see many left also . . . actually I think the parents are able to handle it less than the children . . .

David – Do you mean parents from the Soviet Union?

Larissa – Yes, they didn't like it, because they were thinking that why do we have to suffer again the things we suffered there already? But every family is different of course . . .

The children, growing up in a holistic learning environment in their vocational schools (Stephen n.d.; Gnosh and Abdi 2004; Hoad 1990; Ingrid et al. 2009) have a harder time adjusting to the military-style training methodologies of their Soviet coaches. The parents, who themselves went through such education back in the USSR, also sometimes hesitate about putting their children through the same experiences despite the potential results. Since their feelings are not taken into account, the students in Soviet schools can be shouted at, bluntly criticized, and as mentioned earlier, even poked with a sewing needle, as I experienced during my participant-observation[9]; a practice justified to me as the activation of 'fear memory neurons' by the coach. Such practices have proven effective by producing exceptional competition results and eliminating the less enduring students but are questionable in terms of the degree of psychological trauma inflicted and the limiting autonomy and personal agency of the dancers. In the Canadian cultural context, due to the historical development and

predominance of multicultural education methodology, the result-oriented methods of the Soviet schools are often deemed authoritarian and viewed as negative and lacking in student autonomy. From a psychological perspective, these differences arise from differing motivational climates. The Canadian system is based on autonomous motives, which encourage enjoyment, value identification, and greater internalization of skill. This environment tends to build enduring personal interest and self-sustainable effort. The Soviet methodology favors controlled motives based on introjected – unconsciously adopted ideas or attitudes of others – goal striving, regulated by goal pursuit, and managed through a punishment-reward system. Such an environment can create anxiety as well as feeling of guilt in the student and requires constant feedback from the coaches (Miulli and Bates 2011; Smith et al. 2011). However, the students in those schools do not always agree with this perception as the next interview illustrates.

Dancers focus group, Ottawa dancesport

> Harry – The teachers at my academic school are more easy going and honest, I feel like they're more guidance councillors than really teachers at this point because they're really trying to make you feel at home whereas they really should just teach you. Here they're just teachers and they're teaching you but at the same time they're really teaching you everything you need to know.Sania – It's a really different compared to our teachers, because academically they're always like marks don't count it's all about effort and support . . . and here it's like oh you didn't die, you have to work hard and practice more!
>
> John – The teachers here they also gather that information so that you feel like number 1 while at school they're just like 'yeah, here is what you need do, just do well, have a good day' the teachers at school they don't really strive you for success while here they do everything they can.

Sania - ...Shoul

We can gather from these student's responses that they are not satisfied with the inclusive approach in the Canadian public education and prefer the more rigid and result-based training they receive at the dance studio. Many of them also mentioned receiving similar training in mathematics, music, martial arts, and Russian language. As systems of care and emotional support are culturally based, certainly, their parents' and coaches' attitudes and influences over them play a role in these responses; nevertheless, their voices are clearly consensual. They are unlikely to know all of the theoretical background behind the style of academic education in Canada and its potential consequences for their future lives (Gnosh and Abdi 2004; Miulli and Sanna 2011; Smith 1998: Smith Alison et al. 2011); however, they are comfortable in the system they are at the studio and are certainly not doing ballroom dancing 'socially' or as a simple form of leisure activity. Their perspectives demonstrate how the socialist ethic of merit-based activity has migrated through their coaches and parents from the Soviet Union to their 2nd generation immigrant children in Canada. As more and more Soviet schools opened up around Canada, and dancers from these institutions achieved high results at competitions, the Canadian ballroom dance industry also began to change. Despite the continuing trend of social dance studios, a more

definitive trend towards a sport-based approach can be seen in Canadian DanceSport industry since the 1990s (Canadian DanceSport Federation n.d.; World DanceSport Federation n.d.).

Sport or leisure?: the DanceSport body in the commercial ballroom industry

'Working it' – vignette 5

The large ballroom at the Hilton Marriott hotel is filled with spotlights, which are reflected by the Swarowski stones on the extravagant dresses of the female dancers. The translucent tan on their legs and shining spray on their hair create a spectacle that is somewhere between soft pornographic imagery and a high society ball. Beside them stand Apollonian looking male dancers, dressed in various designs of black dress trousers and open shirts emphasizing their protruding chests. They walk around in a display of territoriality and confidence. The crowd shouts they favourite numbers as the announcer skilfully pronounces the difficult Eastern European names … "Malitowskii, Zagorichenco, Kriklivii … " he perseveres. As the music begins, the bodies begin to move, synchronizing their inner rhythms with the music, the crowd shouts '*Davai Liosha!*' '*Pahai!*' roughly translated as 'Let's go Leo' 'Work it!'. Leo gives a quick smile to his fans and starts 'working it', his movements are quick, sharp, and precise. Like a sprinter in constant take off motions or a cheetah repeatedly leaping at it's prey. His partner Anna compliments him with a slightly more fluid interpretation of these dynamics as she adds more snake-like reverberations in response to his poignant and assertive leads. There is a lot more intensity and athleticism in this contemporary event than would not have been visible 20 or 30 years ago. The music is faster and closer to electronic dance music than traditional Latin songs originally used at ballroom competitions. There are cameras, stage lights, and internet streams happening live. The costumes are tighter and mobility oriented. Most notably, the bodies of the competitors are a lot more uniform with the long, lean, eastern European aesthetic dominating the majority of the floor. The predominance of the Russian language and Eastern European etiquette makes this traditionally British mimicry (Bhaba 2004) of a Latin American dance ritual into an inadvertent ironic spectacle of re-appropriation.

The transformation of the social dancing body into the athletic dancing body through the influx of Eastern European dancers into Western Europe and America is reflective of the historical and cultural development of ballroom dancing in the USSR. Most of the changes occurred during the two decades after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the main period of its diaspora into Western Europe and North America. If we consider the structure and priorities of ballroom dance in the Soviet Union and the number of dancers coming out of that region during the 1990′s diaspora, the reforms in the world of DanceSport over the last few decades no longer seem like a simple coincidence.

After 40 years of unchanging structure, the 1990s saw many course-changing developments in the world of competitive ballroom dance (see Table 5) with many of the innovations in line with the structure and philosophy of DanceSport in the Soviet Union. With the start of *Perestroika* – the restructuring of the Soviet Union and its constituencies into democratic states initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev – the opening of the borders in the

former USSR, Soviet diaspora has made its presence felt in the international ballroom world to an unprecedented extent. While some of the bureaucratic mechanisms for the formation of such a system were already present in Western Europe, they did not come to fruition until the late 1990s, the prime-time of Soviet diaspora. I argue that these changes were in fact propelled and, in-part, initiated by these immigrants and spread by the increasingly accessible information technology around the world. The impact of this diasporic ripple effect has also reached North America but got somewhat diluted by the social dance and pro-am industries in both Canada and USA (see McMains 2006).

This transformation is also visible in the increasingly mechanical movement qualities and athletic ideal body of DanceSport, which is now closer than ever to the typical Eastern European build of tall, lean, and long-limbed dancer (see Figure 4); the facial expressions, which are increasingly reminiscent of the Eastern European stoicism with sudden comedic outbursts; and in movement qualities, which value explosive movements, classical lines, and maximal control of timing (Bezikova 2006; Bobrova 1986).

Inversely, as mentioned in the discussion of codeswitching, through their dancing they practice physicalizing the various characteristics inherent in ballroom and Latin dance. As Juliet McMains states in regard to the character of Standard dances,

"the notion of romance, along with the costumes and the graceful restraint of movement, is derived from a European, aristocratic model of social dance. (2006, 133) This transformation on the dance floor and the dancers' abilities to adapt such identities in their daily lives facilitates their interactions with many of their wealthy upper-class clients and allows them further options for potential class mobility. Malnig (1997) states in her article, that 'through attainment of social dance proficiency, for instance, one might become acquainted with the possibility of the idea of social movement, or at least be able to acquire the skills or adopt the values required to circulate properly within another class level.' In recent years, programs such as Dancing with the Stars helped create a celebrity profile for the participating dancers. For example, Karina Smirnoff, a top DanceSport competitor, starred in Dancing with the Stars and then in the movies and TV shows such as *Across Grace Alley* (2013) and *Famously Single* (2016). Such exposure allowed these dancers and others like them to transcend their working-class roots and become minor international celebrities transforming their identities as dance athletes into those of popular media entertainers. Similarly, after dancers at Toronto DanceSport danced at the Pan American Games Ceremonies, they were invited to shoot a pilot for a reality TV show that could have easily been their ticket to stardom beyond the ballroom. While the pilot was not picked up by the network, it nevertheless exemplifies the close and now intertwined relationship between ballroom dance glamour and celebrity status.

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Conclusion

Through this study, I argue that ideological and expressive qualities found in the bodies of Soviet-Canadian second-generation immigrant ballroom dancers and their teachers, stem from the input of the Soviet socialist body ideologies on ballroom dancing over the last three decades. The competitive success of these bodies in North America and much of Europe has allowed them to shape the contemporary direction of competitive ballroom dance around the world. The developments produced by these bodies stand in stark

Table 5. Timeline of developments in DanceSport (WDSF version).

1935 – Fédération Internationale de Danse pour Amateurs (FIDA) is founded in Prague, CZE. endowment)
1956 – FIDA is dissolved.
1957 – IDSF is founded under the name of International Council of Amateur Dancers (ICAD) in Wiesbaden, GER.
1960 – First TV broadcast of a DanceSport competition airs in Germany.
1990 – ICAD changes its name to International DanceSport Federation.
1992 – IDSF becomes a member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (SportAccord).
1995 – IDSF and DanceSport are provisionally recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). World Rock 'n' Roll Council (WRRC) joins IDSF. IDSF becomes a member of the International World Games Association (IWGA).
1997 – IDSF and DanceSport are granted full recognition by the 106th Session of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne, Switzerland. IDSF becomes a member of the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations (ARISF). IDSF enters into a representation agreement with the International Management Group IMG for the production and worldwide distribution of DanceSport television coverage. DanceSport premieres in The World Games held under the auspices of IWGA and the patronage of the IOC.
2001 – IDSF establishes an Anti-Doping Commission and subscribes to the World Anti-Doping Code.
2003 – IDSF creates the Grand Slam Series for Latin and Standard.
2004 – International Dance Organisation (IDO) joins IDSF.
2006 – IDSF establishes an Athletes' Commission and a Disciplinary Council.

Figure 4. 2011 Canadian Closed DanceSport Championship line up with at least half of the line up made up of Soviet immigrant dancers or their childeren. (Accessed 20 December 2012)

should be on figure 5

contrast to the traditional perspective of ballroom dance based on social dancing in North America. As McMains points out, the original emphasis on improvisation in social dances has been practically erased by the DanceSport industry (2006, 71–74). The sports-based approach, encouraged by Soviet training methods, develops dance athletes rather than social or concert dancers. However, these athletic bodies are also affected by their environment and are transformed by their vocational education, social environment, and cultural indoctrination in Canada. In my studio observations and participant interviews, I was able to record various characteristics of second-generation Soviet immigrant dancers in Canada, which demonstrate resistances to that approach. The multiple identities embodied by these young performers reflect influences from the diasporic communities they come from, as

Figure 5. A screenshot from a recent world championship final where the majority of finalists are current or former Soviet nationals.

Should be on figure 4

well as their personal collages of traits and behaviors gathered throughout their life in Canada. The principles that are at the root of these identities, in turn, affect the way they prioritise and use their time and bodily capital. Some dancers, like Harry or John, choose to remain loyal to the Soviet ideals of utilitarian approach to life and training, while other dancers, like Gregory, prefer to expand their interests or decrease the pressure such regimentation requires. The repertoire that 'enacts embodied memory: performance, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing (. . .) usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge' (Taylor 2003, 20) serves as a toolbox from which these diasporic children draw the specific tools they deem appropriate for themselves and the situation around them. While their parents still have strong ties to their native culture, they do not impose it on their children the way it was imposed on them by the Soviet state (Ottawa parents focus group). The acculturation into Canadian society allows both generations to mediate a compromising stand towards each other and their new cultural environment. If the children manage to successfully negotiate these dynamics, they are usually successful in the field of DanceSport and are rewarded on both fronts, as individual winners and as representatives of their family and community. Such validation, in turn, often provides ample motivation for the children to continue practising this activity for sufficient amounts of time to eventually become leaders in the Canadian DanceSport industry themselves and play a role in its development. In this manner, cultural dynamics shape the identities of these young diasporic dancers who will eventually come to shape the identity of Canadian DanceSport as a whole (see Figure 5).

The Final Bow - Vignette 6

The dancers at Toronto DanceSport have just finished five gruelling rounds of dancing as competition simulation before the world championships in Europe. Completing their final steps, they begin to relax the tone in their bodies and allow a look of exhaustion to creep onto their faces as some of the younger dancers even begin a quiet chatter among themselves. The coach stops the music and shouts 'If you want to relax, go to my social

dance studio, there you can have fun and have a party and sit on the couch with your friends! If you come here you need to shut down your mouthes and be a little bit more serious! He pauses for effect and says in a calmer tone 'Okey, 1,2,3!' The dancers go quiet as they recognize the cue for the bow. Taking a step to the left, the leaders turn the followers to their left side by a sharp pull of the hand and a shaping motion of the body. The followers turn and settle into a traditional curtsy as the leaders raise their right hand and bow their heads. 'Okey, tomorrow we continue.' the coach grunts as he leaves the room.

Notes

1. A result of strong influence from Electronic Dance Music in many Latin American classics remastered for DanceSport.
2. A dance of Cuban origin, deriving from Danzón-Mambo. It is based on 4/4 time, played at 112–120 beats per minute, with 3 even crochet beats and two quavers on the 4th count into leading to an emphasis on the first beat. It is characterized by a Chassé movement that is danced on the 4 & 1 count, which gives the name to dance itself. It is defined in DanceSport by the dancers as expressing flirtation and playfulness. See Table 1 for the list of dances and categories.
3. Ballroom dance is now the term used to describe social ballroom dancing, while DanceSport is used to discuss competitive ballroom dancing. This terminology came into effect in 1997 when competitive ballroom dancing was recognized (but not included) as an Olympic sport (World DanceSport Federation n.d.)
4. I define resistance here in manner similar to Pickett (1996) and Imada (2012), whereby it does not destroy the status quo but demonstrates its limitations.
5. Pseudonyms were given to each studio to retain anonymity.
6. Except for the pilot study, all the studios were also owned and operated by Soviet-Canadian coaches.
7. Detailed interview transcripts are available in the appendices section of my dissertation. See references. instead of 'see references', please put: https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/35021
8. Albeit without the communist propaganda.
9. Such strategies are not universal and are generally used only within a strong student–coach relationship bond.

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Notes on contributor

Dr. **Outevsky** is a researcher and educator in dance studies and dance science. He holds an MSc in Dance Science, and a PhD in Dance Studies. His research revolves around the transnational identity of the socialist dancing body, where he investigates the experiences of former Soviet nationals in the North American ballroom dance industry. Additionally, his physical education research deals with conditioning methodologies and screening protocols for dance. David's work has been published in the Journal of Emerging Dance Scholars, Medical Problems of Performing Artists, Jacob's Journal of Sports Medicine, and Research In Dance Education. He has presented at conferences for the Dance Studies Association, International Association of Dance Medicine and Science, and Healthy Dancer Canada. Having served as a faculty member at York University and the University of Calgary, he taught several courses for the dance department including Dance

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