

My Personal Paso Doble:
An Autoethnographic Performance
“Starring” the Hidden Curriculum of Confidence within International Latin DanceSport

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Abstract

Using an autoethnographic methodology in tandem with a social constructivist lens, the purpose of this study is to critically inquire into the implicit lessons learned by competitive Latin dancers from their participation in the hidden curriculum of DanceSport culture. Additionally, this research looks to outline the intrapersonal and interpersonal development experienced by DanceSport dancers. Doing so, I focus on the voice of the dancers in the exploration of International DanceSport studios and competition floors as sites of informal and non-formal education, particularly in relation to the hidden curriculum of DanceSport.

My role as an autoethnographic researcher and participant in this study was to collect data through multimodal expression, as well as ongoing dialogue with participants. As researcher and participant, I completed the same hands-on task and interview questions as participants, and journaled to explore thoughts concerning my DanceSport experience. Information obtained from interview transcripts and journal entries has been organized, coded, and analyzed creating themes. A description and interpretation of the findings uncovers the unifying theme(s) of six narratives. Narrative inquiry reveals that the hidden curriculum of DanceSport is the awakening and development of dormant confidence as dancers acquire implicit lessons pertaining to the development of intra and interpersonal knowledge. A discussion exploring the unique ways this dissertation contributes to the DanceSport community and body of literature concludes this study. This is alongside an assessment as to the culture's ability to meet current goals of formal education, and the potential Latin DanceSport has to be used as an educational tool in the development of student well-being.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the dancers and dreamers who continue to see beyond their current circumstances, always striving for something more. I have written this dissertation motivated by those fortunate enough to have found a passion, and courageous enough to pursue it. Thank you for creating a path for others by dancing out your own!

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It is with immense gratitude that I also acknowledge and thank each one of the dancers who made this research project possible. Your passion for Latin DanceSport and Education does not go unnoticed, and I am eternally grateful for your willingness to take time out of your lives to open up and share with me your unique journeys. May God bless you all, and may your dancing take you exactly where you want to go.

Finally, I am indebted to the family and friends who have supported me through the ups and downs of this academic journey. You know exactly who you are! Thank you for your unconditional love and unwavering optimism. You have kept me balanced throughout every step of this dance.

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Introduction

“One Person, Many Dances, and the Search for Connection”

I am one body.
I am one person.
But I have multiple identities,
 I dance different dances.
Within each dance,
I am forever in search of connection.

Who you know me as might be different by name as well as by passion.
Perhaps you know me as Crestina. A student.
Ms. Pasco. An educator.
Ninna. A performer.

While I currently write this paper as an academic,
earlier today I spoke as a teacher,
and later this evening, I will perform as a dancer.
Welcome to my separate lives.
School.
Work.
Dance.
With school and work uniting under academia,
I introduce you to my personal Paso.

I have done my best until now at keeping my realities separate from one another.
Although my passion for academia and dance are all I ever want individually,
when brought together,
the resultant experience previously proved unpleasant
..
.
Uncomfortable.

What I once considered the *war* of my *worlds*,
however,
can be thought of as more of a partner dance,
A paso doble,
maintaining both tension and connection.

While I once understood Education and DanceSport as impossible to connect,
 They have conflicting values.
 One teaches lessons to be maintained throughout life while the other teaches
 lessons specific to the dance floor.
I now realize the two domains can prove a successful partnership.

Habermas, 2001, Oseroff-Varnell, 1998). Knowledge construction gained through implicit learning is “incidental,” meaning it happens as a result, or as a byproduct of involvement in an activity or culture (Marsick & Watkin, 2001; Buchner & Wippich, 1998). In other words, implicit messages learned are for the most part “unplanned” (Habermas, 2011, p. 140). The implicit, or “unplanned,” messages learned by those participating in a given learning environment, such as DanceSport, create what is known as the hidden curriculum (Stinson, 2005; Habermas, 2011; Allan et al, 2011).

Significantly, the presence of a hidden curriculum is acknowledged within the arts, and more specifically, within dance (Oseroff-Varnell, 1998; Stinson, 2005). Although the implicit messages received within the educational environment of ballroom studios and competition floors are as worthy of exploration as those found within our formal schooling systems, little research has been done on the ballroom floor as a site of education. Lacking investigation, the implicit messages learned by ballroom dancers as part of the socialization process within the competitive scene have been unidentified and unexplored.

With the current research on DanceSport considered, scholars offer a critique of the culture without voices from the inside being heard.ⁱ Additionally, I find the written material on ballroom dance assumes a “distanced, third-person perspective” (Cooper, 2011, p. 53). To dance within this gap in the research literature, I provide competitive Latin dancers with a voice as we address dance studios and competition floors as sites of education, and work to recognize implicit lessons concerning intrapersonal and interpersonal development from within the environment. As a result, myself and five other DanceSport dancers contribute to an understanding as to how the hidden curriculum

of DanceSport affects us as participants of both the DanceSport culture and the world at large.

For the purpose of this study, amateur dancers are defined as ballroom dance students who learn from a professional coach and do not make an income through their dancing. Amateur dancers usually have college or university degrees and a career outside of dance which “support[s] their expensive hobby” (Drake-Boyt, 2011, p.5). I am an amateur Latin ballroom dancer as I do not make an income through my dancing but rather pay for lessons. For a visual representation as to what this can look like, I have posted a personal compilation of performance clips online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_wNWujKOzE&feature=youtu.be. The video can be found on Youtube under the following title: A Sample of Amateur Latin DanceSport Dancing. Seeing as competitions restrict video recordings, this shared footage is from local shows. Therefore, full competition attire, in addition to the presence of other dancers or judges, is absent.

Coaches are generally more advanced dancers than I am, and are known as “professionals.” To be a professional means that the dancer uses his or her “dance skills in order to receive momentary gain as a full or part-time occupation” (Drake-Boyt, 2011, p.5). As professionals, coaches will also be “registered with a member organization of the WD & DSC [World Dance & Dance Sport Council] as a Professional Member” (ibid.)

The term DanceSport is used to denote competitive ballroom (Marion, 2008), distinguishing the practice from social ballroom styles. Within Malnig (2009), Juliet McMains describes how the name “DanceSport” was adopted “in the late 1980’s in order to facilitate an international effort to secure its acceptance as an Olympic sport” (p. 307).

Within ballroom there are two styles, American and International, which are both further subdivided (Zona & George, 2008). Within International DanceSport you have international standard and international Latin (Zona & George, 2008). My work focuses in on International Latin DanceSport.

The governing body for amateur DanceSport dancers, standard and Latin alike, is known as the World DanceSport Federation (WDSF), formerly recognized as International DanceSport Federation (IDSF). As “the largest ballroom organization in the world with eighty-four National Member Federations,” representing over four million dancers, what is now WDSF is “generally recognized as the undisputed governing body of all international amateur DanceSport competition” (Marion, 2008, p. 35). Originally the International Council of Amateur Dancers (ICAD), the new names have been taken on in DanceSport’s ongoing effort to be recognized as an Olympic Sport (ibid).

The Research Questions

This study asks

- What are the implicit lessons learned by competitive Latin dancers from their participation in the hidden curriculum of DanceSport?
- Expanding on this central question, sub questions include:
 - How have the participants’ intrapersonal selves developed in relation to confidence?
 - How have the individuals’ interpersonal selves and relationships developed in relation to confidence?

Back to the Basics: A Literature Review

Dancers like myself live for the practices when a new choreography is introduced; that is, a collection of movements pieced together shaping a beautiful and unique routine. My coach, however, is sure to remind me and my partner that before we can take on choreography, we must first master the individual basic movements of each particular dance. In much the same way, as a researcher, I am eager to display my research findings, the choreography so to speak, but must first introduce myself and readers to the individual steps of my research journey.



Step One of the Research Choreography: DanceSport Studios and Competition Floors *Are* Sites of Education and Culture

When the Paso Doble begins, dancers are
not
connected.

They stand apart;
with distance between each other.

Given time,
and the proper movements,
the partners eventually connect.

This is very much the situation I face when considering ballroom dancing from an academic perspective. At the onset of the routine, or rather my paper, academic thought felt separated from ballroom dance. With time and the proper movements, or the order of which I introduce the various elements of my literature review, the study of ballroom and education do connect.

In defining educational environments, I turn to the work of Dewey (1938/ 2007) who states simply that a site of education is a space where learning takes place. Learning can happen without the presence of text or teacher (Dewey, 1938/2007; Moore, 2000),

and instead grows out of everyday encounters, and in any given context (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Wells (2000) reminds academics how, “in history, people have always *learned* through participation in activities (p. 59). Evidently, learning occurs in environments beyond the formal classroom, including “activities” such as ballroom dance.

Dewey (1938/2007) also indicates that education “consists of bodies of information and of skills” (p. 17). International Latin DanceSport does consist of a particular body of information which can be found in the rules and regulations established by World DanceSport Federation (WDSF), organizing amateur dancers, and by the World Dance Council (WDC), overseeing professional dancers. Such organizationsⁱⁱ outline explicit information, meaning the rules and expectations are written and recorded. Considering that ballroom dancers must become acquainted with these rules and learn specific skills which become increasingly complex as dancers move from one level of competition to the next, the type of learning that takes place within DanceSport environments matches Dewey’s (1938/ 2007) definition of education.

Advancing the argument that DanceSport studios are educational sites, I ask readers to consider that popular culture is in itself a “primary educational site” (Reynolds, 2012, p. 24). Much like Di Leo & Jacobs (2004) who clarify that popular culture *is* an educational site (p.5), Ibrahim (2007) also believes learning goes “on in sites other than classrooms” (p. 5). As such, Ibrahim (2007) sees relevancy in studying popular culture as a “curriculum site where learning can and does take place” (p. 4). In order for such statements to be considered useful in my work, it is necessary for readers to recognize ballroom dance *as* popular culture.

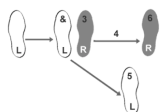
Popular dance, such as ballroom, has been overtly stated by Beck & Kosni (2006) *as* popular culture (p. 14). In the case that one wants to challenge the statement that ballroom is a form of popular dance, consider the fact that WDSF has 92 National Member Bodies,ⁱⁱⁱ or that the television show “Dancing With the Stars,” featuring only ballroom dance, is now recognized as one of the world’s largest entertainment properties and licensed in 42 countries.^{iv}

Using Danesi (2012) as a reference, ballroom dance classifies as popular culture because it is something people do for themselves (p.6), it is “appealing to common people” (p. 229), and it is performed as well as spoken of (p. 215). Thanks to the influence of media and the popularity of shows like “Dancing with the Stars” and “So You Think You Can Dance,” ballroom dancing has become an undeniable component of popular culture. All in all, whether one considers ballroom dance a site of education because it is a given context where learning takes place (Dewey, 2007; Marsick & Watkins, 2001), an environment with a specific body of knowledge and skills (Dewey, 2007), or because it is part of popular culture (Beck & Kosni, 2006; Di Leo & Jacobs, 2004; Ibrahim, 2007; Marion, 2008), ballroom dance studios and competition floors are established educational environments.

With the topic of culture introduced, I would like to support my use of the term culture as opposed to subculture when discussing DanceSport or competitive ballroom dancing (Marion, 2008).^v Joseph Marion (2008) is one scholar who notes there is a recognizable “dance-sport culture” (p.14), and does not agree with those who deem the practice a subculture (p. 25). Marion (2008) is aware that ballroom dancers exist in “the United States, Japan, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, South Africa and Finland;”

ballroom dance being that which is shared among people from these various countries (p. 25). McMains (2006) also comments on how DanceSport is “not defined by particular geographic boundaries” but rather through a “common participation” in the activity of competitive ballroom (p. 13). If DanceSport exists as one of the largest shared units between a variety of geographical regions, then competitive ballroom dance is a culture rather than a subculture. With its own codes, hierarchies and celebrities (Marion, 2008), the DanceSport culture also has its own language. Marion (2008) describes the “terms and usages” of ballroom dance as “opaque to the ‘outsider’” (p. 27). This idea that there are outsiders and insiders in Latin DanceSport promotes an element of belonging which coincides with definitions of what makes up a culture (Chambliss & Eglitis, 2014).

Further contributing to the argument that DanceSport is a culture, Malnig (2009) describes popular dance as “a form of life or as a way of being” (p. 3). Looking at DanceSport’s “way of being,” the culture has “its own social rules” despite “local and individual variation” (Marion, 2008, p. 27). Elements such as timing, weight change, and standing on inside edges allow one “deeper entry into the culture” (Marion, 2008, p. 8). Marion (2008) discusses “values, norms, and skills constitutive of belonging” (p. 8) which participants in my study agree exist.



Step Two of the Research Choreography: Types of Learning

Within any site of education, be it the dance floor or a high school classroom, formal, informal and non-formal learning can take place. These three types of learning exist on a continuum. On one side of the education spectrum exists formal education. For the purpose of this paper, formal education will be defined as that which is “institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured” (Marsick & Watkins

2001, p. 25), and most often results in an “award or a qualification” (Werquin, 2010, p. 14). Distinguishing formal education further, formal systems have “rigid entry and exit points” (Carm, 2013, p. 3456). Not necessarily classroom based, not leading to an award of qualification, and lacking rigid entry and exit points, DanceSport is not considered a site of formal education.

At the opposite end of the educational spectrum is informal education. Informal education, and therefore the learning that takes place in this context, “is not organized or structured in terms of objectives” (Werquin, 2010, p. 22), and emerges instead from daily activities (*ibid.*). Informal education and learning is therefore a “lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment, and is generally unorganized and unsystematic” (Carm, 2013, p. 3456). As such, informal learning “may occur in other institutions, but is not typically classroom-based or highly structured” (Marsick and Watkins, 2001, p. 25). In most cases, informal learning “is unintentional from the learners’ point of view” (Werquin, 2010, p. 22). It is understood that informal education also involves voluntarism, serving the purpose of enjoyment (Madjar & Malayev, 2013). The implicit learning that takes place at dance competitions would then classify DanceSport as, in part, an informal educational environment.

Located between formal and informal education and learning, sometimes closer to one form than the other, exists non-formal education and learning. Like formal education, non-formal education is still “organized and systematic” (Carm, 2013, p. 3456), though not highly enough to require distinguished entry and exit points. Non-formal education is

recognized as providing “select types of learning to particular subgroups in the population” (Carm, 2013, p. 3456).

Using this definition, non-formal learning takes place in dance studios as they *are* governed by institutions such as the World DanceSport Federation. Additionally, much like a “classroom,” dance classes take place between four walls, and lessons are highly structured. Although this is true, dance studios lack any strict entry and exit points in terms of participation, and competitive dancers in the Latin category exist as a “subgroup” within a larger population (Carm, 2013, p. 3456). Finally, those engaged in dance studio learning will not receive an award or qualification such as a diploma or degree. As a result of DanceSport’s existence both within competition floors *and* dance studios, competitive ballroom as a site of education consists of informal and non-formal learning.

Explicitly linking the concept of education with sport, Wrisberg (2007) discusses intentional learning. This involves “the learning of skills or components of skills that athletes deliberately focus on when they practice” (Wrisberg, 2007, p. 4). This intentional learning occurs within informal environments, when a dancer practices at home, as well as within non-formal environments, when a dancer practices at the studio.

Wrisberg (2007) also makes a direct connection between athletics and implicit learning. He openly states that “[w]henver athletes practice their skills, both intentional learning and implicit learning are taking place” (Wrisberg, 2007, p. 6). Scholar Oseroff-Varnell (1998) understands implicit learning as part of the “hidden curriculum” (p. 102); a hidden curriculum consisting of “everything students are learning besides what teachers are explicitly teaching” (Stinson, 2005, p. 51). Specifically related to my research topic,

Oseroff-Varnell (1998) acknowledges the existence of a hidden curriculum within the arts, inclusive of dance (Oseroff-Varnell, 1998). Her research demonstrates the way dance students learn more than just dance steps (*ibid.*). When it comes to what else dancers are learning, one must look to understand the implicit lessons which make up the hidden curriculum of the particular dance culture. Within DanceSport, such implicit lessons are currently an unknown and therefore the hidden curriculum remains untouched by critical thinking and reflection, let alone serious scholarly examination.

Due to the way in which implicit lessons are learned on an unconscious level, often incidentally, the hidden curriculum of ballroom dance remains unexamined. Marsick and Watkin (2001) write on incidental learning, an aspect of implicit learning, and define it as that which happens as a “byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment” (p. 25). To clarify, dancers might be practicing a particular skill such as foot placement in cha cha. While doing so, participants will also learn something that was not planned, such as how they focus best. While the teacher explicitly teaches the student how to do a proper cha cha step, there was no formal lesson on how to focus best and yet both skills are learned.

As Marsick and Watkin (2001) suggest, incidental learning is almost always an unconscious process (p. 25). As a result of learning that takes place beyond one’s consciousness, the messages that have been sent and received are often “taken for granted” or “tacit” (Marsick and Watkin, 2001, p. 26). In efforts to surface such “tacit knowledge and beliefs” (Marsick and Watkin, 2001; Johnson & Golombek, 2002), particularly in relation to the hidden curriculum of Latin DanceSport, narrative inquiry,

the process of articulating one's knowledge and practices in one's own voice (Johnson & Golombek, 2002) has proven useful.

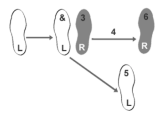


Step Three in the Research Choreography: The Current Focus of DanceSport Literature

I have attempted to draw together the shared information that current scholars researching DanceSport address, beginning with the way in which historical recollections have been omitted from our knowledge of Latin dance. Most scholars who write on competitive ballroom address the lack of current awareness regarding the history of the DanceSport practice and individual dances (Daniel, 2009; Drake-Boyt, Marion, 2008; 2011; Malnig, 2009; McMains, 2006; Zona & George, 2008;). McMains (2006) goes so far as to speak of the racial and potentially racist consequences that result from divisions within DanceSport, and between DanceSport and other forms of Latin dance styles (p. 109). Without an awareness of the history of Latin ballroom, dancers unknowingly contribute to a problematic discourse of power (McMains, 2006).

Existing research on the specific topic at hand also outlines how DanceSport lures in participants through the presentation of illusions. Such illusions include the promise of intimacy (Ericksen, 2011; McMains, 2006;), as well as the potential for transformation in terms of status and identity (McMains, 2006). More typical consequences of pursuing DanceSport involves the extreme costs required to participate (Drake-Boyt, 2011; Ericksen, 2011; McMains, 2006). Although the dancers in my study speak of frustration with the high cost of pursuing their passion, this is a topic that has already been written about within the field of academia. Furthermore, this obstacle faced by dancers is overlooked when the positive benefits of the hidden curriculum of Latin DanceSport are

considered. This is not to say that the negative aspects of the DanceSport culture are to be ignored, but rather they did not develop as the central or shared theme of my research.



Step Four in the Research Choreography: The Place of Confidence in Education

As of 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Education has set forth a “Renewed Vision for Education,” evidently acknowledging the need for a change in focus within provincial school boards. Government documents state that “Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 1). From “the ministry to the school board to the classroom,” the goal is “to meet the needs of our children” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p.18). The government now formally recognizes that the needs of our children are not solely academic and therefore cannot be judged solely on standardized test scores and graduation rates. While these are valid markers of academic success, such qualities do not prove students are “well-rounded” or have achieved a sense of “well-being.” Ontario affirms that “[d]eveloping child and student well-being means supporting the whole child – not only the child's academic achievement but also his or her cognitive, emotional, social and physical well-being” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 14).

Existing as “personally successful,” part of Ontario’s “Renewed Vision for Education,” entails more than the ability to graduate; it includes having an understanding of personal identity, and the self-confidence required to embrace one’s unique character. As addressed by the Ministry of Education, “[b]eyond reading, writing and mathematics, we know that to achieve excellence in the future, our learners will also need to develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 5). In order to develop perseverance and

resiliency, requirements for overcoming obstacles faced both inside and outside the formal classroom, self-confidence and a sense of competency must be cultivated within the learner.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the terms confidence and self-confidence will be used interchangeably, reflecting an approach used by many scholars (Filippin & Paccagnella, 2012; Jackson, 2011; McGee, 2012; Thomas, Lane & Kingston, 2011; Tracy, 2012; Yeung, 2010). Perry (2011), for example, states openly in her paper that the “terms confidence and self-confidence will be used interchangeably” (p. 219). My reason for doing so is based on the idea that self-confidence is simply the state of having confidence, or belief in oneself and in one's powers, abilities, and sense of competency (Chesser- Smyth & Long, 2013; McGee, 2012; Tracy, 2012). When the general term “confidence” is defined, it can reflect back on the self and in a sense becomes a definition of “self-confidence.”

At its core, self-confidence, or the presence of having confidence in oneself, is a mental quality or state (Chuang et al, 2013; Tracy, 2012), and involves the positive evaluation of the self, one's abilities, and one's potential (Ursiny, 2005). Self-confidence is “an optimism” (Ursiny, 2005, p. 19) which recognizes the self as competent, able, and likely to succeed (Jackson, 2011; Perry, 2011). Those who maintain high levels of self-confidence are understood to “have more self-respect for themselves, have a good self-image, a higher self-worth, and are optimistic in most situations” (Chuang et al., 2013, p. 661- 662). In contrast, those who lack or have low levels of self-confidence, or confidence in oneself, “have less self-respect and feel pessimistic, only see their imperfections and think themselves worthless, inappropriate, and deficient” (Chuang et

al., 2013, p. 662). With this note considered, it is apparent that students lacking confidence struggle in their academics and mental health as a result of the continuous self-doubt. Fortunately, as a mental quality (Tracy, 2012), self-confidence can be learned and built with practice (Tracy, 2012; Yeung, 2010).

Affecting one's belief in the self, one's sense of competency, and the optimism in which a situation is approached (Chuang et al., 2013), confidence plays a role in both resiliency and learning and therefore needs to be a topic of discussion within our schools. Directly linking confidence to resiliency, it is understood that confident people face perceivably difficult situations "seeing them as challenges to be tackled and overcome rather than threats to be avoided" (Yeung, 2010, p. 4). As a psychologist and someone who struggled to develop confidence, Yeung (2010) explicitly reveals how "confident people bounce back from setbacks and rejection, adversity and criticism" (p. 26). As Ursiny (2005) explains, self-confidence "is an optimism that prepares you to work through any challenge or roadblock" (p. 19). Confidence is therefore detrimental to a student's success and wellbeing as challenges are faced on a daily basis both within the individual subjects taught in the classroom and beyond the school environment. In order to develop knowledge and expand on any skill, a certain level of criticism, though constructive, is necessary and therefore confidence on behalf of the student is required to accept criticism and develop through it. As Tracy (2012) states, with self-confidence, one can "deal more effectively with the problems and difficulties that arise in day-to-day life." These can be related to one's academics, or the experiences one has outside of the school.

In terms of the role of confidence in educational settings, “self-esteem has been cited over and over again as a key factor in behavior problems as well as poor academic performance” (Borba, 1989, xvii). Self-esteem is the judging of oneself as “worthy or unworthy” in comparison to others (Ursiny, 2005, p. 19) and is therefore related to one’s self-confidence (Shipman & Mumford, 2011; Tracy, 2012). In fact, research states that “self-confidence may be interchangeable with self esteem” (Chuang et al, 2013, p. 661). This idea is supported by Tassoni (2005) who connects confidence and self-esteem together in a discussion of how to foster well-being and resilience in students (p. 301). Either way, as a unit, self-esteem and self-confidence affects one’s willingness to take risks (“Components Unpacked,” 2013), and risk taking is part of learning (Svinicki, 1989). Through taking risks, students are more likely to learn and achieve their highest potential in every regard. For this reason, “the well-being of children and students needs to move to the center of the education system's priorities” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 15). The Ontario Ministry of Education recognizes that when individual well-being is improved, the future of each learner will be significantly altered (Tracy, 2012; Borba, 1989), and each child more likely to succeed and achieve their potential as human beings.

Dancing with Passion for Purpose: My Research Contribution to the Field of Education

As part of a rationale for my study, I connect my work with the current efforts of the Ontario Ministry of Education. With the Ministry’s goal of achieving excellence through a new focus in promoting well-being, I believe that International Latin ballroom dance could reveal itself as a useful tool in developing a positive sense of self and

belonging among participants. As dancers are immersed in the DanceSport culture, they develop on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level, learning about themselves and others incidentally through their sport, and developing confidence as a result. Through the implicit lessons experienced as a result of participation in the cultures hidden curriculum of confidence, learners develop skills and attitudes leading to resiliency. With the improved self-confidence ballroom brings, coupled with the emotional outlet and social experience the art/sport/passion provides, Latin DanceSport within schools has the potential to assist in the development of well-rounded, confident students, and contributes to the reinforcement of mental health (“Achieving Excellence;” “Open Minds, Healthy Minds”). If Ontario aims to “give our learners the tools they need to reach their full potential” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 4), my study demonstrates that experience with competitive partner dancing can be this effective tool. More broadly speaking, my study demonstrates that educational environments do have the capacity to develop life-changing confidence within learners.

The transformative power of confidence is recognized by those such as Tracy (2012) who explains that “[w]ith greater self-confidence, you would be a different person” (Tracy, 2012). With this said, I trouble McMains (2006) who claims the potential for transformation displayed through DanceSport exists as an illusion. In disagreement, I argue that transformation through DanceSport is possible, and that transformation is the life-altering confidence that dancers in my study have experienced as a result of their participation in competitive Latin ballroom. Counter to any understanding that ballroom dancers simply learn ballroom, findings indicate that the hidden curriculum educates beyond explicit teachings and provides many other beneficial lessons that dancers take

away from the studio and use to succeed in the world both within and beyond DanceSport.

To Dance International or American Ballroom? A Methodology

If you ask an International ballroom dancer to show you a common step,
 such as a New York,
 he may show you “X.”

If you ask an American ballroom dancer to show you this same step,
 a New York,
 she will show you a variation of “X.”
 The difference is in the *style*.

In much the same way as dance steps differ based on the particular style one associates with, the way in which a research study occurs and how the research report is written will depend on the researcher’s methodology. One’s methodology includes the selected research design, and the researcher’s philosophical assumptions as revealed through the interpretive framework (Creswell, 2013).

Looking to study ballroom in its natural setting and with the attempt to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 2013, p.44), a qualitative approach has been used. With a specific focus on DanceSport culture, my work is ethnographic. However, having danced Latin competitively for three years, I am a participant within my study, and both the researcher and the researched (James, 2012). Thus, my work is autoethnographic.

Like ethnography, autoethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding (Chang, 2008), but contributes personal experience of the social and cultural context being studied (Uotinen, 2011). Autoethnographers “focus on a group or culture and use their own experiences in the culture reflexively” (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). Participating in the same hands-on assignment and interviews as participants, I also

journalled as part of personal self-reflection, pulling apart the many layers of my consciousness (Ellis, 2004). As an autoethnographer, I was responsible for interviewing and engaging in dialogue with other learners, but also engaged in an in-depth analysis of my own experience, my feelings, and emotions within the particular cultural context of competitive ballroom dance (Grbich, 2013).

My interest in incorporating the voices of others, listening and taking into account a complexity of views, demonstrates my stance as a social constructivist (Beck & Kosni, 2006; Creswell, 2013). In accordance with New & Cochran's (2007) description of social constructivism, my study is both exploratory and collaborative (p.746), as I worked *with* participants in exploring their experiences through narrative inquiry. Social constructivism also emphasizes critical inquiry (Beck & Kosni, 2006) and self-reflection (Beck & Kosni, 2006), pursuing a "constant critique of social and educational institutions" (Beck & Kosni, 2006, p. 13). My autoethnographic study encompasses all three of these social constructivist indicators, as it involves critical inquiry and self-reflection on behalf of both myself and participants, as well as an ongoing analysis of the social and educational site of ballroom dance. Further demonstrating a social constructivist epistemology, I believe "there are multiple realities and ways of doing and understanding" (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010, p. 2). As such, I have used multimodal expression and narrative inquiry through interviews in efforts to provide different modes of self-expression.

The research process I took on incidentally resulted in the creation of a critical inclusive environment where at least the dancers I interviewed deconstructed their experiences, and in turn ballroom dance culture.^{vi} The interview process facilitated a new

understanding dancers had of their experience. As participants vocalized their dance journeys, they could then consciously reflect upon them, arriving at discoveries about themselves and how they interact with the world. In this way, the dancers who participated in my research were engaged in narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry is defined as the process of articulating one's knowledge and practices in one's own voice (Johnson & Golombek, 2002), and questioning these stories, reflecting on them, and confronting the unknown (p. 4-5). Narrative inquiry allows educators like myself, and potentially study participants, to acknowledge and then "reconcile what is known with that which is hidden" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 6). This last part of Johnson & Golombek's (2002) definition is significant as it demonstrates the potential narrative inquiry has on addressing the hidden curriculum of DanceSport.

Cha Cha, One, Two, Three, and Cha Cha One: Procedures

If the methodology is the style or approach of my research, consider the procedures as the specific steps that were taken. In much the same way as there is more to cha cha lock steps than stepping one foot in front of the other, there are many aspects as to how this study developed.

Drawing on a "range of sources of data" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3), my role as an autoethnographic researcher in this study was to collect information through participant activity and multimodal expression. This was accomplished through participant creation of a collage mind-map centered on the topic of either "ballroom dance," "ballroom dancing," or "ballroom dancer." For the purpose of this paper, the collage mind-map will hereafter be referred to as a collage and is a collection of words, images, phrases, and/or 3D décor presented in a way of the participants choosing. Data

collection also took place through the use of an initial interview, ongoing dialogue with participants through email, and a follow up interview, as well as reflective journaling completed by the participant-researcher. The multiple source data-collection, hands on activity, and ongoing dialogue with participants through member checks reveals my distinct effort to ensure trustworthiness. Further using triangulation to improve the trustworthiness of my autoethnographic research, participants were drawn from five city studios offering competitive Latin ballroom.

Participants

Eligible participants were those over the age of 18 who are competitive International Latin DanceSport dancers from a particular city within Eastern Ontario. Within this select city, participants were drawn from any of the five studios offering International DanceSport lessons. At each of these five locations, there are between 10 – 20 students who compete, making the participant pool roughly 100 people. Both experienced dancers, male and female, as well as those new to the competition scene, were asked to participate through the posting of a flyer at their dance studio. For the purpose of ensuring views that reflect the voices of participants and not only my own, I did not ask anyone I have engaged with in a critical discussion regarding ballroom to participate in my study. Overall, I planned on interviewing three female and three male Latin Competitors. Participants were selected on a first come first serve basis.

A total of three females, plus myself, and two male dancers, stepped forward as participants for a total of six study participants. While six DanceSport dancers, not including me, originally volunteered as participants for this study— three females and three males— one of the males opted out when asked to complete the collage assignment.

Of the two males who remained in the study, one was deeply disinterested in completing the hands on task while the other accepted the activity without any explicitly negative response. The three female competitors expressed interest and even excitement at the idea of creating something visual. Each of the participants were eager to contribute to my work and made themselves very flexible in terms of meeting up for interviews. A note must also be made acknowledging the fact the dancers in my study offered their time and effort with no compensation. The dancers who volunteered were simply excited at the thought that their passion for both Latin DanceSport and education could be useful and assist in filling a literary gap. Their willingness to dedicate and volunteer their time to helping one of their peers with a school project demonstrates the very thoughtful and giving individuals who make up the DanceSport culture. The positive rapport I have within the Latin ballroom community is also suggested.

Study participants vary between the ages of 21 to 65 and compete in different age categories as well as levels. With this said, while some participants are single students, others are married with families. In terms of dance experience, some of the dancers interviewed have just begun their competitive dance journey, with one or two competitions under their belt, while others have been competing for years.

Participant Activity- The Use of Collage

To make use of multiple data forms, I proposed the use of a collage as a preliminary activity of interview participants. Therefore, the first meeting I had with study participants and future interviewees was to discuss the goals of the overall study, and more specifically, the assignment of a collage mind-map to be completed and submitted prior to the first interview.^{vii} What I am classifying as a collage mind-map is

the combination of “pictures, drawings, photographs, words, or objects,” (Malone, 2011, p. 66) surrounding the term “Ballroom Dance,” “Ballroom Dancing” or “Ballroom Dancer.” I have added the term mind-map on to the word collage to indicate that dancers were free to choose how to present their thoughts. Beyond the inclusion of one of three aforementioned terms, I urged participants to be as creative as they choose and simply place on this otherwise blank piece of Bristol board that which comes to their minds when they think about the selected term.

This “homework exercise” encouraged creativity beyond verbally spoken words and it has provided me with an increased understanding of participant perceptions (Malone, 2011). Completed “at home,” participants had more freedom in terms of time and materials than if they completed the task on the spot (Malone, 2011). As suggested by Malone (2011), such an assignment came with written instruction and participants were cognizant that their work would become part of the research archive. The collage task was used to initiate an initial creative thought process surrounding the dancers involvement and feelings towards DanceSport. The collage also served as a discussion piece while in the interview, and was an effective transition into the interview questions. For further detail on the collage assignment, see Appendix A.

With both the collage assignment and interview questions considered, as both the researcher and the researched, I also participated in the completion of such tasks. I completed my own collage, following the same instruction as the other participants and with the same amount of time. I completed this task, as well as answered the interview questions, prior to engaging with participants so as to ensure my views were uninfluenced by those of the other dancers.

Interviews

Central to various forms of ethnography, dancers participated in a standard interview (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). These were semi-structured, one-on-one, interviews with six competitive ballroom dancers at a location of the dancers' preference. These interviews took place one week after the initial task was provided. In stating that six dancers were interviewed, I include myself. Prior to interviewing other dancers, I used the same guiding questions to interview and record myself. As both participant in the Latin DanceSport community and researcher, I considered it necessary to place myself on the spot with the interview protocol in the same way participants would experience. This way I was able to capture my personal thoughts on the topic of DanceSport before being potentially influenced by the views of other participants.

Recording the interview in the same way as I would with other dancers, I worked out any potential technical issues. I also quickly discovered that, as a tactile person who needs to think through my answers, a pen and paper should be available to interviewees. This was largely a result of having a few questions that were perhaps more "loaded" than they needed to be. With more than one element to a single question, the interviewee needed time to dissect what was being asked. With this said, it made sense that participants did find it helpful at least once in the interview to have the paper copy of the guiding questions as reference. Perhaps worthy of notation, though I made writing utensils available, I was the only person who had an interest in using a pen or pencil during the interview process.

After receiving informed consent, audiotaped interviews ranging between 27 minutes to an hour and a half took place following the interview protocol. This protocol can be found in Appendix B. The first few interview questions required participants to reflect on the collage assignment they completed one week prior to the interview. The remaining interview questions required dancers to reflect on what they have learned from DanceSport and how they prepare for competition.

With the interviews recorded and kept safe on a password-protected computer, transcription and member checks followed. Either two or three weeks after the first formal interview was held, I emailed each participant an electronic copy of their interview and asked if they wanted to meet up to discuss, or discuss over the phone, any alterations they would like to make. While no participants informed me that they wanted any adjustments made to their transcripts, one participant replied about how entertaining it was to see what they said in writing. Two of five participants emailed me after having competed with additional thoughts to add to my research. At this point, I narrowed down many themes into fewer themes and discovered one very intriguing unifying theme which concerned the boost in confidence Latin dancers experienced as a result of their participation in the DanceSport community. With this new idea in mind, I developed further questions and requested a follow up interview with participants. For the guiding questions that led my follow up interview, see Appendix C.

This second meeting was less formal and required far less time than the original interview. All follow up interviews took place two months after the original interview. Participants were provided with another opportunity to engage in an analysis of their previous responses, and expand on or retract any previous responses should they see it

necessary. In this second interview, I mainly asked participants how they felt their lives have changed as a result of DanceSport. After hearing initial responses, I shared with participants my findings so far and explicitly asked for their thoughts on the topic of DanceSport and confidence. With an ongoing dialogue between researcher and participants, I believe the voices of participants are expressed and heard throughout the presentation of my research.

A Researcher's Journal

Parallel to the use of interviews, Creswell (2013) also recognizes the use of journaling within qualitative research as a form of data collection (p. 160). With autoethnography considered, a process of meaning making “in which researchers add their own stories and connect their experiences to those of others” (Davis & Ellis, 2008, p. 300), journaling can be used by the researcher to outline and reflect upon personal involvement in the culture at hand. Similar to participant observation, as a researcher, I can “observe [my] own behaviors and document [my] thoughts while living them” (Chang, 2008, p. 7). Such documentation took place through the use of informal note taking and reflection in an electronic journal. Similar to why I used interviews, I journaled with the purpose of bringing to the surface that which is usually “taken-for-granted, habituated and/ or unconscious” (Chang, 2008, p. 7). I feel the majority of my journaling took place before, after, and even during my own Latin dance lessons. So, it was when I was directly within the DanceSport environment that I found I was able to document my thoughts best, and reflect on what I was learning, feeling, seeing and doing as a Latin ballroom dancer. I would later reflect on these written thoughts and was often

inspired to compose short poetic pieces. Occasional fragments from these journal notes have been presented within this study where appropriate.

Analysis

Within my study, the information obtained from interview transcripts and personal journal entries were organized and analyzed as I searched for common themes. As Kai-ming (2002) admits, the organization and classification of data is “the first step of data-management or data-analysis in ethnographic research on its way to theorizing” (p.2). My first step was to organize individual participant interviews, sorting through themes I found within each of the six dancer narratives. I then compared the themes from within the six dancer profiles to each other. The increasingly organized data was then translated into overall themes through coding (Creswell, 2013); a process involving the reduction of data into “meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments” (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). This means transcripts and journal notes were read several times (Creswell, 2013; Wolcott, 1994), as I looked for patterns in the data (Creswell, 2013). After the original coding and organization of themes took place, I discovered the one unifying theme was increased levels of confidence within dancers. I then applied a finer focus on themes that related to this overarching topic. Next, I engaged in interpretation which involved “making sense of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). At this point I worked to describe, classify, and interpret the data in an effort to portray the implicit lessons found within DanceSport and the way the hidden curriculum affects the learners.

Casting a Spotlight on the Individual Dancers

Before high-level dancers claim their spot on the floor amidst a possible other 12 couples, they may experience the opportunity of having the floor all to themselves. Here, audiences and judges meet the individual dancers by name, and have a sneak peak into what they have in store for the approaching fierce competition.

What follows is a brief introduction to each of the individual six participants. The information provided is both subjective and objective, as I attempt to describe the kind of energy the participants exude, as well as focus on personal information naturally revealed during the interview process. Although biographical questions were not specifically asked during interviews, I have developed a composite based on how I perceive participant personalities, in combination with the personal information participants shared with me during the interview process.

To ensure participant anonymity, some details found in dancer introductions may have been slightly altered. With this goal, I have not attached age categories to the individual dancers but will inform you that participants vary between the ages of 21 to 65. Further adding to the diversity, some of the dancers interviewed have just begun their experience competitive dancing, having competed only once or twice, while others have been competing for years. On this note, the competitive DanceSport journey, involving a high level of commitment, is recognized by one participant as coming to an end. While this is all valuable information, as it demonstrates the unique way DanceSport allows dancers of all age categories to continue training hard and presenting their progress, I leave such details separate from dancer introductions in order to ensure anonymity.

Additional noteworthy information separated from dancer profiles includes how each individual was introduced to Latin ballroom. For some participants, such details will be revealed in the “Interview Summary Section.” Whereas some dancers experienced a history of heartache bringing them in one way or another to ballroom, others have found Latin after very negative previous dance experiences, as well as having experienced serious injury. I will say that in each instance, the media, and shows like “Dancing with the Stars,” has played a direct and recognizable role in exposing each dancer to the style they would pursue next. Also interesting to recognize is the fact that some of the dancers have had previous experience with forms of narrative inquiry through encounters with psychologists, including but not exclusive to sports psychologists.



Welcome Crestina to the Floor

In effort to describe the impression I project, I consider how others perceive me, as revealed in even this interview process. Having once acquired the nickname “Jellybean” at my studio, I am seen as a bright and bubbly dancer, with an overwhelming amount of energy. My liveliness is expressed both through my movement and tone of voice. Although there are positive aspects to an energetic personality, in that it can lead to quality performing for instance, there is also a downside, as it must not interfere with one’s focus and ability to carry out technique. In this way, I struggle to tame or contain my energy, necessary in creating the DanceSport image of control and grace.

Parallel to most participants, although Latin ballroom is relatively new, I too have a history of dance experience. Within DanceSport, I have experienced a variety of different partnerships and join the majority in the ongoing search for a consistent and level appropriate dance partner. Not having attained a high level partnership in three

years, my level of passion for DanceSport is often affected. I still have a strong desire excel within this sport, but I find my current circumstance hinders the concept of hope from developing in my mind; a concept that the thought of Latin ballroom used to trigger.

I believe what keeps me so involved with Latin is the challenge it provides; the frustrating yet rewarding focus on technique mixed with the ability to feel and look beautiful and sexy while the challenge is taken. I understand the importance of work ethic and know that when it comes to my progress as a competitive dancer, I will only ever experience improvement and success if I put in the time.



Welcome Tiny Dancer to the Floor

Meeting Tiny Dancer, you might agree that her appearance, in her choice of clothes, posture, hairstyle, and the way she carries herself, simply screams dancer.

To most, Tiny Dancer might appear a quiet person with an artistic and expressive side; however, at the studio, Tiny Dancer lights up, taking on a lively personality.

Describing herself as an Artist, Tiny Dancer depicts a history of musical ability and 17 years of ballet training. Tiny Dancer recognizes her shift from ballet to ballroom meant learning a new language. She describes this experience as filled with challenges, but has the attitude that if you love something, you will never give up on it.

Describing DanceSport as a place of hope and healing, a light from past darkness as well as everyday stressors, ballroom is a whole new world from what she knew as prima ballerina. At this point in her pursuit of dance, Latin Ballroom has become part of Tiny Dancer's identity. She recognizes the practice as the biggest passion in her life right now, going so far as to describe Latin dance as her drug. Largely addicted to competition,

Tiny Dancer similarly acknowledges the appeal of human connection that DanceSport offers. She also feels competitive Latin is exceptional for the way it allows women to feel both beautiful and powerful.

Tiny Dancer attributes learning a great deal about herself to DanceSport, and feels the practice has contributed to her self-improvement. In terms of learning style, Tiny Dancer knows she is a visual learner, describing herself as a chameleon both at competition and at the studio. Outside the studio, Tiny Dancer has a job, maintains a healthy and successful intimate relationship, and a close relationship with her parents.



Welcome Khaleesi to the Floor

Whether you meet her for a chat, or see her practicing at the studio, my preliminary description of Khaleesi would be that she is a beautiful, calm, and delicate flower. Realizing from ballroom, however, that she does have a competitive streak in her and does not take lightly to constructive criticism, there is definitely more to this young lady than the initial “delicate flower” portrayal.

Although calm in her speech, Khaleesi is very impassioned about both art and individual sport. Khaleesi is proud to call herself a Latin dancer, and is drawn to the style for the passion, strength, and power it develops in dancers. Although she feels competition has allowed her to grow in certain ways, Khaleesi’s drive to learn and perform is far greater than her desire to compete. When performing, Khaleesi comes alive beyond what the “outside world” gets to see. In this way, she describes herself as a “game day player,” cognizant of the fact that she may appear timid at practice time, but reveals a different part of herself when performing.

Khaleesi is a creative, expressive, and reflective person who describes her “position” as confused. With this in mind, DanceSport provides Khaleesi with a way of understanding herself and the world around her. It is evident dance stands as a coping mechanism and expressive outlet for her. Through dance, Khaleesi finds herself hopeful and in a position of power, where she feels free from societal constraints.

Applying various theories and philosophies to her understanding of dance, it is clear Khaleesi is well read. In addition to learning more about herself, Khaleesi is intrigued by the social connections and human interactions unique to Latin ballroom.



Welcome Janvier to the Floor

If you met Janvier within or beyond the dance studio, you would likely perceive him as a very polite young man with an air of calm about him. At the studio, Janvier appears very focused, and when competing, holds himself and his partner up with great confidence. Describing his “position” as upright and seated, it is without a doubt Janvier thinks very literally. The way he responds to interview prompts is also very straightforward. He does not get lost in his thoughts, jumping from one to the next, but responds very directly.

Although literal and direct, Janvier is definitely creative and artistic. Appreciative of art and musically inclined, Janvier values Latin ballroom for the beauty it creates on the floor. With this said, Janvier acknowledges dancers as athletes, as well as artists, as a result of the intense physical training and high energy required in DanceSport. In love with Latin as both art and sport, Janvier dances because it is fun, challenging, and he is always learning.

With no previous dance experience, Janvier overcame his nerves and faced a fear of walking into an unfamiliar artistic arena. Janvier's first dance experience was largely negative as a result of attending a franchise studio where his pockets were emptied and the quality of instruction was poor. With time, Janvier learned to shop around and he has experienced a few city studios.

Janvier expresses significant interest in the learning processes and feels his Latin ballroom involvement has built on his "formal" understanding of learning. Through real life experience, Janvier feels he understands to a greater extent his personal process for practice. Overall, Janvier has perhaps indirectly learned a great deal about the way he learns through DanceSport.



Welcome Entertainer to the Floor

Entertainer is an energetic male Latin dancer who considers ballroom a sport, which is communicated as art. With an air of confidence about him, Entertainer acknowledges his position as a "learner" above anything else. Throughout our interview, Entertainer spoke a great deal about self-improvement and personal development and accepts and embraces the concept of lifelong learning. Through DanceSport, Entertainer has learned about himself and how to manage interpersonal relationships. Very self-aware and in touch with his learning style, Entertainer is passionate about teaching and learning. Learning dance, a new skill as an adult, benefits his own teaching practice. Entertainer is reminded through DanceSport experience what it means to struggle as a learner, as well as how different students need different things at different times.

In a very motivating and inspirational way, Entertainer is cognizant of the fact that we learn most through failure. He displays the reality that facing your fears leads to personal growth and increased levels of happiness and confidence. With eyes that never leave yours if in conversation with him, Entertainer knows how to connect with other people, and capture their attention. With his positive attitude, expressive faces, and an effective use of verbal and body language, it is difficult not to be captivated by Entertainer.

Describing DanceSport as a combination of athletic training, physical movement and timing, Entertainer displays a very competitive nature. As a judged activity, Entertainer is frustrated with the politics of how people are ranked but has an inner drive to perform and the need to be on stage. He recognizes that in order to improve in any given area, commitment in terms of time and money are requirement.



Welcome Chamudah to the Floor

As a former teacher, Chamudah is passionate about education and was first to demonstrate interest in my work and a willingness to participate. Whether at the studio or walking down the street, Chamudah is a vibrant and approachable young woman, sure to be seen with proper posture and a smile. It is clear in our interview that Chamudah is highly educated, well-traveled, and has a longstanding romantic relationship. Chamudah appears to pull off the “balancing act” she speaks of often in her interview.

When speaking of DanceSport, Chamudah lights up, and yet remains down to earth as she describes both positive and negative aspects of the culture. For example, Chamudah acknowledges the extreme level of commitment required for the sport; a

commitment in one's finances, and use of the body. Chamudah inspires while explaining that no matter what you are doing in life, whether you aim to run faster, improve academically, or succeed in a style of dance, there are going to be good and bad times which you just need to "get over." Whatever it is you are learning, if it brings you joy, you have to realize that both the positives and negatives help you reach your goal.

The central reason behind her love of ballroom, Chamudah describes performing as fun, and an activity that provides her life with unique access to feelings and displays of passion. Chamudah also feels that being able to share her passion with a community of other people keeps her interested in Latin. Chamudah believes ballroom affirms her understanding of how she learns best, and contributes to her continuous journey of self-improvement. For a natural leader and with a personality most comfortable in control, Chamudah feels ballroom teaches her how to enjoy sharing with others and how to accept being led.

Dancers in Action, and The Partnering of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Development: Interview Summaries

In view of verbal interviews, varying between 27 minutes to an hour and a half, the following summaries differ in breadth accordingly. Each of the summaries outline what brought the individual dancer to the style of Latin ballroom and indicate what dancers feel they have learned through their involvement in Latin DanceSport. While dancers often begin with an acknowledgment of what they learned explicitly, such as dance steps, movement, or how to count music, the focus of each interview naturally shifts into a discussion of the implicit lessons learned incidentally through their participation in DanceSport's hidden curriculum, soon to be revealed as the hidden

curriculum of confidence. The implicit lessons learned by DanceSport competitors concern knowledge about the self (intrapersonal intelligence) and knowledge about others (interpersonal intelligence).

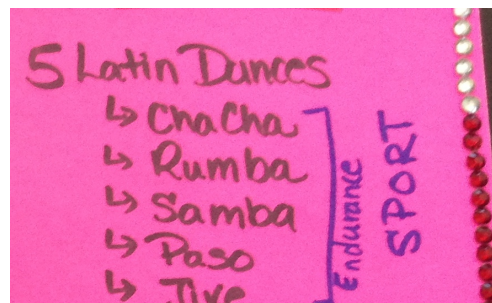
Stated very simply, intrapersonal intelligence denotes “the capacity to understand oneself” (Gardner, 1999, p. 43), while interpersonal intelligence involves one’s ability to understand and engage with others (Gardner, 1999). Interview summaries reveal that information learned about the self and others is often intertwined. For the purpose of providing clarity, I have attempted to separate the way dancers developed intrapersonally and interpersonally; however, it was not always possible to do so as dancers often learn about the self through interactions with others.

Beginning with the understanding and relationship with oneself, through DanceSport, study participants report learning about dormant aspects of their personalities, and gained insight into how they learn best, how they respond to given circumstances, about their personal attitudes, and about self-discipline. As dancers learn more about themselves and experiment with aspects of their identities they had not previously felt safe doing, the DanceSport environment nurtures the growing confidence experienced by each learner. In terms of interpersonal relationships, through ballroom, dancers work through any anxiety associated with interacting with others, particularly with the opposite sex, and learned new ways of communicating with others, including the social processes of cooperation and sharing. Developing in their interpersonal abilities, confidence within each dancer is further cultivated. All of these implicit lessons concerning the self and others are learned incidentally as dancers dance through what becomes known as DanceSport’s hidden curriculum of confidence.

Welcoming Crestina Back to the Floor

Having previously found the joy of partner dancing through salsa, I was intrigued by the image of perceived perfection Latin ballroom dancers presented through extreme attention to technique. Striving for self-improvement and a new challenge, I agreed to take on DanceSport with an already interested, high-level, partner. Having competed together only once, this advanced level partner left the country and I have been searching three years for another. Despite the discouragement of partner searching, ballroom has become part of my identity—it is a passion of mine; part of what I do and who I am. DanceSport has changed me, teaching me how to “hold my head up higher” in both a literal and figurative sense. Despite the regular criticism I receive as a learner striving to improve in my abilities, ballroom still manages to significantly improve my confidence. For such reasons, I remain involved in DanceSport culture.

When asked directly what I have learned in my time as a ballroom dancer, I initially reply with the fact that “I have obviously learned dance steps, and those steps correspond to the different styles.” When it comes to learning these foundational skills, they were learned directly from a teacher; “he or she would show me the steps and I learned them.”



Clipping from Participant Collage: Crestina-Learning the different styles within Latin

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport

Intrapersonal Development and Confidence: Moving away from the more “straightforward” skills I have learned, in my interview I comment on more abstract

ideas. For example, I note that, in ballroom, “I always learn about myself. Every lesson, I learn about myself.” For example, my participation in ballroom has informed me that “I



Clipping from Participant Collage:
Crestina- All Challenges are possible
when you accept the necessity for time
to pass, for practice, and commitment

have high expectations of myself. I want things to happen quickly.” With high expectations regarding the amount of time it takes me to progress and learn, I have often been frustrated with myself and engage in self destructive, negative, self talk. Therefore, it has been helpful to learn about the reality and effects of

muscle memory. I reflect on a coach telling me, “You’re not gonna get it right away. You need to give yourself a few months for this to be normal for your body to do.” Even though the teacher told me this explicitly, personal experience is what proved the lesson valid. When “I actually saw it take place, where my body would move, eventually, in the right way,” I believed in the lesson originally presented by my coach.

In other words, from my experience dancing Latin, I have learned that time commitment is needed to improve and therefore patience is necessary for both improvement and a sound mind, as it truly takes time for the body and mind to process information. I have learned that with time, practice, and commitment, all challenges start to appear possible. With such knowledge, I approach my dancing as well as other challenges in my life with a sense of optimism. Additionally, having learned this, the frustration I once experienced regarding my level of improvement subsides and I am able to enjoy my dancing and my life to a greater extent. Recognizing the reality and impact of muscle memory on one’s progress, I stopped being hard on myself and experienced

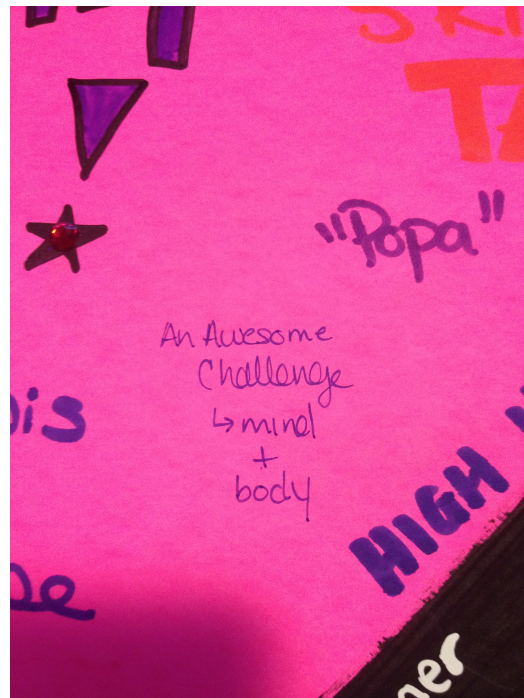
positive feelings, instead of negative feelings, towards myself and my progress. In turn, my confidence has been positively affected.

Experience has also taught me “work ethic, in that you really need to practice. And you really need to invest your time.” The expression that “You’re only gonna get out what you put in” became real for me as a Latin dancer in a way it never had before. I learned this lesson having watched “coaches doing it, I see others doing it, and so I learn it through others. Like this idea of work ethic and how you invest your time and you get the results then.” This quotation reveals two beliefs. Primarily, my experience dancing has taught me that I am a visual learner and process information through seeing, or rather visualization. Additionally, I acknowledge that there is nothing magical about professional dancers and that what separates them from me, the amateur dancer, is the amount of time they spend working on their skills. In other words, “the professionals are professional and technically just amazing because they put in that time.” With that idea in mind, my confidence is protected from negative self-talk as I recognize that my skill level is nothing to be disappointed in, but is rather a starting point which I have the ability to improve upon should I invest the time. Moreover, looking at professional dancers, I admire and aspire their work ethic. While in the interview, I realized that what I claimed to be learning in ballroom are actually life lessons that “I think sometimes I’m in denial of. I hope to get things easy, the reality is we must focus and work hard in order to experience success.”

When I asked myself, “What does Latin DanceSport mean to you” I replied, “It means that I get to be technical, I get to be challenged, I get to be sexy, I get to embrace my body and feel confident that I can be sexy and, you know, accomplish something.”

Using the term “sexy” in describing myself, I have clearly gained confidence since the time I once wrote poems about how unhappy I was with myself, my mind, and my body. Saying that “I can be sexy and accomplish something,” I point out that DanceSport has brought me an understanding that I am attractive as well as capable. Feeling competent, recognizing myself as talented in a given area, I have clearly developed a healthy level of confidence through DanceSport experience.

Interpersonal Development and Confidence: Creating a bridge between the intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge I gain from my DanceSport experience, I feel that I am learning “what its like to be a learner.” In my interview I reveal “I actually like being in a place where I learn new things because I’m a teacher, and it reminds me of what it is like to learn something new. Learning dancing is like learning a new language. It



Clipping from Participant Collage: Crestina- Facing challenges makes me a better teacher as I can relate to student experience

takes time, and you go through frustration and feelings where, I just want to give up, but you have to push through. And these are all good things. They are good reminders of what its like to struggle. You understand the concept but you physically can’t do it yet. It’s frustrating. So, I am reminded of what’s its like to struggle. I’m reminded of what its like to learn.”

Evidently, that which I learn on the dance floor benefits myself, as well as others outside of ballroom. Always learning more about what it means to be a learner, never forgetting what it means to struggle in my comprehension of a given task, facing a challenge and learning how to move through it and overcome, I note that ballroom “makes me a better teacher, in the end.” Furthermore, in facing the challenges associated with learning something new, I further my understanding that I am competent—a feeling that builds one’s confidence.

Another lesson I have learned through ballroom is “patience with myself. And patience with my partner.” Aware that none of my coaches have ever taught a lesson on developing patience with yourself and others, I realize that “experience is what teaches me that.” Learning patience benefits the relationship I have with myself as well as the relationship I have with others. When it comes to working together with others, such as your coach or your partner, I note that “there is no other option.” As a result, the lesson I experience in regards to how to work well with others is a consequence of being in a certain situation.

Welcoming Tiny Dancer Back to the Floor

With a childhood dream of becoming a prima ballerina, Tiny Dancer’s life lined her up for success as a formally trained dancer. When unforeseen circumstances robbed her of this opportunity, she felt as though her world “had fallen apart.” Without dance, Tiny Dancer believed her life “kind of crumbled” and she began to slip into depression. Upon reflection, and inspired by “Dancing With the Stars,” Tiny Dancer made a decision that would positively affect the quality of her life. She decided to look into Latin

ballroom dancing. Tiny Dancer narrates that DanceSport “saved her;” it became her “light” in a place of great darkness.

With years of ballet training, learning the five dances of Latin ballroom meant that she had to reprogram her body and learn a “whole other language” that her “body didn’t understand.” She describes a frustrating transition period, where she “hated cha cha and samba because, just, the hip movements” which were still unfamiliar to her classically trained body. In addition to coaches teaching Tiny Dancer how to move her hips, she also notes that her first Latin instructor became “the first coach who actually taught [her] how to find the beat and how to count properly.” Within this new environment, it did not take Tiny Dancer long to realize that “with the Latin dancing, you can’t really get by without knowing where the beat is, or the count.” Both body movement and counts were skills Tiny Dancer recognizes were taught to her verbally, as well as through physical manipulation and demonstration.

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport



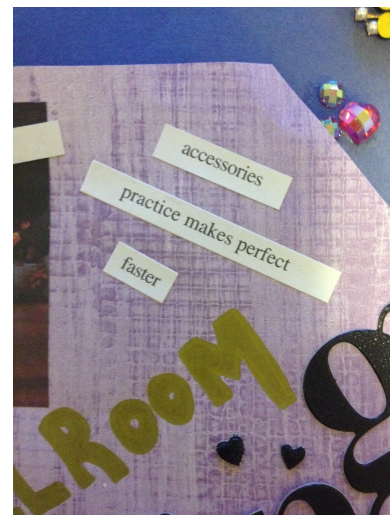
Clipping from Participant Collage: Tiny Dancer- “Like a moth to a Flame,” we can see how Tiny Dancer is drawn to ballroom and sees it as a “Light” in her life.

Intrapersonal Development

and Confidence: As part of DanceSport culture, Tiny Dancer learned more than just technique and timing. As previously alluded to, this dancer learned that Latin Ballroom has the ability to “save you.” In other words, Tiny Dancer learned an effective coping strategy for dealing

with stress. Not only was ballroom capable of pulling her out from a season of sadness, it continues to do so on a more regular basis. Tiny Dancer describes that when she is “having a bad day, and [she’s] at the studio, all is good.” With the safe environment DanceSport provides, this dancer has found an escape from negative feelings and protection against negative thoughts. Understanding herself as an artist, Tiny Dancer knows she now has an energetic and creative outlet that contributes to the maintenance of well-being. Knowing she is free to express herself within the DanceSport culture, Tiny Dancer experiences feelings of acceptance and confidence in who she is which allows her overall confidence to develop.

Moreover, through the explicit lessons which taught her steps and how to move her body, she learned the power of practice and commitment. Although drill training can lack the element of fun, committing oneself to practice has the ability to completely “reshape” the learner. Through practice, Tiny Dancer reveals “its amazing what you can accomplish.” This kind of knowledge sets her up for success in any area of her life where she is faced with a challenge. Her Latin ballroom experience has taught her that although a task might appear daunting, through commitment and training, you can learn something completely new and succeed in that area. Such a lesson contributes to Tiny Dancer’s optimistic attitude when faced with challenges and contributes to her resiliency.



Clipping from Participant Collage:
Tiny Dancer- There are rewards to practicing your skill

Expanding on this positive idea, Tiny Dancer claims that “never giving up” is actually the “biggest message that [she] has received from [her] DanceSport experience.” Although her coach never stood up and gave a lesson on “never giving up,” this was something Tiny Dancer learned through personal experience, as well as having watched her coach demonstrate what it looked like to live this way. It is without a doubt that this implicit lesson affects Tiny Dancer, as it has become part of her life philosophy. This attitude, formed through her participation in DanceSport, will likely strengthen Tiny Dancer when in the face of challenges within and beyond the dance floor. Furthermore, having learned this lesson, Tiny Dancer is aware that “people who love what they do will strive to reach their goals no matter what.” Aware of this, Tiny Dancer is able to connect with people around her who passionately pursue personal dreams. With this said, this lesson strengthens Tiny Dancer as a person, and provides her with an additional way of connecting with people. Speaking of the effect this internal attitude has on her life, we see that the intrapersonal skills affect one’s interpersonal relationships as well.

When asked what she has learned in Latin Ballroom, Tiny Dancer states that “a lot of what [she has] developed in [her]self is confidence.” Illustrating that this progress is part of the hidden curriculum, Tiny Dancer states that “to be confident with yourself—that’s not something you can really teach someone.” As such, Tiny Dancer has learned how to access confidence through watching, imitation, and personal experience.

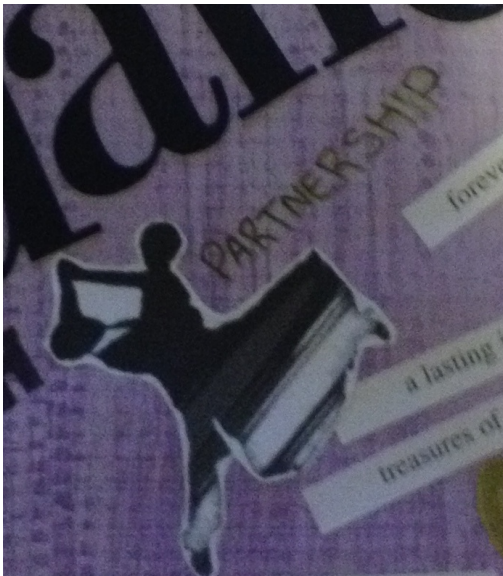
Having moved from one style of dance to another, Tiny Dancer describes ballroom as “just as whole new world of confidence.” As “a total visual learner,” Tiny Dancer has learned what confidence looks like by watching others. She comments on competition, and how “you can just see it when you watch the different couples on the

floor; It's the couples that really have the chemistry and the confidence with one another that, you're gonna strive to either dance like them, or you're just gonna watch them the whole time." Tiny Dancer makes a clear link between her watching confidence in action and wanting to emulate such a characteristic.

Emulating what she sees as looking good on the floor, Tiny Dancer explains how performing and competing boosts her confidence. What may have started through imitation, Tiny Dancer realizes she has gained confidence of her own since her time dancing Latin. She reveals the following: "Like my whole life, I've had this fear of being judged. But I think with the confidence I have built around ballroom dancing it has helped me, you know, for that." Evidently, Tiny Dancer attributes her current level of confidence to her experience dancing ballroom. Furthermore, she realizes that having attained this confidence helps her beyond the dance floor where she no longer fears being judged in general. Acquiring confidence, Tiny Dancer has experienced a shift in her attitude and personal philosophy. While she once constantly thought to herself, "what are people thinking about me...now, [she is] just there to own it." Rather than living in fear of being watched, Tiny Dancer actually wants people to watch her. She claims to no longer care what other people have to say, "because no matter what, people are gonna talk." Acquiring this attitude through DanceSport, Tiny Dancer demonstrates a great change from the person she was before Latin.

Also likely contributing to her improved confidence is learning that a variation of body shapes and sizes are accepted and welcomed within DanceSport communities. With a history of being bullied as a result of her size, it comforts Tiny Dancer to see "couples who are, you know, they look like they are anywhere between 5 feet tall to couples

where, I mean the guy is 6 foot 2.” Tiny Dancer believes that, “in terms of appearance, [she doesn’t] think you’re judged on, you know, if you’re a different bone structure, or you’re a little heavier than the next girl, or this girl is a littler thinner than you.” Unlike other dance communities, Tiny Dancer feels that DanceSport lacks the “negative spin” on body image and she feels it is “more of you know, just being out there and performing and seeing sort of what you can come up with.” Knowing this acceptance within the DanceSport community, Tiny Dancer feels more free to be who she is. Not feeling as judged, despite the presence of literal judges, I believe this implicit lesson allows for Tiny Dancer’s confidence to develop despite the competitive environment.



Clipping from Participant Collage: Tiny Dancer- As a partner dance, Latin ballroom requires dancers to engage in a partnership and learn how to communicate and connect with another human being.

Interpersonal Development and

Confidence: Through ballroom dance, Tiny Dancer realizes she has learned a “whole other language” through her dancing with a male partner. She notes that “for the longest time [she] didn’t even know about connection or chemistry. [She] didn’t even understand it.” Lacking this understanding of how to interact with her partner and feel his lead, Tiny Dancer did not know what her instructor meant when he said, “I can’t feel you.” Since this time, through dancing together

with a partner, and through watching other dancers, Tiny Dancer has learned about the power of chemistry and connection. She has learned that “you can have this passion and chemistry that you share with another person, but it doesn’t necessarily mean, you know,

that you need to be dating that person.” In this way, Tiny Dancer has received the message that physical proximity and the movements one’s body makes does not have to indicate or initiate a romantic relationship. Tiny Dancer also realizes the way in which one partner’s state of being affects the other, stating that her current partner keeps her “calm.” The ongoing attention Tiny Dancer receives from her coach, coupled with the very close connection she has established with him, fills her with positive feelings that contribute to an increased level of confidence.

Welcome Khaleesi Back to the Floor

Realizing the need to stop running from her past, Khaleesi spun into Latin ballroom when she allowed herself to start living in the present. Here, this young lady found an “outlet for [her] emotions,” “a form of expression” allowing her to experience and work through her feelings.

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport

Intrapersonal Development and Confidence: When asked what she has learned as a ballroom dancer, Khaleesi explained how “learning ballroom dancing teaches you a lot about yourself. Your personality.” For example, Khaleesi “definitely learned that [she doesn’t] like being told what to do.” Within an environment where she is constantly exposed to new skills, Khaleesi is forced to learn how to control the “heat” that builds up inside of her when frustrated. Therefore, in addition to practicing dance steps, Khaleesi regularly practices controlling anger and frustration.

Commenting further on what she has learned about herself, Khaleesi notes that through Latin, she has learned that she “can be confident...in front of people...That [she doesn’t] have to be shy.” She speaks openly about being an extremely shy person. In fact,

Khaleesi's spine was affected by her shy character, x-rays once revealing her looking "like a crane" as a result of "always rounding forward." To stand straight and open up her chest meant that Khaleesi was exposed – something she was not comfortable with "because [she] was so shy."

In high school, even just the thought of going in front of people "petrified" her. Khaleesi's nerves would cause her to shake and she would sometimes even puke as a result of nervousness. This fear stayed with her even into University where she dropped a class simply because she was "too shy to do it." Through ballroom, it becomes clear that Khaleesi has changed when compared to this former self. Demonstrating her progress, Khaleesi explains that "when [she] first started [ballroom] [she] used to stand at the back of the room. Now [she] walk[s] right up to the front." Evidently, having been socialized within the DanceSport culture did something to increase her self-esteem and confidence enough that she became comfortable with the idea that attention might be drawn to her. In fact, she has come to a point where she welcomes it. Khaleesi explains, "in the front, I can see the teacher better, I can see myself in the mirror better... And a part of it is like other people can see me better too."

DanceSport has allowed Khaleesi to "try on" different "personas." According to Khaleesi, "everyone wants to feel sexy, and wear these fun outfits, and you know, have everyone look at them, but at the same time, the thought of everyone looking at you is terrifying." When it comes to how shy people can get over their fear of being watched, Khaleesi says, at competition, "you can almost hide behind this persona of who you are, and maybe learn something about yourself." In the same way she can try on different costumes and learn that she likes certain material better than others, she recognizes the

competition floor as a space where she can try on different “personas” that she feels are not accepted of her in the outside world. Trying out “flirty” and “sensual” on the floor, she can decide whether or not she enjoys embracing this potentially hidden side of herself.

Believing “you can be anybody you want” on the dance floor, Khaleesi feels the DanceSport culture is unique. She thinks that in the world outside of ballroom “[y]ou are supposed to suppress yourself, and put yourself into these little squares and these cookie cutter shapes that everyone expects you to be.” Within the walls of the ballroom dance studio and competition floor however, Khaleesi believes “you can be anything you want and you can express yourself.” With paso, for example, Khaleesi believes the dancer is allowed to be powerful and aggressive; to “assert dominance” over one’s emotions and how the individual is feeling.” With “cha cha, you get to be fun and sexy and flirty. And rumba you get to be sensual and desirable.” Ultimately, “you get to be these things that you are not supposed to be anywhere else in the world.” Unmistakably, Khaleesi feels there is an element of freedom to Latin ballroom dancing. In terms of learning, Khaleesi summarizes, “[I have learned] that I can express myself, that I am good at this, that I have the movement and that I’m, you know, its definitely been a confidence booster.”



Clipping from Participant Collage: Khaleesi- A show of “passion, strength and power,” Khaleesi feels the paso doble encompasses what ballroom dance means to her. Through this dance, she has learned about herself and how to express and master her emotions. The bull represents either “the self” or your dance partner, as there exists a “battle” to understand, and connect in both intra and interpersonal relationships. This image also embodies the vulnerability that Khaleesi feels a dancer experiences when they partner with someone else. The ballroom dancer must learn to work in a vulnerable state, “not hold back” and “let your inhibitions go.”

As a Latin ballroom dancer, Khaleesi explains that “you’ve put yourself in a situation where this is what you’re supposed to do.” You are supposed to be “passionate and sexy,” you are supposed to be “powerful” and you are supposed to look a certain way. In turn, if these are the expectations, then dancers feel more open to experimenting with their personality. Evidently, a safe environment has been created where dancers feel they can “let their inhibitions go.” Khaleesi has acquired this understanding by watching others dance. Feeling free to experiment, Khaleesi perceives the ballroom community as one that accepts her for all that she is which lends to increased levels of confidence.

Khaleesi has also learned “about [her] physical body”—how to use her abdominals, how to tuck her tailbone underneath, and how to keep her legs straight. In this way, when you “think about it, you do have to internalize a lot” and “understand your physical body and how it’s moving and feeling.” Khaleesi points out an “interesting” dichotomy in that, while an individual element to ballroom might exist, you have to internalize things in order to later express them externally and in front of a crowd.

Throughout the interview, Khaleesi’s focus is less about dance-specific-skills, and more about skills and awareness’s she has gained through ballroom which influence her life beyond the dance studio. Such skills have not been learned directly through coaches, but more through experience and in response to being in particular situations. Khaleesi believes that in being a DanceSport dancer, “you are put into a situation, and you may not even realize you are learning, but you are gaining skills.” The element of competition “adds stress” but results in a type of learning. At competition, “you are learning about your emotional response” to movements, as well as to the energy of an audience and

other dancers. You are also learning whether or not the technique you have learned is engrained in your muscle memory. Oftentimes in competition you will “forget” things, or as Khaleesi describes it, you will go “oh screw my technique” and focus on feeling the music and just getting through your choreographies. This is the “under the gun” experience Entertainer speaks of, where what you have learned is tested and you learn your strengths and weaknesses.

Interpersonal Development and Confidence: Dancing between intrapersonal and interpersonal development, Khaleesi demonstrates that the type of personal skills she acquires through dance are often intertwined. In ballroom, Khaleesi mixes an internalized and individual mindset, where she is focused on her and what her and her body are feeling, with an external component which involves becoming almost “selfless” in order to “create something with somebody else.” Ballroom has “definitely taught [Khaleesi how] to interact with people more.” Being greeted personally by fellow dancers when she enters the studio, Khaleesi has learned that people remember her, noticing when she has been away. As seen in the image Khaleesi created to address what Latin DanceSport means to her, the bull is described by Khaleesi as representative of either the self or the other. Within ballroom, dancers continue to work on their relationship and understanding of the self while learning about interacting with others.

At the studio, Khaleesi has learned what it is like to be part of a “community,” a group larger than herself. When people ask her how she is, Khaleesi really feels “like, wow, people actually care about me.” Knowing this, Khaleesi has allowed herself to develop friendships and has expanded her social network unlike ever before. Once assuming that no one would know who she is, Khaleesi demonstrated a low level of

confidence. Through the ongoing “hellos” of her dance peers however, Khaleesi is constantly reminded that she is remembered, and that her presence is recognized. In this way, the ballroom culture is an atmosphere that nurtures confidence within the dancers.

As Khaleesi vocalized her thoughts and had the opportunity to reflect on what she believes she learns as a ballroom dancer, she also demonstrates the connection between intrapersonal and interpersonal development. She states:

Like maybe I didn't realize it, but now that you've asked me to think about it, I can actually see that it's helped so much on my personal journey, as a human being. Cus you know, you're trying to figure yourself out, and I mean I've been doing a lot of reading, so that's great, I could read a tone of books about human beings and the psyche and you can analyze what you're doing, but as soon as you start interacting in the world on a day to day basis, the more situations you put yourself in, your gonna learn more. So I'm learning a lot about who I am through those movements, through the classes, through being around other people.

Focusing in on the competitive aspect of her sport, Khaleesi feels as though competition prepares you for real life in a way that “being fair” does not. Khaleesi uses recreational soccer or baseball to illustrate how “everyone gets the same time on the field, and everyone is entitled to all these things; like not being told that they are better or worse than anyone else.” In her opinion, the lack of competition and believing that all team players are as good as the next is “teaching that you don't actually have to work hard to get anything, and that you're entitled to everything everyone else is.” Khaleesi does not believe this reflects society and therefore places the learner at a disadvantage. Khaleesi believes competitive ballroom serves as more accurate preparation for real life, where you have to work on things, such as your “expression, your “technique,” and to be “better than somebody else.” This “drive to get something, to work hard for something,

Janvier's collage reveals that he learned that "it is a happy and wonderful feeling to take an empty room and turn it into something beautiful just by moving in it." Emphasizing the beauty of movement, Janvier connected all the words on his collage as if to dance through words on the blank page. He recognized that once he "connected everything in a single line" his collage became "kind of like a routine, as it goes around the floor."

When the specific question regarding what he has learned through ballroom was asked, Janvier claims the "first thing" he learned was to "shop around." This is in response to his initial Latin ballroom experience, where he started dancing at what I call a franchise studio. Janvier uses the words "horrible" and "terrible" to describe his experience dancing there. Despite being new to the activity, Janvier was aware he was spending "a lot of money on very little quality."

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport

Intrapersonal Development and Confidence: After surveying options and finding his current studio, Janvier learned it was "so much better being involved in the technique." Knowing the basic structure of each dance style "makes it feel better to do." Janvier continues explaining how "it's more fun, being able to know what you're doing, instead of just dancing some steps haphazardly." Evidently, learning technique, although often difficult to grasp, does, in the end, make the dancing more fun.

Janvier has also "learned a lot about [his] body and how to move it and what it can do." Through Latin ballroom, Janvier realizes he is "able to do things [he] never thought [he would] be able to do." Through this statement, Janvier directly links learning how to move his body in a new way to learning he is capable of doing things he never thought possible. As a consequence, Latin ballroom has been "good for [his] confidence

too.” Janvier expands, remarking that it “just feels good” being able to move technically and “knowing what [he] can do and being able to do it. It’s a lot of fun.” Again, technique is described as necessary in order to master movements, but it is this sense of understanding that allows the dancer to have fun and feel confident moving in a new way.

Janvier speaks further to the confidence he has acquired and explains he is “more confident in [his] ability to adapt and to learn and to just be able to do something that [he] wasn’t comfortable with before.” Tying internal confidence to how we interact with our world, Janvier explains that “having done this,” referring to his experience ballroom dancing, he is “less afraid to try new things.” Undoubtedly, with the ability to remove fear from his life, the confidence Janvier gains through DanceSport is life changing.

Janvier has also “learned a lot about the way that [he] learn[s] and the way that [he] practice[s].” At this point in the interview, Janvier reveals a personal interest in teaching and learning and therefore feels it has been really interesting for him to learn what works best for him. “Learning about the way that [he] learn[s], [Janvier has] been able to use that to improve [his] dancing more.” Part of this involves how he has been able to “practice properly.” Janvier comments on how he has learned what he calls the “process for practice.” As a result of taking on this new activity, and being forced to learn something from the most basic elements, Janvier realizes “practice does not make perfect” but rather “perfect practice makes permanent. And then perfect practice makes perfect.” Janvier has learned that “if you practice wrong, you’re not gonna get perfect...you’re just gonna keep doing the wrong thing.” In a sense, Janvier alludes to what I speak of as muscle memory. You need to train your muscles into knowing how the “right movements” feel.

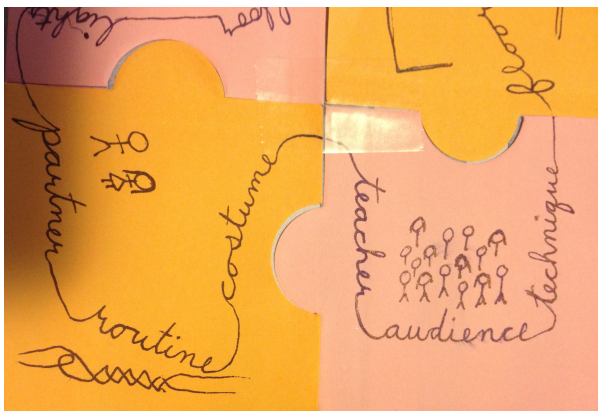
Furthermore, Janvier reveals that it is crucial not just to practice your routines as whole pieces, but to break them down, “identifying what you need to work on” and then working on those pieces “specifically.” In the process of learning, Janvier has realized “some of [his] weaknesses when it comes to practice.” Janvier uses the term “practice A.D.D.” to describe his struggle to remain focused on only the elements of the routines he needs to work on. He says that when practicing with his previous partner they “would do something and then after a while we would get tired of it... and then [they] would move on to something else, and it would just kind of be really messy.” Having acknowledged this pattern, Janvier has learned how to “improve [his] process” and now focuses his attention on particular movements, practicing them until they improve before moving on at the cause of boredom.

Acquiring technique, and attaining the most effective way to practice, Janvier has learned to “become more confident in [his] ability to lead.” This is significant because what Janvier learned in DanceSport has affected his personality. As he says himself, “I’ve always been, historically, very shy and more of a following type person” Therefore, with what he has learned dancing Latin, Janvier’s own personality and identity has begun to shift away from the historical shy person into the confident leader audiences, including myself, view him as. It is also interesting to note that what Janvier has gained intrapersonally affects his interpersonal relationships. Increasingly confident in his ability to “lead,” Janvier is really more confident in his ability to interact with and guide other people—his dance partners.

Distinguishing Janvier from each of the other participants, he is the only study contributor who does not speak of his nerves getting to him, or the presence of butterflies.

Janvier states, “for me, I’m, uh, I don’t like get nervous or worried or anything. So I don’t really have to do any like, um, any rituals or anything like that to calm my nerves. Its just you show up and you do it, for me anyways.” As such, Janvier does not feel any “special mental preparation is required” for competing or performing. His strategy for competing is simple. It involves “just sort of learning everything, practicing, and being as good as I can and being confident about it. That’s sort of it.”

Interpersonal Development and Confidence: Despite Janvier’s absence of butterflies, as a team sport, he does realize he “sort of [has] to be concerned about [his] partner’s mental state, mental preparation and their nerves.” As such, Janvier has grown in his ability to pick up on how those around him are feeling, mainly his dance partner. With this information, he then decides how to act accordingly. As a partnership activity, your dance partner’s success is your success and so you will do what you need to in efforts to help calm this other person. This is something Janvier has learned through experience and explains that he “had to deal with it a couple times.”



Clipping from Participant Collage: Janvier- Elements required for Latin DanceSport include a partner, teacher, and audience

Looking at his poster, Janvier’s thought process begins with the consideration of “things [ballroom dancers] might need or want.” Janvier understands these to include music, shoes, floor, lights, partner, routine, costume, teacher, and an audience. With the idea that Latin ballroom dancers

“need” a partner, a teacher and an audience, it is clear that a large part of ballroom

dancing involves close interactions with other people. Learning how to work with others, learning that he has the ability to calm down a female partner and lead her on the dance floor, the intra and interpersonal skills Janvier has learned through DanceSport nurture his developing confidence on a continuous basis.

Welcome Entertainer Back to the Floor

With a routine from “Dancing with the Stars” in mind, Entertainer first stepped into a ballroom studio with a potential life partner to choreograph a wedding routine. With the passing of this relationship came the birth of a new passion and Entertainer let one love go and immersed himself in another.

Learning a new skill “from scratch as an adult,” Entertainer was in a frustrating position realizing that learning ballroom meant he was a full grown adult “going, I don’t know how to walk.” As a result, it was necessary for Entertainer to learn basics before he could shape routines. He explains doing “loops, and loops, of cha cha walks. And then back and forth of cha cha chasses, for hours.” When working on these steps, “[his coach] would say, not like that, like this.” Evidently, Entertainer was taught steps and movement explicitly. In other words, dance instructors can teach you how to get better “technically or like dance-wise.” When it comes to serious, focused, and committed practice, Entertainer expresses “knowing that system works.”

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport

Intrapersonal Development and Confidence: When I specifically asked Entertainer what he has learned in his time practicing ballroom dance, he provides the following initial response: “Yeah, okay, I’ve learned steps. Who cares? Yeah, okay, I’ve learned how to move my hips better. Who cares? That’s not really what you’re learning

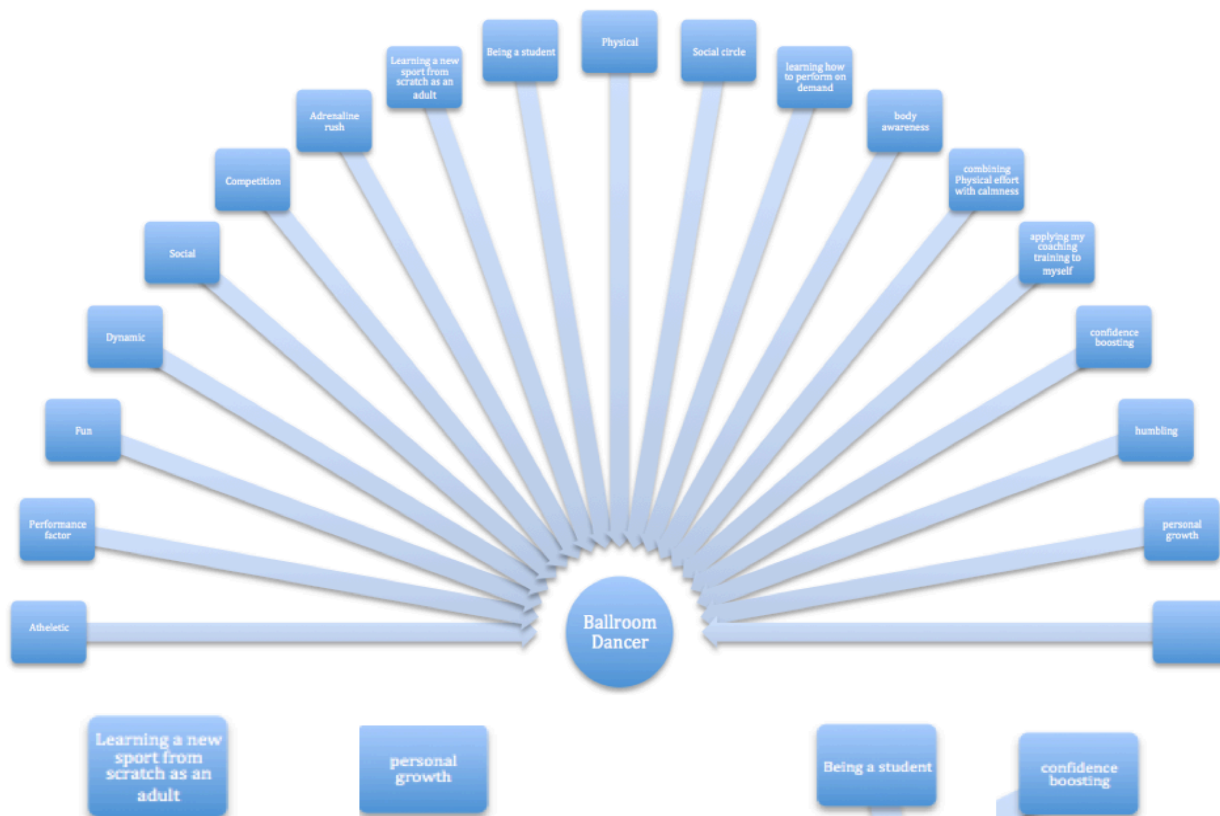
when your learning to do this. What you are really learning is you are learning to understand yourself better.”

What Entertainer does here is acknowledge the skills he has learned through explicit teaching—learning steps and movement—but demonstrates his understanding that these teachings are inferior to more meaningful lessons learned. One such lesson is how you, as a person, learn best. Entertainer has discovered, for example, that he will “learn technique, and then put in movement.” Entertainer is aware that it does not work for him to “learn movement, and then put in technique.” Translating this dance lesson into a life lesson, Entertainer understands it is necessary to learn basics, starting small, before one will appear as though they are truly accomplishing a given task.

As a teacher, Entertainer explains how competitive ballroom dance has taught him how to be a better teacher himself. This is a result of the way learning ballroom forces you to “[learn] a new sport from scratch as an adult.” He compares his experience dancing, where he literally “did not know how to walk,” to activities such as golfing and mountain biking; both activities people do and claim they are doing for the “first time.” To the person who says they are learning how to play golf, Entertainer says, “I bet you swung a golf club before. I bet you went to the driving range.” To the person who says they are learning how to mountain bike, Entertainer challenges, “Well did you ride a bike?” In opposition, taking up competitive ballroom dance means you have to admit your previous knowledge is less significant and you must learn literally how to place one foot in front of the other before being able to enjoy the activity.

Through DanceSport, Entertainer enhances his understanding of various stages in the development of learners. Parallel to the other dancers, the intrapersonal and

interpersonal lessons continue to dance closely to one another throughout Entertainer's understanding of how he has developed as a person through DanceSport. Learning about how he learns benefits both Entertainers' understanding of himself, and how he interacts with others. As he faces the challenges associated with such learning, Entertainer dances and develops through them improving on a regular basis. As such, the practice of DanceSport builds Entertainer's understanding of himself as competent and in turn nourishes his confidence.



Clipping from Participant Collage: Entertainer- The terms surrounding "ballroom dancer" are what Entertainer believes are "connected" to the central concept. Of the 18 listed related terms, four have been pulled out and presented at the bottom as they relate to what has been spoken of so far in Entertainer's interview. All 18 terms appear to relate to what he has learned implicitly *about* or *through* his participation in DanceSport. Although Entertainer does not speak to each term within his interview, including the way in which ballroom has "boosted" his confidence, he does make the explicit connection between ballroom and such concepts through this collage mind map.

When it comes to his process of learning, Entertainer comments on the role of failure. For example, in terms of how to prepare for competition, he learned that he sometimes prepared the “wrong way” and “wound up” in the “Oh my God I have to perform!” Entertainer speaks about “little things” he does in preparation for competition, but notes that these “rituals don’t mean anything, they accomplish something.” What his “system” allows him to do is “turn the thinking brain off and the doing brain on.”

Entertainer is aware of a difference between being ready and being prepared. This knowledge provides him with a greater ability to achieve success when competing. As he explains, being “prepared just means you know your steps you have everything you need and you go on the floor. Being ready is like you know your steps, you’re ready for like oopsie daisies, you’re ready for what happens when you bump into somebody, you’re ready for the experiences that might happen that could throw you off.” Another element that Entertainer thinks “throws dancers off” is the thought that “everyone is watching them.” However, in Entertainer’s words, “That’s horseshit. The only people everyone watches are the pros!” Entertainer comments on how this knowledge “only comes with experience.” Knowing this, though, promotes calmness within Entertainer and he is capable of focusing on the goal of performing well.

An additional way in which Entertainer has learned how to understand himself better concerns his ability to “compartmentalize things.” Compartmentalizing his training and energy level, I understand Entertainer’s use of this term as indicative of an ability to separate and control. In compartmentalizing his goals, Entertainer acknowledges that you train to have fun, you train to learn, or you train to compete. Depending on the type of training you understand yourself to be doing, Entertainer feels you will have different

expectations with regards to your coach and yourself. In turn, you will also learn and behave in different ways. For example, Entertainer says that if he were to “do ten competitions a year, it would be like, click! Now, focus, lets go.” Evidently, if Entertainer’s goals change, his focus and the type of training he engages in would change also. Learning how to compartmentalize things is helpful on and beyond the dance floor where certain behaviors are appropriate in one area and not in the next.

In separating and controlling his energy, Entertainer speaks of having to “deactivate himself” because he gets “super pumped up.” With a high-energy personality, when on the dance floor, his adrenaline peaks and has the potential to negatively affect his dancing. He describes competing and “when you get off [the floor] the trick is to deactivate yourself because you are so fucking spun.” He then tries “to keep [his] adrenaline at like a slow simmer until [he has] to turn it on again.” Learning how to compartmentalize, or rather to separate and control his energy, Entertainer’s dancing is permitted to be at its best which lends to increased levels of confidence. In turn, Entertainer’s intrapersonal development, learning how to understand himself better, lends to the development of his confidence.

With the competition aspect of DanceSport considered, Entertainer describes that “you are learning how to understand yourself better, and then that understanding of yourself you are putting under the gun to see how it works.” In other words, competition gives you the opportunity to test out your self-knowledge. For Entertainer, competing illustrates whether or not his learning strategies are working, and whether or not he has mastered the ability to compartmentalize. With such knowledge, Entertainer is able to

create a game plan in terms of what areas he needs to focus on next. As such, Entertainer can continue to develop as a dancer and as a person.

Interpersonal Development and Confidence: Knowing that no teacher can explicitly teach you how to understand yourself better, Entertainer realizes that some skills “aren’t teachable. They are learnable.” One such trait is interpersonal skills and “how to manage people better.” Through ballroom, Entertainer has learned a great deal about the “relationship aspect” which I summarize as learning how to engage in a relationship with people. With every partner or coach, you have to “learn how to train together again.” This means learning effective methods of communication with your partner or coach. Entertainer says it point blank: DanceSport “is a lesson in relationships.” Overall, “ballroom dancing, teaches you to be strong but soft.” While this comment appears to me as a lesson in terms of the athletic training that takes place, where dancers power each movement with extreme strength and yet the dancing must appear graceful, Entertainer makes the comment in relation to “how to manage your interpersonal relationships with people.” You must be strong, in that you get your message across to your partner or coach, but soft, in that you communicate your messages in an appropriate and approachable way.

Entertainer’s interactions with others is especially significant when one learns that he considers himself an “introvert.” While people from the studio, like myself, would have a hard time believing Entertainer is “not a social person,” he states that his change in demeanour is a result of the DanceSport environment. He perceives the dance studio as “a safe place” where he was able to experiment with this other side of himself. Entertainer feels that the confidence he gained through his Latin ballroom experience has

been “the confidence in like engaging with people on a social level,” as socializing was not something he originally enjoyed. As his social life expanded and Entertainer engaged in relationships with others, he notes that the level of his general sense of confidence also improved. He explains that this “added confidence was a side benefit” of his participation in DanceSport.

Welcome Chamudah Back to the Floor

When her childhood dream of becoming a ballerina was no longer a perceived achievable goal, Chamudah tried to let go of dance but realized it was a need within her, a passion, she could not ignore. Experimenting with different styles, Chamudah’s interest in Latin ballroom was peaked by “an advert on the radio.”

Implicit Lessons Learned Through Latin DanceSport

Intrapersonal Development and Confidence: As a dance style new to Chamudah, ballroom dance has taught her a new way of expressing herself and serves as both a positive outlet for her energy, as well as a source of energy. Additionally, through Latin, Chamudah comments on “learning what [her] body can and can’t do, no matter how much [her coach] tries.”

In direct response to being asked what she learns as a Latin DanceSport dancer, Chamudah explains “learning different steps to different dances” as the “very basic of things.” In what she calls the “basic and concrete” acquisition of Latin movement, Chamudah came to learn “a whole different life. The life of a ballroom dancer.” With this said, Chamudah confirms she is happy with where she is in life right now. By watching the professionals, Chamudah recognizes “there has to be some innate pleasure that they are getting out of it because the rewards are not very great.” She says this with the

understanding that the goal of the professional dancer “is to become first” and yet “only one person becomes first. And it is usually the same one.” Chamudah continues saying that “the other people, no matter how hard they are trying, might improve their placement but might be shy of that goal.”

While Chamudah appears to point out the political aspect of DanceSport, what she is really expressing is her understanding that “the life of an elite athlete, and [she] include[s] dancers in that, is a difficult one.” With this said, DanceSport has taught her that “[she is] glad [she is] not a professional.” Having once dreamt of making a career out of dance, through ballroom, Chamudah realizes that she is “okay with where [she is] at right now.” By “watching them, [the professionals], [Chamudah] realize[s], [she doesn’t] want to be there. [Chamudah doesn’t] want to be there in life and [she doesn’t] want that stress of life.” With such statements considered, it is also clear that Chamudah learns visually, by watching those around her. Additionally, learning that she is happy with where her life is, Chamudah permits herself to feel successful and confident in herself and her accomplishments rather than focusing on her childhood dream and feeling as though she has failed in any way.

In her response to what she learns through ballroom, Chamudah also makes the following comment: “The learning that I am getting out of dancing, I think its just more of an affirmation of how I learn... and how I focus, on a particular goal.” Already aware of personal learning styles, DanceSport has confirmed Chamudah’s self-knowledge and reminds her of life lessons such as how “you can’t slack off.” Furthermore, DanceSport reminds Chamudah that, “if you want to strive for goals that you want... You have got to be strong, both mentally and physically, to keep striving because otherwise you will give

up at some point.” In this way, Chamudah’s attitude has developed through DanceSport and lines her up for success in both dance and life in general. Chamudah offers insight in terms of how we develop as learners. She explains that “Your goal always has to be ahead of you; it has to be almost reachable but not quite there.”

Demonstrating extreme commitment to their craft, Chamudah feels Latin ballroom dancers “are focused and dynamic.” She asserts that “you don’t see wishy washy people doing Latin ballroom” and believes this is because the amount of focus that is required for the sport. She sees DanceSport competitors as “decisive” people who “know what they want. They know where they want to go,” and Chamudah believes this “translates into life in general.”

With a coach who “is very good at building a routine that’s appropriate for the person,” Chamudah learns that working with one’s strengths creates the most beauty. Skilled in her ability to turn, Chamudah’s routines are made beautiful and unique through



Clipping from Participant Collage: Chamudah- This corner of the collage captures perceivable negatives associated with D.S. Chamudah expresses mixed feelings towards the “little doll things that surround your actual dancing.” The doll is used to represent “the false image” dancers can portray.

the showcasing of many chenné turns rather than movements requiring extreme flexibility. Whether you are building a dance, or a life, around things you are good at, focusing on one’s strengths lends to the development and maintenance of confidence.

While Chamudah speaks of the positive aspects of the DanceSport community, as it is her “joy” in life and gives her “a positive moment” to “look forward to” every week, she also acknowledges potential negatives, such as the “falseness of the image that we

convey.” When asked to describe what she means by this statement, Chamudah expands, “the falseness. The, you know, taking “this” [pointing at herself now] and dressing up into “that” [points at her costume]. Yes. Costume, whore makeup, hair plastered that will never move, nails, everything that goes around ‘the look’.” Chamudah clearly acknowledges a certain appearance as being the standard expectation for Latin ballroom dancing and has learned that her love of dance is greater than her love of aesthetics. Although she problematizes the focus on external appearance and realizes that you have a “choice” as to whether or not you abide by the standard, she recognizes the achievement of the look as part of belonging to the DanceSport community. In Chamudah’s opinion, this sense of community is a large part of what keeps people coming back.

Interpersonal Development and Confidence: Bridging the intrapersonal and interpersonal lessons that dancers learn, Chamudah realizes there are “different layers” to what “competitive Latin ballroom dancing means.” According to Chamudah, DanceSport is about “technique, and partnership, and relationships... and fun.” Whereas the acquisition of technique can be an individual task and lead to learning about the self and how one learns best, the elements of partnership and relationships deals with the development of interpersonal skills. With a coach who incorporates a combination of these elements, Chamudah came to the following conclusion: “I have to work harder. I have to train harder. I have to focus better. I have to practice more.” Evidently, when the proper environment is created, a learner can be inspired to work harder than they have ever done before. While this is an attitude Chamudah has developed and therefore related to intrapersonal growth, the lesson has been learned as a result of interpersonal interactions.

Concerning her communication with others, through ballroom, Chamudah has learned a new language. She comments on “the nuances of the conversation in dance, [which] certainly at the beginning...are very subtle.” Chamudah describes how “we are used to people telling us, ‘go over there and sit on that chair.’ You don’t really have to think much because it is being told to you.” However, in Latin, you have must engage in a different form of communication and learn to be extremely attentive to your partner’s body language. For Chamudah, this involves “learning to come out of yourself, and what you’re doing, and to incorporate somebody else,” which for her “is really new.” Evidently, her mind and body are both forced to function in a new way. Learning this new language, and becoming more established in it with every practice, Chamudah increases her understanding of herself as competent and confidence is permitted to develop.

Expanding on the social element of ballroom dancing, Chamudah learns “about a different community” where you are not just an individual athlete, but in partnership with someone else. Although working with a partner, Chamudah states that ballroom has “always been about how I’m doing and how I can do better.” In regards to such personal development, Chamudah is “learning to give up a little bit, so to think of your partner, because I’m not used to that.” She summarizes this statement as, “learning to be less of a control freak” which she acknowledges as “difficult.” Through partnership, Chamudah is “learning to enjoy being part of something...learning to share



**Clipping from Participant Collage-
Chamudah: As a DanceSport
dancer you engage in comradery
and must learn to share in all
things (success, failures,
knowledge)**

and enjoy... being with someone else.” Accustomed to individual sports, Chamudah is learning something new about herself—that she can work in this new way, with other people, and actually enjoy it. Again, the intrapersonal and interpersonal development are seen dancing together. As a result of her dance partnership, Chamudah has developed as an individual as she learns how to compromise and share.

Also part of the “different community,” Chamudah comments on the way the competition floor causes her to be highly critical of herself and others. She notes that this is “something [she is] not particularly happy to learn about, but it’s a fact.” Despite this, Chamudah comments on studio experience and speaks of “the support and positivity of the other people who are dancing with you.” According to Chamudah, this positive personal encounter with others who share the same passion and have fun together “is why you keep going.” With this last point considered, Chamudah’s interview stands somewhat unique from the others as she recognizes that DanceSport both challenges her confidence as well as builds it.

Dancing Through My Research Findings: Across the Floor Analysis (Cross Case)

This study set out to question what implicit lessons are learned by competitive Latin dancers from their participation in the hidden curriculum of DanceSport culture. As the interview summaries indicate, the implicit lessons of the DanceSport culture concern personal development and deal with the acquisition of greater intrapersonal and interpersonal understandings, contributing to increased levels of confidence. Although there are some similarities between the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and understandings gained by the six study participants, each dancer does report learning

different features about themselves and how to interact with others. As dancers report these different narratives and express the various ways they have developed on both an intra and interpersonal level, one experience unifying all six dancers concerns the positive relationship between DanceSport and increased levels of self-confidence. The hidden curriculum of DanceSport is thus the awakening and development of dormant confidence.

Like a dancer who becomes changed, or wet, *as a result* of dancing in the rain, DanceSport dancers become changed *as a result* of their presence within the DanceSport community.

While the rain that touches and changes the dancer parallels the way implicit



lessons affect the dancers of my study on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level, this experience takes place while performing a particular dance. Take the dancer from the image above who dances in the rain. She might be taking cha cha lock steps as she becomes changed through each individual droplet of water. Similarly, DanceSport dancers take the “Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence” and also experience a personal transformation.

When dancers were asked, “What have you learned in your time dancing ballroom,” rather than speaking at length about dance steps or Latin ballroom specific movements, dancers focused on how dance affected and continues to affect their personal development. Moving beyond explicit teachings, study participants spoke directly to

certain implicit lessons of the culture, which affect their understanding of themselves and those around them. While these lessons sometimes varied, what remained consistent between interviews was the way in which DanceSport, and the lessons learned within the Latin ballroom setting, has improved each dancers levels of confidence. As a result of this collective theme, I have developed a form of cross-case analysis to demonstrate the shared experience of dancers, or more specifically, the similar way in which each dancer's confidence was affected through participation in the hidden curriculum of the Latin DanceSport culture.

As a *hidden* curriculum, the curriculum of confidence within Latin DanceSport is “generated through the taken for granted structures and practices of the culture” (Stinson, 2005, p. 51). I identify such “taken for granted practices” as they pertain to DanceSport in the diagram below entitled, “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence.” For a full-page version of this visual, refer to Appendix D.

"The Latin DanceSport (D.S.) Steps of Increased Confidence"

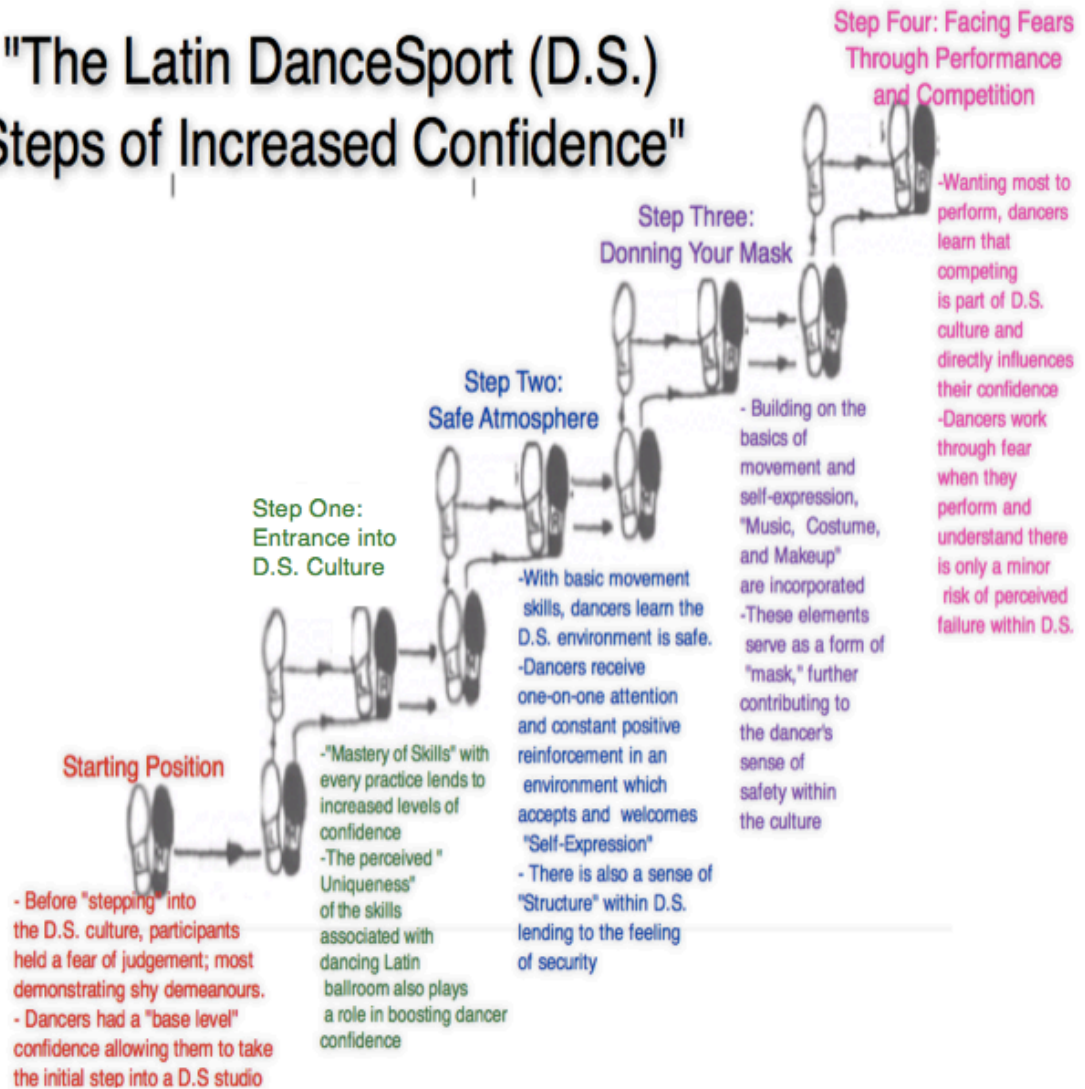


Diagram 1: Steps of Increased Confidence

As previously stated, parallel to the dancer who “danced in the rain” took cha cha steps and became changed in the process, DanceSport dancers take the “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence” and are also transformed.

Like cha cha lock steps which go forward and backwards, in addition to side to side, dancers do not go from the final step of Diagram 1 back to the starting position, but rather back and forth between steps one and four. As the interview summaries suggest, as dancers dance through the hidden curriculum of confidence, they also incidentally

develop on an intrapersonal and interpersonal plane. In the discussion of the “Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence,” subheadings will not be used in the exact same way as they were in the “Interview Summary Section” to separate the intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies gained by dancers. In the same way as dancers competing are not ranked individually but as a couple because they dance *together*, it would be artificial for me to completely separate intrapersonal and interpersonal development in this cross case analysis because, they too, are very much intertwined. As interview summaries indicate, as you learn about yourself, your relationships with others are also affected; and when you interact with others, you are likely to learn about yourself as well. In the end, however, what results from one’s presence and growth within the DanceSport culture is an improved level of confidence.

The Starting Position

“My whole life, I’ve had this fear of being judged.” —Tiny Dancer

In Latin ballroom, before you ever take a step forward in any particular dance, you automatically assume a starting position. Most of the time, this means you have one foot forward with the majority of your weight on it and one supporting foot behind. In Diagram 1 outlining “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence,” there is also a starting position that study participants experienced before they started “taking the steps” of increased confidence. Before “stepping” into the DanceSport culture and expanding on their understanding of the self and others, participants appear to have felt a fear of judgment; most demonstrating shy demeanours. Aware that it takes a certain level of courage to leave one’s comfort zone and try something new, it is also clear that the

dancers had an initial base level, or “starting position,” in terms of their confidence which allowed them to take these first steps into a ballroom studio.

Knowing study participants strictly through our communal sport, I perceive each of the dancers as powerful, confident, happy people. Perhaps this is because, as Chamudah points out, “you rarely see people walk out of the dance studio without a smile on their face. They may be sweating, but they have a smile on their face.” With this comment, Chamudah also assumes that “overall, people who dance are happy people.” With the positive energy I exude, I imagine ballroom dancers describing me in a similar way – powerful, confident and happy. Within the DanceSport environment, my peers are unaware of the person I was before partner dancing. Rather than seeing a girl who holds her head down or is filled with self-doubt, DanceSport dancers know the confident Crestina I have become through Latin. Dancers might be shocked to discover that my former self was once even described by a peer as “a shadow.” This was the kind of surprise I felt, at least, upon hearing that many of these other strong, beautiful, artistic dancers shared a similar story. Despite the assertive presence dancers including myself display on the dance floor today, most describe a former self who lacked such confidence and shied away from attention.

Tiny Dancer, for example, experienced a history of bullying, and therefore “hated” being “in the spotlight because [she] felt [she] was either judged or was going to be, sort of bullied.” Khaleesi shared this fear and “wouldn’t raise [her] hand” in class concerned that it would draw attention. Using the same rhetoric as Tiny Dancer, Khaleesi was also “so afraid people would judge [her].” Khaleesi describes herself as having been “really shy” to the point that even “the thought” of “going in front of people petrified

[her].” Although Janvier does not present this similar sort of internal fear, he notes that he “has always been, historically, very shy and more of a following type person.”

Prior to ballroom, it appears at least four of six participants openly demonstrated a shy nature, where they were more likely to “follow” for fear of standing out. To stand out is understood as increasing the opportunity of being judged. Addressing one of the two participants who do not explicitly use words like “shy” in describing their demeanour, I was surprised to learn that Entertainer, despite his outgoing presence on the dance floor, believes himself to be an “introvert.” He confided that he is “not a social person” and is “much happier just sitting at home.” When you are “at home,” it is understood that there is little perceivable risk. To continue, even Entertainer, who appears to have, as well as believes to have, a healthy level of confidence, describes that when he first started dancing, performing made him “so fucking nervous.” With this said, Entertainer exemplifies someone who does not explicitly reveal a history where lack of confidence was an issue, but he still proves to have an anxiety concerning judgment. Entertainer’s very pseudonym speaks to the fact that what other people think of him does matter despite his air of self-assurance. Within the first few minutes of my interview with him, Entertainer invested meaning into what I had to say about him and he selected his alias based on a word I felt described him or “matched” his “dancing style.... like [his] dancing personality.”

Similar to Entertainer, though Chamudah does not overtly speak about any lack of confidence, it is clear through dialogue and analysis that her level of confidence does, or has, wavered. For instance, when speaking about her dance costume, there is talk about making sure it “covers up” her “flaws.” Additionally, before competing, Chamudah

reveals how she experiences feelings of “unworthiness” and that she is “not good enough.” She will often question “can I do it?” Chamudah summarizes these doubts as “a little bit of tension” which requires “a lot of pats on the back” in order for her to overcome.

It is interesting to consider the way participants responded when I asked to see their collage. Chamudah, for example, was quick to inform me as to how she put a great deal of effort in the “word part” of her collage. “ Sticking it on” was the slow part. Chamudah explains how she struggled not to worry about the presentation since she is “not getting marked on her art project.” I tried to assure her that her work was fantastic but felt as though Chamudah’s concern with it, the need to speak to her visual in this way, demonstrated an inner fear of judgment.

Like Chamudah, Khaleesi felt the need to justify what I was about to see. When preparing to show me her work she begins, “Being an artist.... I did this differently I think than...” Khaleesi then immediately compares herself to others. When I expressed interest in seeing Janvier’s collage, he also appeared anxious about being judged. With a sense of nervousness, Janvier says, “Oh gosh” as he pulls a piece of paper out from a plastic bag. Although Janvier presents a beautiful and effective poster expressing his understanding of Latin ballroom, he articulates the belief that his pictures were “poor.” Similar to other participants, Janvier demonstrates the trend of being self-critical. Fortunately, however, somehow the fear of judgment either explicitly expressed by the dancers or demonstrated through their actions is overcome when dancing in the Latin ballroom environment. Through their narratives, I have arrived at an idea of how this transformation takes place and thus reveal the DanceSport steps of increased confidence.

I feel that in order to understand the intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation experienced by dancers, one must be aware of the “starting position” from which they began their journey.

The Fire Inside

When you dance, you discover a part of who you are.
And while the world accepts a candlelight spirit,
DanceSport welcomes my wildfire. —Crestina

With the first line of the above verse considered, I present the understanding, as revealed to me through dancer narratives, that DanceSport allows dancers to discover a hidden piece of who they already are. Although my history, alongside the other



Figure 1 “People who dance ballroom have a little bit of a fire inside” - Chamudah

dancers of the study, demonstrates that our confidence has improved, it becomes apparent through my research that a seed of confidence has always existed within us. This seed simply lived a season where it went without being nurtured. DanceSport becomes the fertile ground in which tiny seeds of confidence can grow. Alternatively, the Latin ballroom environment permits the previously guarded and concealed inner flame, or ember, to develop within dancers and reveal itself to the world.

Janvier agrees and states, “Like I had confidence before, otherwise I don’t think I would have been able to do it;” “it” referring to his taking any dance lessons. Chamudah would also agree as she says, “I think everybody has confidence in them. I think if they had no self-confidence they would never be doing Latin ballroom. Ever. Because it would just be too far out of their comfort zone.” Dancers make the valid point that there is some base level confidence, or a starting position in terms of one’s initial level of

confidence, required in order to take the initial steps of walking into a ballroom studio. For Janvier, this is very literal, and he describes his first day of ballroom, and “walking up the steps” thinking, “Holly crap. I have no idea what I’m doing. This could go horribly wrong. Cus I’ve never danced anything ever in my life.” In order to work through these thoughts and make it up those stairs, Janvier must have had some initial inner source of confidence.

When Janvier speaks of the confidence he had before his DanceSport experience, he does note that “it was a different kind.” In exploring what he means by this, Janvier reveals there was a necessary thought process required in order for him to reinforce his feelings of confidence. He explains, “I had to feel sure of myself, like think through things a lot, and then I became sure of myself, and then I would do something.”

Interestingly, Khaleesi explains a similar occurrence and discusses how she “would always have to think to [her]self to feel confident.” With Latin ballroom experience, however, Khaleesi can now “sort of bring it out and express it in a way that [she] hadn’t been able to do.” Khaleesi summarizes her point saying, “So I guess that’s what dance has done for me, in a way, is let me bring that confidence out of myself.” With this said, it is clear that Khaleesi has always had confidence, though it previously lied dormant within her.

Expanding on this idea, Khaleesi believes that confidence can reside below the layers “of defensiveness and protection” that people put on as a result of experiencing discouragement or hurt. These protective layers cover up the “little ball of energy or light” that we all originally have, resulting in the expression and perception of someone who is “closed off” or shy. For Khaleesi, the personal discovery of Latin as an expressive

outlet initiated a process of “removing those layers” and shedding them. This intrapersonal progress allows Khaleesi’s inner light to shine through to the outside world, thereby affecting her interpersonal development and relationships. Free of protective yet suppressive layers, Khaleesi has learned, “I don’t have to be my shy self.”

Building Up The Fire: Nurturing Confidence in Learners

“I think that everybody has that cell of confidence in them, whether well hidden or more out there, and it depends on their circumstance and where they are.”

—Chamudah

Reflecting on this thought, Chamudah first acknowledges that all people do have a “cell of confidence in them.” The size of this “cell,” or the level of this confidence, differs between individuals. She believes “Most people are somewhere in between the very shy wallflower who would sit on the side and never even dream of going to the dance studio and that person who is totally narcissistic.” This cell of confidence can be “hidden,” indicating that it can go unnoticed despite its presence within. Chamudah realizes that the likelihood of that cell of confidence being appreciated, or for that ball of energy and light to be visible, is dependent on “circumstance.” In order for a seed to grow, it must be placed in the proper environment. This is the same for confidence. With this said, the Latin DanceSport culture seems a fertile ground for the development of confidence.

In exploring what it is about Latin DanceSport that establishes the environment as successful in the promotion of self-confidence, let us begin with “Step One:” Entrance into the DanceSport Culture and the mastery of new skills perceived as “unique.”

Step One: Entrance into the DanceSport Culture

When the initial level of confidence is enough to get dancers through the unfamiliar doors of a Latin DanceSport studio, they are welcomed into “a whole different world of dance” (Tiny Dancer). Upon even just the first lesson, dancers “are sold” (Entertainer) as they learn their first steps of a new style of movement. The feeling of mastering new skills is the first way in which study participants reveal their confidence is positively affected through DanceSport.

Mastery of New Skills

According to Entertainer, not many people (adults and teens alike) can actually say they learn something completely “from scratch.” Explaining his point, Entertainer says that while “someone can say, well I learned golf,” chances are they have “swung a gold club before.” Even if your experience swinging a golf club was just at a mini putt, Entertainer reminds us that the skills necessary to play golf have likely been introduced at a young age. In a high school classroom, while a student might say, “I learned algebra,” chances are they have a previous understanding of more basic mathematics. Entertainer shares how “It’s a very different situation walking into somewhere going, I don’t know how to walk.” Those who enter a DanceSport studio for the first time often lack the basic building blocks of Latin ballroom steps, movement, or body positions. This is true for those with and without previous dance experience.

Despite years of dance experience, Chamudah discusses learning from scratch in a similar way. She comments on the unique skillset required for Latin ballroom and explains how, even with a dance history, DanceSport is a form of dance new to most

people within our city. As such, when at a lesson, ballroom dancers experience mental stimulation as they learn new skills and techniques. While the lack of even the most basic skills seems daunting, the acquisition of a new proficiency evokes a positive response. Learners feel a sense of accomplishment knowing they are able to do something one day that they were unable to do the day before. This feeling of personal competency improves one's level of confidence.

Janvier unambiguously attributes his confidence to the process of learning Latin ballroom, something he recognized as new. He states, "learning ballroom, I did feel like I was doing something I had not been able to do before. So even just that like brought my confidence up." Explaining how ballroom has "been good for [his] confidence," Janvier says, "I just feel good being able to, knowing what I can do and being able to do it. It's a lot of fun." With such excerpts considered, it is obvious that, for Janvier at least, acquiring the new skill of Latin ballroom dancing "gives [him] confidence." With this renewed confidence, dancers increase in "energy" and the feeling that DanceSport "gives [them] joy in life."

Chamudah expands on this idea of joy awakening and believes "there is this innate joy that comes with [Latin ballroom]." Chamudah and Janvier's first interviews indicate that part of this "innate joy" is a result of the nature of the sport, which is that you are always learning. Parallel to the views expressed by Chamudah and Janvier, Khaleesi also explicitly connects learning new skills with heightened confidence. Khaleesi explains, "Learning that I can express myself, that I am good at this, that I have the movement ...it's definitely been a confidence booster." First of all, such a statement makes it clear that learning ballroom informs the individual dancers that they are

competent at something. This develops personal identity and as dancers increase in their understanding of the self as confident, they also increase in their levels of self-confidence. Expanding on her point, Chamudah explains how the DanceSport dancer's goal is "always ahead of you" and yet continuously remains "almost reachable." Therefore, dancers will never run out of skills to learn, and will learn new movements, or new concepts, with every practice. In Entertainer's words, DanceSport thus exists as "something new. Long term new." Entertainer is referring to the idea that a DanceSport competitor can dance for years and still learn something new in each and every lesson. In turn, the positive feelings associated with mastering new skills are continually experienced within ballroom and dancers can always leave practice feeling competent and in turn confident.

The following is an excerpt from one of my journal entries and reflects points made by Chamudah and Entertainer.

Having danced Latin ballroom competitively for three years, today I took my first steps of the Paso Doble. This means that despite three years as a learner within the DanceSport culture, I had yet to learn even the basics of all five Latin dances. One might question, "How could I go three years dancing only three or four dances?" My answer is simple; there is just so much to learn, so much to master, in each one of them. Even with years of experience, dancing rumba, cha cha, and samba over and over again, though I have improved tremendously, I have yet to master the technical aspects of the aforementioned dances, including the connection and speed you see professionals demonstrate. With professionals in mind, I am well aware that they too continue to develop as dancers. Professionals and amateurs can equally spend their entire lives dancing Latin and still find they learn something new from either lectures or dance instruction provided by other high level dancers/coaches.

Known within my studio as a competent dancer, I was nervous to learn something new in front of my peers. In a single moment I perceived myself to go from a knowledgeable and experienced Latin dancer back to a beginner. Despite my anxiety, I took today's lesson knowing that, with time, I would improve in this dance the same way I have in all the others. Learning something new, learning something from scratch, though nerve-wracking, is all part of the learning process. And now, having done it, I smile knowing I faced a fear and learned something new. Not only did I learn a new count and body position, I learned that I can be fierce.

This excerpt supports the idea that there is always something more to be learned as a dancer. Learning these new skills expands the dancers' understanding that they are competent which in turn affects confidence. Additionally, I make the point that I did not simply learn explicit information such as new steps, but learned another aspect of my personality (that I can be "fierce"). Even though I am far from mastering any paso doble technique, the implicit lesson I have learned affects the identity I carry with me every day.

The Uniqueness of Latin

Perhaps also contributing to the positive impact DanceSport has on the lives of learners is the perceived uniqueness of the activity. Openly attributing an increase in confidence to "having the skill" of Latin ballroom dancing, I asked Janvier if he feels this is exclusive to competitive ballroom. I was curious to know, for example, if he thought being skilled as a competitive soccer player would give him the same kind of boost in confidence. Janvier replies, "If it was me, not as much, because [soccer] is a very, well it's a more common skill. I think it's the uniqueness and the novelty of ballroom that sort of adds to it for me. Because it's not something most people can say they can do."

Possibly a result of its "uniqueness," the reaction we get as DanceSport competitors when we tell people what we do with our time is positive. Janvier explains, "just being able to go around and tell people yeah, I've done a bit of ballroom dance, they are like 'Oh my God, that's so cool.' So it's a really cool feeling. It makes me feel more confident I guess." Markedly, Janvier makes an explicit connection between the response he receives when he shares his passion with others to an increased level of confidence.

Khaleesi, Tiny Dancer, and I share similar stories to the one illustrated by Janvier. Beginning with Khaleesi, when explaining what type of dancer she is, Khaleesi declares, “I always say Latin ballroom. Um, and when people ask me and when I say it, its like, I feel proud to say that. I’m a Latin dancer. People are like, ‘oh wow! That’s so amazing.’ They get really excited about it.”

In a discussion that developed in the second interview (Appendix C), Tiny Dancer speaks to this same experience. She states that she feels “very proud when [she] tell[s] people what [she] do[es] and what [her] passion is.” She explains that “the reaction [she] get[s] when [she] tell[s] them [she] dance[s] makes [her] feel like a superhero.” Feeling like a “superhero,” Tiny Dancer’s attitude concerning herself appears positively influenced by the reactions people have to the mere fact that she is involved in Latin DanceSport.

My personal experience also reveals that the response to just talking about DanceSport is extremely positive. These four testimonies support the notion that the learning of Latin ballroom stands apart from the learning of other sports, and knowing the uniqueness of the skill contributes to a dancers developing confidence. With positive reactions from those we speak with towards our passion and what we dedicate so much of our time and finances to, the reactions themselves play a role in amplifying our confidence.

Step Two: The Safe Atmosphere of DanceSport

Further contributing to the way DanceSport nurtures confidence within dancers is through the establishment of an atmosphere perceived as safe. Looking first at Entertainer’s interviews, he describes the confidence he built through dance as “the

confidence in like engaging with people on a social level.” Despite the high-energy socialite I know as Entertainer, he defines himself as “an introvert.” Counter to what I imagined, Entertainer reports that he is “not a social person.” When I express my surprise with his perception of self he replies, “I know. Because the dance studio gives this, it’s this safe place, and you’ve probably heard that a lot.” This statement reflects an aspect of confidence that he did not have prior to his involvement in DanceSport. Before ballroom, Entertainer lacked confidence in engaging socially with others. At the studio, however, his personality is enriched by his engagement with those around him. He credits this new confidence and the apparent transformation in identity to the “safe place” he finds at the studio. In regards to the security Entertainer experiences at the studio, he feels this is a shared belief among other dancers. The six dancers validate Entertainer’s point and share his understanding of the studio as safe.

Parallel to Entertainer, Tiny Dancer recollects on who she “once was” and how she has changed as a result of DanceSport. Tiny Dancer explains the following: “I hated at school being sort of in the spotlight...like my whole life, I’ve had this fear of being judged or I was gonna be, sorta bullied. But...in the dance world, like I couldn’t wait to compete. I couldn’t wait to show people what I can do. I guess it was sorta my safe zone, or my comfort zone.” Using some of the same words as Entertainer, Tiny Dancer agrees that between the studio and the competition floor, there is something about DanceSport that makes it a “safe zone.”

In efforts to explain what it is about DanceSport that ensures a “safe” space, interviews suggest it is a result of how DanceSport welcomes and encourages all forms of emotional and creative expressions while maintaining an element of structure.

Accepting and Welcoming Self- Expression

Study participants, including myself, demonstrate that, within studio walls and competition venues, intrapersonal development allows dormant aspects of our identities to emerge in a perceivably safe environment. Interviews reveal that this feeling is due in part to the fact that the culture found within these walls welcomes and accepts emotional and expressive behaviors. As Khaleesi explains, within the Latin ballroom culture, “You are allowed to be expressive and loud and passionate.” This is different from “the rest of the world” where “it’s like, don’t show your emotions, don’t show your passion, like keep it to yourself.”

Dancers not only feel free to express their emotions, but are encouraged to do so. Take the paso doble for example; in this dance you “get to show your power and strength, and a bit of aggression.” In cha cha, “you get to be fun and sexy and flirty. And in rumba, you get to be sensual.” Within the DanceSport setting, it is not only appropriate for dancers to display intense emotions such as anger, sadness, or sexual passion, it is encouraged and expected. As such, dancers are valued for their displays of emotion rather than judged negatively. This appears to lend to the creation of studios and competition floors as “safe places” and allows for the personal growth that interview summaries revealed.

By “providing the environment” where dancers “can express [themselves] in these [different] ways,” where “it’s okay to be loud and expressive,” a certain “atmosphere” is created where dancers feel accepted however they are. With coaches who give you one-on-one attention, with peers who all take turns watching you and clapping for you at

performances and/or competitions, you are constantly surrounded by positive reinforcement as you express yourself.

Chamudah expands on her previously stated comment in regards to the initial cell of confidence dancers rely on in order to make it into a competitive dance studio. She explains that, at first, “you can only pull on your own confidence that you have within you.” With even just one interaction with a coach or fellow dancer, this confidence “just builds on [the original confidence] because every time you are told, ‘yeah that was good.’” While Chamudah is well aware of the regular criticism dancers receive in order to improve their performance, she admits that “you are also gonna get that ‘Yeah! That worked!’ And every time someone says that little bit of ‘you’re good’ it can only build up on your confidence.”

This quality of interaction and positive reinforcement found in DanceSport “gives [her] something to look forward to, something [she] know[s] that every week, there will be a positive moment in [her] life.” Chamudah also notes that, “certainly in the studio community, there is a lot more support for what you are doing, and that’s really nice.” This positive setting translates into the perception that it is also “safe.” As a positive and secure environment, the atmosphere found in dance studios and competition floors allows DanceSport to function as it does in developing confidence within dancers. Perceived as safe, dancers are more likely to engage in self-discovery, and face the discomfort that can often come with interacting intimately with the opposite sex.

The Sense of Structure within DanceSport

Khaleesi overtly connects “the atmosphere” of the DanceSport culture to her improved confidence.” She believes that DanceSport “provide[s] the structured

environment to be able to express yourself.” There is structure in terms of how lessons and competitions run, there is structure in that there are only five Latin dances, there is structure within each dance as they involve style specific movements and techniques, and there is structure in terms of apparel and what is considered appropriate for Latin ballroom.

Speaking of style specific movements and techniques as a form of structure that supports the feeling of safety, Khaleesi compares Latin ballroom to contemporary dance. Although Khaleesi feels both styles of dance promote and capture “expression,” “passion” and “power,” when it comes to ballroom dance, “you have to contain” these elements. Khaleesi describes how “you have to sort of squish all of that down and put it into these technical restraints.” To Khaleesi, she feels this end result, a very compact containment of expression with technique, “seems more powerful in a physical sense, and it could be in an emotional sense too.”

Khaleesi feels that in ballroom, part of “being competitive” is “being very technical.” When she considers contemporary dance, Khaleesi believes the dancers do not have to be as in control of their emotions and that they can engage in movement while having the freedom to “let those emotions be anywhere.” On the contrary, in Latin, Khaleesi feels you “have that control of your emotions.”

In terms of a form of structure maintained through costuming which further contributes to the feeling of security within Latin ballroom dance, my participants reveal the understanding that there are rules as to what is appropriate for dancers to wear. Knowing that it is not acceptable for a Latin ballroom dancer to wear a “thong bottom” and show one’s “bum cheeks,” the “classiness” of ballroom is believed to be maintained.

As a result of the presence of guidelines in terms of apparel, dancers feel they are allowed to look and dress in very sexy ways within the DanceSport culture, which might otherwise be considered inappropriate. Consequently, through the perception of “limitations” on costuming, dancers feel protected against the negative views of others because the way they are dressing and acting is permitted within the DanceSport culture. Within this environment, then, dancers are provided with the opportunity to experiment with aspects of their identity they may have never done before. For example, both men and women allow themselves to feel desirable when on the dance floor, and while a female dancer might gain insight into an aspect of her femininity, perhaps the male dancer experiments with playing the role of a “Casanova.” Without the perceived presence of rules and regulations, dancers might not feel that it is appropriate to dress and act in these different ways and would therefore miss out on the opportunity of intrapersonal exploration and resultant personal development.

Step Three: Donning Your Mask

This project makes it clear that music, makeup, and costume serve as protective shields for dancers. With the presence of these elements, dancers feel free to explore alternate aspects of their identities and also develop interpersonally as they engage intimately with their partner and an audience.

Music

With music, Entertainer speaks of what he deems “the alter ego” that he feels he can present while at a studio or competition. Without any definition of “alter ego” defined, Entertainer uses the term to indicate a part of himself that exists within but he usually keeps hidden from society. When asked if this “alter ego” is part of him, he does

not hesitate to say, “Absolutely it’s part of me.” He feels that the DanceSport culture “nourishes” and “supports” this alter ego, which is really another aspect of himself. Doing so, the Latin ballroom “environment lets you feel like you are everything you want to be.” Evidently, the person Entertainer feels himself to be while dancing is a superior version of his more “everyday” self. In stating that he is “everything he wants to be,” Entertainer has found a persona where he can embrace his confidence. Entertainer notes, however, that when you leave the DanceSport environment, you are also separating yourself from “this shell; this protection of the music that lets you be that person.”

I think as dancers we have likely all said at one point, “I just got lost in the music.” Personally, I know this is something I say to almost explain, or justify to people, how I could show such powerful emotions while dancing. When I do this, when I turn to the music to explain my behavior, I support Entertainer’s claim that the music provides me with a form of “protection” which I rely upon. Additionally, such a statement proves Khaesi’s point that, in the outside world, it’s just not normal for people to be as expressive as we are in DanceSport. As she states, in society at large, “You are not supposed to be passionate;” you are not to “feel;” you are to “hold back your emotions.” In a sense, the music frees me from these perceived societal expectations and I “can be anything [I] want and can express [my]self.”

Summarizing his statement, Entertainer understands music as contributing to the “safe environment” where dancers feel they can express themselves without fear, and in turn present what can be seen as an “alter ego.” Entertainer adds to the list of protective qualities within DanceSport and acknowledges “costume, makeup, and music” all as “a mask.” He continues, “it’s that mask that lets people feel like they can express.” As

dancers familiarize themselves with this expressive, confident, passionate version of themselves, they gain a confidence in this persona and the qualities once reserved for the dance floor start to seep into their more everyday lives. As such, with time, this version of the self, which is “everything you want to be,” becomes who you are in day-to-day life. Through partner dancing, you grow in your understanding of the self and develop a greater love and contentment with the overall person you are.

Costume and Makeup

Participants speak very openly about the physical transformation they undergo before a dance performance. Chamudah speaks in both her interviews about “taking ‘this’ [pointing at herself as she appears in day-to-day life] and dressing up into ‘that’ [pointing at her dance costume].” She explains that, “superficially, you are changing from ‘this’ [pointing at herself] to the makeup, the dress, the hair, the tan, the whole thing. You are transforming yourself.” Khaleesi would agree, in that she believes “that’s part of [Latin ballroom], is getting yourself all done up.” For her, even for a studio show, this involves making sure her “nails [are] painted” and “[her] toes match,” her hair is done and she “[makes] sure [she] [gets] the spray tan, and [her] lipstick matche[s] [her] nails, and you know, that kind of thing.”

Khaleesi also notes that her partner has his own preparation ritual, though she is “not sure what he does.” The men in this study do not speak much to the physical transformation expected of male DanceSport dancers, though they acknowledge owning costumes specific to their dancing. When preparing for competition, Entertainer speaks about having his costume ready, and “[making] sure [his] shoes are polished, [his] pants are ready, and [his] shirt is ready.”

When Janvier is asked what distinguishes DanceSport dancers from other cultures he says, “the appearance. A lot, like all the makeup and hair and costume.” Evidently, he too sees that there is a certain look DanceSport dancers, male and female, try to portray. He describes aesthetic efforts as “pretty intricate and elaborate” however recognizes that “it just appears natural because its in that environment, on the stage or on a floor or whatever.” So within the DanceSport environment, the extravagant hair, makeup and costuming “just looks normal.”

In my interview, I reminisce on “helping [my] partner” “do [his] hair” and makeup. So even though the male participants in this study do not speak much about it, there is great detail placed in their physical preparation as well. Male Latin dancers often sport a tan, apply some makeup, slick back their hair using mass amounts of gel and hairspray, and wear Latin heels and a costume.

Each of us dancers speak to the idea of “looking the part,” or rather, looking like you “belong” to the DanceSport culture. Entertainer recognizes the DanceSport environment as a new “social circle” or which he feels he belongs. Tiny Dancer uses the words “a whole other world” to describe the sense of belonging she feels within the DanceSport community. With those around you who call you by name and ask how you are, Khaleesi also recognizes that her participation in DanceSport means she has entered a new community of belonging. With these examples considered, it is understood that the interpersonal relationships dancers develop within this community lend to a feeling of belonging and assist in the development of overall confidence.

When it comes to the extravagant displays of both emotions and costuming, Khaleesi points out that, in DanceSport, “You’ve put yourself in a situation where this is

what you're supposed to do." Tiny Dancer addresses potentially negative perceptions of DanceSport apparel, reflective of Chamudah and Khaleesi's comments, but she thinks the "really out there" costumes are "great." She discusses how "you can have all these crazy cut outs or short skirts, long skirts, whatever. But [Tiny Dancer] think[s] it's really nice too that they still follow certain rules. So for example, they still wanna keep it classy and sophisticated. They don't want you to necessarily, be you know, wearing a thong bottom and you're showing your bum cheeks." With this comment considered, Tiny Dancer feels the DanceSport system still "kind of preserve[s], sort of, you know, the classiness of it. So it's not just, you know, people think 'Oh, these girls just love to dress like whatever, and wear pretty much nothing.'" Tiny Dancer says that this is not the case.

As Khaleesi points out, "everyone wants to feel sexy, and wear these fun outfits" but dancers, like myself, would rather not experience being connected with ideas of prostitution as Chamudah, Khaleesi, and Tiny Dancer reveal plausible. With the concept of the "safe zone" considered, Tiny Dancer's comment leads to the understanding that the "rules and regulations" she understands as concerning apparel protect ballroom dancers from the more disrespected association. Additionally, with the desire to attract attention from audiences, "but at the same time" experiencing fear at "the thought of everyone looking at you," Khaleesi points out that "you can almost hide behind this persona of who you are." Evidently, regulations concerning Latin DanceSport costumes protect dancers from being associated with selling their bodies, and the costumes themselves protect dancers from a fear of judgment.

As Entertainer indicates, costumes provide a mask for Latin dancers. Khaleesi adds on to this idea stating that the wearing of this mask allows dancers to "hide behind

this persona of who you are, and maybe learn something about yourself.” Very explicitly, Khaleesi connects the idea that costumes serve as a form of safety with intrapersonal development. When costumes are worn and the music is playing, dancers feel free to experiment with aspects of their identities that have previously remained hidden.

Khaleesi describes this experience, “Like maybe, ‘yeah! I am this!’ But I’ve never let myself be this before. Because, it’s never been ok. So on the floor I can be boisterous and loud and this, or I can be boisterous and loud but I don’t like it so I’m not gonna be like that in the rest of my life.” On the dance floor, Khaleesi feels she can act in ways society does not support. Investigating a new side of herself, she then decides whether or not she wants to leave the dance floor holding on to the recently discovered identity. Through such self-discoveries, Khaleesi’s self-confidence increases and the way in which she interacts with others is affected in turn.

Discussing a visible change in demeanour, where Khaleesi is super shy in one setting and yet vibrant and outgoing in another, I find her comment concerning the similar effects of alcohol especially intriguing. Khaleesi makes an interesting connection between DanceSport dancers and those who drink at bars. Similar to the way competitive Latin dancers let go of their everyday worries and find themselves brave enough to take on positions of increased vulnerability (in terms of their emotional expressions and body positions), people drinking at bars seem to do the same. Khaleesi notes that “drinking and dancing are a little bit different” but explains how, when people drink, “they loose their inhibitions for sure.” In this way, I realize that instead of “liquid courage,” DanceSport dancers experience a form of “costume courage.”

Alcohol is known to “influence self-perceptions” (Bègue et al, 2013, p. 225) and makes a person feel more attractive (ibid.). Feeling more attractive, a person is confident and therefore more likely to act outside of their “usual” character. Those who drink and in turn perceive themselves as more attractive than usual are reported to have improved “intimate interactions” (Bègue et al, 2013, p. 232). When you feel attractive, you feel more confident, and you are more likely to engage comfortably with other people. This is all very similar to the “costume courage” we experience as dancers. I am aware that when I am in a costume of my choosing, I feel more attractive. Feeling more attractive, I gain a feeling of confidence and am therefore more comfortable than usual in expressing my emotions and taking the “risk” associated with performing. Dancers like Khaleesi, Entertainer, and Chamudah also speak to the idea that their involvement in DanceSport improves their social lives in that they feel confident engaging in relationships within DanceSport settings. With time, this confidence follows the DanceSport dancers out the door of the ballroom studio and affects their interpersonal relationships at large.

Echoing the views of Khaleesi, The following is an excerpt from my research journal entries and connects clothing choice to self-perception and performance. It appears that I too experience “costume courage,” a concept that I reveal is applicable to one’s everyday practice, in addition to formal performances.

*While I recognize studio mirrors as one of the greatest dance teachers,
sure to inform me that my knees aren’t in fact straight even when my mind tries to convince me
they are,
These mirrors can also distract me.
Today I crumple up a piece of scrap paper and scribble with anger the way I feel.*

*The way you dress effects the way you feel
The way you feel effects the way you dance.
If you dress sexy, you will feel sexy and will dance with more motivation and intensity.
If you dress lazy, you will feel lazy, and you will dance lazy.*

*On this day, I am angry because I dressed lazy, I look and feel lazy, and so my dancing is lazy,
a.k.a. very sloppy.*

With the above text considered, I would like to point out that I am not the only dancer who makes an explicit connection between external appearances and internal feelings. In her response to my follow up questions, Tiny Dancer reflects on the transformation she understands takes place when preparing for competition. She states:

Every time I get ready for a competition, all my makeup is on, costume on, I never recognize myself. I get this last minute adrenaline shock of confidence and I feel like I can conquer anything. It's amazing how a look can change how you feel, change the way people see you. I think especially because I look so young but at a competition, I feel and look like a powerful woman. It's like putting on your mask for the evening.

Within this excerpt, Tiny Dancer acknowledges a connection between how she looks and how she feels and further supports the statement that one's costume and makeup serves as a form of "mask" worn by DanceSport dancers. With this mask, Tiny Dancer feels empowered and like she "can conquer anything." The more Tiny Dancer experiences these feelings, the more likely they are to follow her off the floor and become part of her "offstage" persona. This has proven true for Khaleesi, for example, who we have seen experiment with being "louder" and more "energetic" and makes the decision as to whether or not she takes this recently discovered personality home.

Khaleesi's description of a lifelong interest in "building her confidence" enhances the argument that DanceSport stands apart from other recreational activities. Having tried to take up improvisational theatre, Khaleesi felt she "could not do it" and that something about "dancing was completely different." With participant interviews considered, part of what likely made dance "different" for Khaleesi was the security that music, costume, and makeup provide. As Khaleesi says, these elements allow her to "hide behind this persona of who you are," providing a "safe zone" where she can risk experimenting with

her identity. Doing so, she “learned that, you know, [she] can be confident... in front of people. That [she doesn’t] have to be shy.”

Step Four: Facing Fears through Performance and Competition

Further investigating what it is about Latin DanceSport that establishes the positive climate of self-confidence among learners, the role of performance and competition must be considered. First of all, it should be known that the element of performing is what keeps most of the dancers involved in DanceSport, but competition is part of the culture. When it comes to competing, study participants indicate a direct connection between this activity and confidence. Interviews also indicate that every time a dancer performs, whether at shows or at competitions, nervousness and fear are experienced and must be worked through. Overcoming nervousness and anxiety contributes to intrapersonal development as dancers learn what they are capable of, and in turn one’s self-confidence is positively affected.

“I just want to Perform”

Ultimately, the most rewarding experience at least for amateur DanceSport dancers is the opportunity we are provided to perform. At a small event held very recently dancers were willing to spend \$50.00 on the opportunity to perform for just two minutes. This should speak to the strong desire we have to showcase our work. As Tiny Dancer describes, she “simply just love[s] to perform.” As such, she states that she will take “any chance, you know, you can be given to perform.” Evidently, study participants beyond myself demonstrate the strongest desire is actually to show, rather than compete. In fact, it was this longing to perform which drew most of us in to DanceSport and has kept us hooked.

Having always danced in some capacity, I stayed with step-dancing the longest out of any style when I realized I did not need a partner. I took such pleasure knowing I could bring a pair of step-dancing shoes with me and be a “one-woman-show” wherever I went. The ability to do something I love and share that with others, bringing smiles to their faces, brings me an irreplaceable joy. Moving from step dancing to salsa and then to Latin DanceSport, I maintained a strong presence in the salsa community simply because it offers me a more viable access to performing. In salsa, I have a partner of my own, as opposed to a coach. This means I can perform at various events without paying fees as I do when performing with my DanceSport coach. It is a result of my fervent passion for performing that I live a split life between styles and spend every spare minute I have, not on television, or with friends, but on dancing.

Sharing a similar yearning for the opportunity to showcase her dancing, Khaleesi explains in her first interview, “I never really thought about competing. I just wanted to dance, and perform.” She reiterates this point throughout the interview stating, “I don’t necessarily want to compete. I want to perform. The competition is fun, but it’s the performing aspect that I like.” Entertainer believes it is this exact “desire to show” that makes “us” different than Latin social dancers. In his words, what distinguishes a DanceSport dancer from a social dancer is “ego. It’s performance. It’s like, that need to be on stage. That need to be in front of people.”

In a similar way, Chamudah took on Latin thinking “it was just a chance to be out there and perform.” Initially, Chamudah was unaware of the “pocket of work” that DanceSport entailed and entered the community for the sole reason of having an opportunity to perform dance. It is clear that performing means the most to her as it “was

one of the first [terms] that came in” when she was making her collage. Her love of performing is made very clear when she answers the question, “What kind of dance do you do and what does it mean to you?” Chamudah answers, “I compete in the competitive International Latin ballroom style of dance. What does it mean to me? It means the ability to perform, probably most important.” It was this desire to perform, to “show off, to feel good,” “that drew [Chamudah] to Latin.”

Competing is Part of DanceSport Culture

Curious to know what brought Janvier into competing, he revealed to me that it “was probably less of a decision and more something that just fell upon [him] from being in the environment.” Janvier acknowledges ballroom dance as a distinct environment, which he later deems a “general culture.” He felt that within this environment, competing was just “something that you do.” Creative with his explanation, Janvier states that a ballroom dancer’s decision to compete is similar to “being at high school and eating lunch in the cafeteria. It’s just something that you do because you are there.” In this way, Janvier did not feel pressured, but simply saw a n opportunity and wanted to “try it out; see what it was like.” Despite the nervousness that competition entails, the way it appears to feel like just another aspect of the DanceSport culture works to ease dancers into competition. It is at competition where dancers will put their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to the test and fully immerse themselves in an onstage persona which further contributes to personal development and increased levels of confidence.

Khaleesi agrees that being in the DanceSport environment, competition was “just what you do. It’s part of it.” My story relates this same idea. Through my immersion in the DanceSport culture, I believed competition was a necessary “step” if I wanted to be

“amazing.” According to Tiny Dancer, once you take that step and do start competing, “a lot of dancers” would agree that “you become addicted to it. Like you have to go and compete.” In explaining what it is about competition that keeps dancers hooked despite their initial desire to simply perform, this study indicates the increased confidence that comes from competition, through the facing of a fear, contributes to the desire.

Competition Dances Hand in Hand with Confidence

With participant interviews considered, one cannot deny the direct link dancers make between their involvement in competition and improved confidence. For example, Tiny Dancer notes that, in terms of her development through DanceSport, “a lot of it, especially the confidence, is through competing.” According to her, confidence is “not something you can really teach someone.” She notes her experience and understanding that “you can’t take a course on how to be more confident.” In this way, experience competing has helped her gain confidence. Not being explicitly taught, confidence is clearly part of the hidden curriculum of DanceSport.

Janvier also sees that competition “helped [his] confidence.” When he realized he could compete, he thought to himself, “yeah I can actually do this. I’m good enough.” Khaleesi shares a similar awareness and describes how she “definitely gained a lot more confidence when [her coach] said ‘yeah, you’re ready to compete.’” Khaleesi explains the situation as “a little bit of an ego boost.” Ultimately, “to be good enough at something to compete in it” makes dancers “[feel] so good about [themselves].” Knowing that DanceSport competitions offer a variety of different level options, all Latin dancers, no matter their skill level, have the opportunity to experience this “ego boost.” With

different categories, organized by both dancer level and age, the DanceSport environment ensures that it can boost the confidence of all learners within the community.

To illustrate my personal experience performing and competing, I provide a poetic piece from my research journal entries. Although I perform and might appear very care-free on the floor, I do have to fight through feelings of nervousness to get to that point. I composed this text the day of a show.

“Working through Fear”

*Like the base at a loud bar,
I feel my heart pounding out a beat in my chest.
It travels up through my windpipes and I can feel a vibration even there.*

*Unsure if the butterflies are contained to my stomach,
I grow increasingly uncomfortable with the feeling of numbness that travels in through
my fingers and down through my thighs.
The sensation is hot almost,
It’s a feeling of warmth that moves through my body,
Perhaps an explanation of the hives that appear to make their way over my chest and
neck.
This physical reaction to the thought of performing comes and goes for an entire day
before I put on a simple show.*

*Before stepping onto the floor,
You see dancers appearing to shake around their body parts.
While they claim to do this to keep their muscles warmed up,
I wonder if,
like me,
what they are really trying to do is shake free of their nerves.*

This creative piece is my attempt to capture part of a personal response to the thought of performing. I wrote the above description literally as I prepared to perform at a local venue. Parallel to other study participants, my main interest in Latin ballroom is in having the opportunity to perform. With this said, I acknowledge the stress I experience each and every time before performing and competing. While four of the other study

participants reveal this shared experience, all five acknowledge nervousness and fear as a common response to competing. Knowing that the dancers do bring themselves to compete, it is clear that all participants face and overcome the feelings of nervousness that they attribute to the thought of presenting their dances. Working through these feelings, dancers mature in their understanding of the self. As dancers, we learn how stressful situations affect us, how anxiety distresses our minds, bodies, and dancing abilities, and we develop strategies to calm our nerves. Experiencing nervousness, we might also develop on an interpersonal level as we open up to our partners about our feelings, and we rely on our partners, as well as our peers and personal support systems for encouragement and positive reinforcement.

Each of the dancers from my study discusses nervousness and fear that comes when preparing for shows and competitions. Tiny Dancer explains how a week before competing “is always fun because that’s when [she] start[s] to feel butterflies.” Describing the competition experience, Tiny Dancer speaks of “walking into the, you know, just into the ballroom.” Here she reports being “really really nervous.” Summarizing the experience, Tiny Dancer says competing is “nerve wracking, but at the same time, so much fun.” The element of performing and breaking through that initial fear appears highly rewarding. As previously mentioned, one is able to accomplish this feat partially as a result of the “mask” music, costume and makeup provides.

Khaleei’s competition involvement also entails feeling “sick with nerves” on the morning of the competition. When she “gets her costume on,” she cannot deny the reality that she is about to perform, and at this point she reports her nerves really “kick in.” Even the confident Entertainer reports being “so fucking nervous” before competing. He

comments on the regular attempt a dancer must take to “try to manage the butterflies to go like this [indicating a straight path] rather than like this [indicating scattered] as much as possible.” In the attempt to calm our nerves, dancers like myself, Tiny Dancer, Khaleesi, and Entertainer develop strategies to do so and in turn develop on an intrapersonal level.

Parallel to these four previously named dancers, Chamudah also experiences “butterflies” and believes “there will always be nervousness” when it comes to competing. Chamudah’s nervousness and fears start to “come in several weeks before [competing] when you are just finishing getting everything under control with the routines.” At this point thoughts of doubt enter her mind but dissipate once routines have been solidified. The relief Chamudah feels from nervousness and fear is temporary and returns again on “the day of the comp.” She does feel the butterflies that come with competing, “that little bit of tension,” holds a positive function in that the dancer remains “on that edge.” According to Chamudah, the presence of anxiety is good for one’s performance. This is something Chamudah would have learned about herself through previous experience.

Although Janvier does not report experiencing butterflies or any sense of nervousness before competing, he does recognize this is a common response among dancers. He comments on how he “sort of [has] to be concerned about [his] partners mental state, mental preparation and their nerves.” With this said, although Janvier claims he does not experience the nervousness himself, his interview still demonstrates that facing one’s fears is an element of competing that most DanceSport dancers encounter. Each time dancers compete, they therefore face either nerves of their own or of their

partners. Due to the nature of partner dancing, Janvier's understanding and ability to react to the feelings experienced by his partner will affect the partnerships overall ability to perform and do well in competition. Not allowing fear to dictate our lives, as competitors, we learn that we are capable and take the action, take the risk, of walking through that fear. As "Step Three" indicates, the "Donning of a Mask" appears to help us. The resultant action, however, of having faced a fear strong enough it causes our bodies to tremble, gives our confidence reason to grow.

Though potentially nerve wracking, dancers know that when you get on the floor, part of "the personality you are trying to exude is confident" (Janvier). As such, whatever your previous state of being, whether shy or fearful, when you get on that floor, in order to meet the expectation of judges and an audience, you "have to express yourself" and "exude confidence." As Chamudah reiterates, "when you are out there and doing Latin, you can't be anything but confident." Perhaps lacking high levels of confidence at the "starting point" of one's dance journey, through steps one, two and three from Diagram 1 on page 79, dancers build on their confidence, and find ways to work through fear and potentially shy demeanours. Upon seeing others dance and express an air of confidence, as Tiny Dancer points out, it is something you want to emulate.

Resultantly, at competition, perhaps sheltered by one's "mask," dancers experiment with this confident version of the self. Janvier describes how, through competition, "you get used to being that confident identity, or that confident person" and then "you adapt some of it to your personality;" "you internalize that confidence in a way" and it therefore positively develops the dancer's identity and concept of the self. Khaleesi also believes that, with time, this other perceivably superior version of yourself,

as presented on the dance floor “becomes the person’s real identity.” Evidently, through taking on a confident demeanour for the purpose of performing, dancers are able to overall “bring that confidence out of [themselves]” (Janvier) which improves the life of the dancer both on and off stage.

Minor Risk of Perceived Failure in DanceSport

Entertainer offers insight into why competition is “confidence boosting.” He explains competition as “a pretty intimidating environment, right. And you are going into somewhere and you are afraid. And you keep showing up, and you’re still afraid. And honestly the biggest part is facing the fear.” With this statement, Entertainer makes an unambiguous connection between the “facing of one’s fears” at DanceSport competitions and resultant confidence. In his follow up interview, Entertainer says point blank, “Here is why competition boosts your confidence, because you are putting yourself on the line and no matter how well you do in DanceSport you are succeeding because you did it.”

Making a fascinating comparison to other sports, Entertainer continues, “If you are in a swimming race, and the eighth guy comes in eighth, everyone sees him come in eighth. In a dance competition, everyone is on the dance floor, everyone starts at the same time, and everyone finishes at the same time. Everyone did it.” Considering Entertainer’s point, it appears that while there are “nerves” involved, the risk of perceived failure within DanceSport is less than in other competitive activities. Dancers do not find out how they placed until some time after they dance. Therefore, although dancers are taking the risk and presenting themselves on the floor, they are not directly faced with the feeling of “losing.” In this way, competition advances dancer confidence because

competitors experience fear and develop the internal fortitude to dance through it. The format of Latin dance competitions is such that when you are on the competition floor and when you step off of it, you are as much a winner as the dancer beside you. This aspect of DanceSport competition appears to make any perceived sense of failure less immediate and therefore less damaging to one's confidence.

Summary of Findings

In summary, it is apparent that there is a "Hidden Curriculum of Confidence" in International Latin DanceSport. While the majority of revealed implicit messages from within the DanceSport culture are shared among participants, the theme of increased confidence is all embracing. The narratives of all six dancers demonstrate that involvement in the DanceSport culture increases one's confidence. The hidden curriculum of DanceSport appears the awakening and development of dormant confidence. My research indicates that DanceSport allows a person to "step" out of "insecure, shy, and very self-conscious" identities. The culture does so by nurturing a present but undeveloped confidence, or inner fire, which circumstances and one's soundings have stifled.

Similar to the girl dancing cha cha in the rain who is changed as a result of each water droplet, study participants dance "The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence" and also experience personal development through their interaction with the implicit lessons of the culture.

A hidden curriculum is recognized by Stinson (2005) as "generated through the taken for granted structures and practices of the culture" (p. 51). The "taken for granted" practices within the educational environment of DanceSport have been outlined in

Diagram 1, “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence.” These “Steps” illustrate the means by which the educational environment of DanceSport nurtures confidence. The practices that generate the hidden curriculum of DanceSport include the entrance into the culture and the mastery of new and perceivably unique skills; the acknowledgment of a safe and structured environment which welcomes and accepts self-expression; the donning of a mask through music, costume, and makeup; and the facing of fears through performing and competing.

Having departed from “The Starting Position,” the six study participants, myself included, have danced through the movements of Diagram 1 (p. 79), continuing to dance through steps one to four. Doing so, we have all learned new aspects of our identities through Latin DanceSport. Although each of us dancers either spoke of or demonstrated throughout interview one an internal fear of judgment, it is clear that when we dance, we face this fear head on and chassé through it. While this change in attitude, this newfound personal strength, may then be perceived as temporary, study participants demonstrate that the confidence gained though facing the fear remains and continues to build with each dance lesson and performance.

The Adjudicators Speak: Discussion Section

Reflecting on the goals of this study, my research aimed to investigate the implicit lessons learned by competitive Latin dancers by way of their participation in the hidden curriculum of DanceSport culture. With a hidden curriculum of confidence, I hoped to outline the intrapersonal and interpersonal development experienced by DanceSport dancers in relation to their improved self-confidence. Through the narrative inquiry experienced by myself and five other International Latin DanceSport dancers, I have

addressed the research questions and discovered that as individuals dance through the DanceSport hidden curriculum of confidence, implicit lessons are acquired which benefit dancers personal lives beyond the dance floor. These lessons develop dancers in their relationship and understanding with both the self and those around them. Although all Latin dancers do experience implicit lessons of the DanceSport culture and develop on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level, the individual lessons slightly vary. What does remain a constant between the study participants is the experience of a changed understanding of personal identity as a result of the increased level of confidence gained through Latin ballroom.

My Research Contribution to Literature on DanceSport

Scholarly Support for Claims of Increased Confidence

While likely every website or flyer presented by a dance studio offering Latin DanceSport incorporates the claim that Latin ballroom dance improves one's confidence, there is little scholarly evidence supporting the explicitly declared assertion. As such, my research advances the DanceSport community as it provides academic insight into the benefits of ballroom dance, particularly in relation to increased confidence.

Currently, the scholarly literature contributing to the topic of DanceSport deals with historical and cultural concerns, or looks at the effects of the sport on the physical body. Although there is a larger, yet still limited, body of academic knowledge concerning the broad topic of ballroom or social dance, the literature on DanceSport in specific is diminutive. For now, the key scholars writing explicitly on DanceSport include Picart (2006), McMains (2006), and Malnig (1995).

Despite the lack of literature to strengthen their claims, dancers speak openly about the drastic change they have experienced in their levels of confidence as a result of engaging in the practice of DanceSport. My work offers such academic support and investigates the way in which such confidence is developed within the DanceSport environment and its dancers. My work begins a discussion on how the confidence of Latin ballroom dancers both affects, and is affected by, the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences that takes place as competitors dance through the DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence. Doing so, I provide dancers with a voice on the subject of the personal development that takes place within the educational environment of Latin DanceSport, how their participation in the hidden curriculum affects one's confidence, and the interaction of this confidence with intrapersonal and interpersonal development.

A Site of Education with a Hidden Curriculum of Confidence

No literature specifically on DanceSport addresses the way dance studios and competition floors exist as sites of education. In turn, the implicit messages sent and received within this culture are largely unrecognized and therefore untouched by critical thinking and reflection, let alone serious scholarly examination. While research does acknowledge the existence of a hidden curriculum within the arts, inclusive of dance (Oseroff-Varnell, 1998, p. 101), such a curriculum within Latin DanceSport has not been identified. My research therefore initiates dialogue on the topic of implicit learning and the hidden curriculum of DanceSport.

With a hidden curriculum of confidence, the DanceSport community will be enlightened knowing that the benefits of the practice are life changing and have the

ability to positively influence dancers in all areas of their lives as a result of the way it shapes their intrapersonal and interpersonal development.

According to my study, Latin DanceSport clearly assists in the development of personal growth, on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level. This reflects the understanding that, as an art form, “dance has a twofold purpose, communion with self and communication with others” (Dimondstein , 1971, p. 5). Dance is understood as contributing equally to emotional and social education (Elias, M. et al. 1997, p. 2). In other words, the intra and interpersonal development that takes place in relation to increasing confidence within dancers are very much interconnected (Mowat, 2011), “always interacting with one another” (Thomsen, 2002, p. 73). As Mowat (2011) points out, one needs to “come to an understanding of themselves and of their relationships with others” in order to “develop self-esteem and confidence” (p. 231). My study reveals Latin ballroom has the ability to make this happen for those who participate in the art/sport/passion of ballroom dance.

The Partnership between Intrapersonal Development and Confidence within DanceSport

Developing on an intrapersonal level entails developing “the capacity to understand oneself” (Gardner, 1999, p. 43, 90). When the term intrapersonal intelligence is used, it denotes an understanding of the self (Mowat, 2011), and involves “knowing who you are,” “what you can do,” and “how you react to things” (Thomsen, 2002, p. 71-72). The ability to develop intrapersonally is understood as essential for life (Warin, 2010) and is connected to the development of self-confidence and social, as well as emotional, maturation (Warin, 2010). My study reveals that DanceSport, in particular, is a style of dance that directly contributes to the participants “sense of self-knowledge

(Dimondstein, 1971, p. i) and assists in the development of one's personality. As one dancer states very overtly, "what you are really learning" when you participate in Latin DanceSport, "is you are learning to understand yourself better" (Entertainer).

Primarily, through participation in International Latin DanceSport, it is apparent dancers learn more about "who they are." I make it clear in my interview with myself that, through DanceSport, "I always learn about myself. Every lesson, I learn about myself." I have learned that I am very much a visual and kinesthetic learner, and that "I have high expectations of myself. I want things to happen quickly." Realizing this about myself, and recognizing the stress this expectation brings to my life, I have gained an understanding of the learning process through ballroom, recognizing that "time is needed to improve" and therefore "patience is necessary." Having learned this, the quality of my life has improved and I am less likely to place undue pressure on myself. Educating ourselves as to the way we learn best has been a shared experience among study participants. We have learned this or affirmed this through our participation in DanceSport.

As Warin (2010) points out, intrapersonal development is important because, "when we construct a self," or an "identity," we are "simultaneously creating lenses through which we see the world and forming the bedrock of our mental health and well-being" (Warin, 2010, p. 29). When the understanding of "Self, or identity, is interlinked with psychological health and well-being" (Warin, 2010, p. 29), it is clear Latin DanceSport can play a significant role in the lives of participants.

Reflective of Thomsen's (2002) definition of intrapersonal intelligence, through DanceSport, dancers gain further insight into "what they can do" (p. 71-72). Parallel to

the “educational dance” Dimondstein (1971) speaks of, Latin ballroom is also “concerned with control of the body” (p. 4). Learning about what our bodies can and cannot do, and expanding our abilities through practice, comments were also made on “the mental stimulation” associated with the learning of new skills and techniques. This is a significant statement considering the “growing evidence that stimulating one's mind by dancing can ward off Alzheimer's disease and other dementia” (Powers, 2010, para. 3). Partner dancing has been scientifically proven to positively affect the brain. Establishing itself from other solo dances, Latin dancing exists as a partner dance capable of stimulating the brain and affecting neural pathways due to the rapid fire-decision making involved in leading and following (Powers, 2010; Wright, 2013).

Contributing further to personal development, dance is recognized as helpful in the development of “self-discipline as they learn technique” (Hanna, 1999, p. 35). Every single one of the dancers in this study speaks of the extreme focus on technique within DanceSport. I note that the “focus on technique is so great, that it’s like you are accomplishing something in every single practice. In every practice, you are being challenged.”

As Step One of Diagram 1 from my research findings describes, dancers learn they are capable of something new and gain mastery over a skill thereby experiencing a feeling of competence. Research reveals that confidence and competence are linked together (Jackson, 2011) and that knowledge about one’s abilities lends to the development of self-confidence (Benabou & Tirole, 1999). It is interesting to note that confidence “acquired from competence causes us to become increasingly stimulated” (Jackson, 2011, p. 9) and causes our brains to make us feel stronger (ibid.). Research

shows that when individuals gain an awareness and appreciation of their abilities, they are likely to be resilient (Thomsen, 2002). This is significant as participants within my study reveal an increased understanding of their capabilities. Therefore, one can link the learning that takes place within Latin DanceSport environments with an increased potential for resiliency.

Additionally, intrapersonal development, and the understanding of one's personal abilities, is directly linked to confidence. As Thomsen (2002) states, "Those who know themselves well and are confident in their abilities possess the most important life skills of all" (p. 66). Latin DanceSport allows dancers to gain a deeper understanding of themselves as both dancers and learners. This sort of "dance achievement" has been recognized through research to help the learner gain self-esteem and confidence which can be applied to all areas of one's life (Hanna, 1999).

Dancers also learn about "how they react to things" (Thomsen, 2002, p. 71-72) and learn how to control their emotional responses to various situations. First of all, it should be apparent that each of the dancers in my study "react" to the practice of DanceSport positively and develop in confidence due to participation in the culture. Interview summaries also indicate that Latin dancers learn how to express, and control or manage their feelings and potential frustrations. This supports the understanding that dance "represents one form of communication through which [one] shares his[sic.] ideas and feelings with others" (Dimondstein, 1971, p. 4).

With the way Latin ballroom dance develops a dancer's sense of inner calm, and assists dancers as they deal with "emotional conflict or psychological difficulties," dancers are less likely to fall into the category of "troubled" (Cornwall & Walter, 2006,

p. 48). Cornwall and Walter (2006) define “troubled students” as “experiencing anxiety or distress characterized by problems or adversity” (p. 48). Aware that Latin DanceSport provides both a way to cope with anxiety and has the potential to develop the attitudes necessary to live through “problems of adversity,” Latin DanceSport is a useful tool in the maintenance of healthy, happy, people—adults and youth alike.

As Cornwall and Walter (2006) overtly state, learning opportunities must be taken to develop “a person’s relationship with themselves” in order to support an inner sense of peacefulness (p.48). Latin DanceSport proves to be one such learning opportunity as study participants state openly that DanceSport has taught them most about themselves.

Cornwall and Walter (2006) also propose that if one’s intrapersonal relationship is “difficult or strained, as in the case of anxiety” one’s unrest with the self will affect social interactions causing “further emotional upset” (p. 48). At this point, we see intrapersonal development desire to dance with interpersonal development, as success in one of these areas affects the other. As we develop in our understanding of the self, we also enhance our “capacity to understand the perspectives of others’ (Warin, 2010, p. 42)

Through Latin DanceSport, we experiment with playing roles that may not be natural to us, or relevant to us at the time. As such, we gain insight into emotions that are not currently ours. The way intrapersonal and interpersonal development are seen intertwined within my research findings, both contributing to the overall improved self-confidence within dancers, my work supports the understanding that knowing the self is necessary for social interactions (Benabou & Tirole, 1999).

The Partnership between Interpersonal Development and Confidence within DanceSport

Developing on an interpersonal level involves one's ability to understand and engage with other people (Gardner, 1999; Mowat, 2011; Thomsen, 2002). Social interactions are recognized as pivotal to cognitive development and influences the development of learning behavior in school contexts" (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p. 48). Additionally, research reveals that the establishment of relationships within educational environments is "key to creating an atmosphere for learning (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p. 51).

Dance in general is known to help in social relations (Hanna, 1999) however, I would argue that partner dancing assists in the development of social relationships to a greater extent than solo dancing. Unlike more solo dance styles, such as jazz, tap, or hip hop, where you may be dancing in a group but you are truly only in direct contact with yourself for the majority of the time, partner dancing requires you to be in a constant close position with another person, maintaining eye contact, and sending and receiving messages through the use of bodies. With such close physical proximity, and the necessity to pick up on what Chamudah calls the "nuances" of the dance "conversation," relationships are forced into developing at a faster rate than in other styles of dance. When you compete, you must be concerned about your partner as you dance and are ranked as "one" unit. In the establishment of one movement, Latin DanceSport, as a partner dance, has the unique ability to quickly nurture strong relationships. If the relationship between partners lacks strength and the two dancers are unable to communicate successfully, the partnership will not likely last and the dancers will search for someone with whom they can more easily connect.

If it is understood that “negative peer relations and difficult peer relationships with adults” can “have a dramatic impact on a child’s self-esteem” (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p. 49), then it is logical to conclude that the creation of positive peer relationships has the potential to positively impact one’s self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as “the need to be valued” (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p. 49). In Latin dance, we have one-on-one interactions with our partner and our coach on a regular basis, and we also receive attention from crowds of people when performing. That means various individuals express their validation of us by setting aside time specifically for us. This leads to a dancer’s understanding that, “I am valued.” This is unlike say the instruction of jazz, or tap, where direct one-on-one contact and attention may not be as regular an occurrence. Physical touch and continuous eye contact makes the relationship between ballroom dance coaches and their students, or between two armature dance partners, feel more intimate and meaningful. This contributes to an understanding that we are valued as those around us take time for us and make their attention to us explicit.

Self-esteem is understood as “fuelled” by “drives of affiliation,” described by Cornwall and Walter (2006) as “the need to engage with other human beings in reciprocal caring relationships” (p. 49). Interview summaries indicate that the DanceSport setting provides caring relationships, and a supportive caring environment, where dancers feel they belong. This sense of belonging is recognized as necessary for personal development and the understanding of one’s identity (Freeman, Leonard, & Lipari, 2007).

As a partner dance, within DanceSport learning environments, dancers express very intimate aspects of themselves, dancing in ways that the outside world would deem intimate and taboo, and yet judgment is withheld. This sort of atmosphere, one in which

allows the learner to express themselves freely, without judgment and therefore allowing the learner to still feel cared for and supported, is recognized as most fertile for the progression of resiliency within students (Thomsen, 2002). Resiliency is understood as the “ability to adapt and thus bounce back when faced with conditions that create disequilibrium or adversity” (Waddell, 2007, p. 128). Being “socially competent” is an aspect research reveals is associated with “the resilient child” (Freeman, Leonard, & Lipari, 2007, p. 20) and DanceSport appears to address.

The perception of “established caring relationships” are necessary for an individual to develop resiliency (Freeman, Leonard, & Lipari, 2007), and dancers feel they have such relationships with both their coaches, partners, and peers. When we build relationships with those around us, we gain the understanding that we belong, and a sense of belonging is part of building resiliency (Freeman, Leonard, & Lipari, 2007). I recognize that I build relationships with both my partner and my coach, and have learned how to extend patience to both of these individuals. Overall, as Entertainer states, “DanceSport “is a lesson in relationships.” These relationships are both intrapersonal and interpersonal in nature and develop as dancers experience the hidden curriculum of DanceSport, dancing through “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence.”

Partnering My Research with the Formal Education System: Considerations for Further Study

My Study and Ontario’s Goals for Education

“Well-Being” and the Development of the “Whole Child”

In lieu of the current Ontario government goal of achieving excellence through a new focus in promoting well-being, my research findings are particularly relevant. This

goal concerning well-being, as expressed in the document, “Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education” (2014) is not particular to Ontario and is also officially presented in “Every Child Matters,” a government document used in the U.K (Cornwall & Walter, 2006). Having uncovered a “Hidden Curriculum of Confidence” in Latin DanceSport, which awakens and develops dormant confidence in learners, the activity is a useful tool in the development of a positive sense of self (Hanna, 1999). This character trait is recognized as necessary in the development of resilient learners and assisting in the maintenance of mental health (“Achieving Excellence;” “Open Minds, Healthy Minds;” Young, 2010). In fact, research has established that confidence is the strongest predictor of student performance (Stankova, et al., 2014). Therefore, if Ontario aims to “give our learners the tools they need to reach their full potential” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 4), experience with ballroom dancing reveals itself as one such tool.

With the “Renewed Vision for Education” set forth by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2014, it is obvious the government formally recognizes that the needs of our children are not solely academic and therefore cannot be solely judged based on standardized test scores and graduation rates. This government document expresses Ontario’s interest in committing itself “to the success and well-being of every student and child” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 1). Ontario accepts that “[d]eveloping child and student well-being means supporting the whole child – not only the child's academic achievement but also his or her cognitive, emotional, social and physical well-being” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 14). Both my study and former research on the benefits of “fantasy play,” an element of the ballroom experience, demonstrates that

ballroom dance addresses this exact goal. As a “manifestation” of fantasy play, the involvement in ballroom has positive benefits on intellectual, emotional, and social development (Newman & Newman, 2015; Moyles, 2005).

DanceSport and Intellectual Development: As H’ Doubler (2002) points out, the aim of education today “is the development to the fullest extent of the growth of the individual, based upon a scientific understanding of all his or her needs and capacities” (p. 11). In terms of cognitive development, dance is described as “more than emotional and physical experiential expression” but as “a mental phenomenon, too” (Hanna, 1999, p. 28). It is understood that education from kindergarten through to grade 12 is about developing intelligence (Sternberg, 1996), and dance is recognized as developing certain types of intelligence (Hanna, 1999). My study reveals that intelligence developed through DanceSport reinforces intra and interpersonal capacities. Knowledge concerning one’s body is also developed by DanceSport dancers as a result of the body movement and control dancers gain as they experience “Step One” from “The Latin DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence” (see Diagram 1 on page 79).

Additional mental benefits particular to partner dancing include the neural pathways that are developed within the brain as a result of the quick thinking required to lead and follow (Wright, 2013; Powers, 2010). Partner dancing “integrates several brain functions at once — kinesthetic, rational, musical, and emotional — further increasing your neural connectivity” (Powers, 2010, para. 29). Unlike more solo style dances, such as jazz, tap, ballet, or hip-hop, ballroom requires dancers to engage in “split-second rapid-fire decision making” (ibid.). With this impact partner dancing has on the brain,

distinguishing it from solo dances, ballroom is recognized as a preventative measure against dementia (Powers, 2010).

DanceSport and Emotional Development: My study also supports the idea that Latin DanceSport assists in emotional development (Elias, M. et al. 1997). Hanna (1999) states that dance education “may help students understand themselves as a whole person and to discover and express their identities” (p. 32). As Dimondstein (1971) asserts, dance “allows a child to know himself in still another way, through the body’s capacity to express feeling through the forms of movement” (p. i). My research reveals that DanceSport permits such an experience. In the maintenance of mental health and internal sources of confidence, it is suggested that learning opportunities must be taken to develop “a person’s relationship with themselves” (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p. 48). With the way in which Latin DanceSport develops dancers intrapersonal skills, it is clear that DanceSport fulfills this educational goal and belongs in the classroom.

Learning how to cope with one’s emotions is part of emotional development, and dance is recognized as an “effective stress management approach” (Hanna, 1999, p. 35). Contributing to the maintenance of mental health, dance is known to develop self-discipline within students as they learn technique (Hanna, 1999). While this acquisition of self-discipline is effective in itself, when coupled with dance performances, it is understood students connect with their community in a way that can prevent destructive behavior such as substance use and abuse (Hanna, 1999).

DanceSport and Social Development: Additionally, DanceSport certainly contributes to social development (Elias, M. et al. 1997; Weinstein, 2012). Working one-on-one with a coach, as well as a partner, DanceSport contributes to the educational goal

of developing students in terms of their social relations (Hanna, 1999). Dancers benefit socially as they learn to respect the self and others (Wright, 2013), and must grow in their ability to communicate effectively with those around them. Dance is one form of communication “through which a child shares his ideas and feelings with others” (Dimondstein, 1971, p. 4). In dance performances, the audience also comes into play. DanceSport dancers work to express their emotions and movements in such a way that they can extend their effective communication beyond just their partner. Learning effective ways to communicate and work with others benefits dancers within and beyond formal schooling, as dancers are increasingly likely to demonstrate respect for their peers. This is not only useful when it comes to the group work required in classroom assignments, but in the everyday encounters students have with each other. It is recognized that learning how to interact with others is a social skill that the learner uses “for the rest of their life” (Weinstein, 2012, p. 49). Contributing to such a skill, DanceSport is established as an incredibly useful tool in the development of students as well as human beings.

DanceSport contributes to Perseverance and Resilience

Moving forward, the Ontario Ministry of Education demonstrates awareness that “to achieve excellence in the future, our learners will also need to develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2014, p. 5; Elias, M. et al. 1997). My study reveals that the personal development of perseverance and resiliency is part of the hidden curriculum of DanceSport, as it exists as something dancers learn implicitly. Dancers discuss openly the ways in which they learn that hard work pays off, that challenges can be a positive

because they lead to improvement both personally and in terms of one's dance abilities, and that all experiences come with both positives and negatives.

Another manner in which ballroom nurtures perseverance of learners is that it provides you with a positive coping mechanism and means of emotional expression. Myself, Tiny Dancer, Khaleesi, and Chamudah, all overtly explain the way ballroom dance provides us with an escape from the every day, and an area where we can be happy and experience joy while releasing any potential negative energies.

The development of self-confidence and an internal understanding of competency are not the only benefits gained through DanceSport. Dancers also improve in their understanding of the way they learn best, an idea that directly influences and advances the formal schooling of a child. Learning that "practice and commitment pay off," students who dance also prove more resilient in the classroom as they are less likely defeated when the work at hand is recognized as difficult.

The Government Goal: A "Renewed" or "Revived" Vision?

I find it interesting that the focus on student wellbeing is currently recognized as part of a "renewed vision" as it appears to have long been a goal of formal education. In 1987, Humphrey discusses the "valid assumption" that the purpose of education "is to attempt to insure total development of children" (p. 14) so that students may possess "as high a level of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual well-being as his or her individual capacity will permit" (p. 13). With such literature considered, the 2014 "renewed vision of education," with its focus on the "whole child," does not appear so renewed. What can be "renewed," however, is the approach we take to achieving this total development, the combined development of the "physical, social, emotional and

intellectual self” (Humphrey, 1987, p. 14). I propose that this new approach demonstrates a focus and interest in incorporating Latin DanceSport as a form of partner dancing. While many Ontario schools do offer dance classes, I do not believe they have the same potential impact on one’s confidence as partner dancing. Based on personal experience within both the high school dance curriculum and that of Latin ballroom, I attribute a lack in ability for current school dance programs to develop confidence to the fact that the dances currently incorporated into the curriculum lack the partnership aspect.

DanceSport as a Tool in Achieving the Government Goal

Overall, with a hidden curriculum of confidence and the resultant ability to positively transform the lives of those who engage in the activity, Latin DanceSport in particular is an available activity capable of contributing to the task set out by the Ontario Government: to develop within students the “knowledge, skills, and characteristics that will lead them to be personally successful” (“Achieving Excellence,” 2013, p. 3). Recognized as “the strongest predictor of student performance” (Stankova, et al., 2014, p.9), and the basis from which “people bounce back from setbacks and rejection, adversity and criticism” (Yeung, 2010, p. 26), the development of confidence is a necessary skill and characteristic that will lead to the personal success Ontario reaches for. Research shows there is a “positive association” between “being educated in dance and academic achievement” though the reasons are debated (Hanna, 1999, p. 36). I am tempted to say that it is the growth in confidence that makes this change. With confidence, you are more likely to take risks, which leads to learning. Additionally, with confidence, you are more likely to apply yourself because you experience less fear of being “wrong” or “unapproved of.”

Enhancing the Dance Course within Ontario's Arts Program

Dance within Ontario's Arts Program

The 2010 Ontario Arts Curriculum asserts that, through the participation in the arts, “students can develop their creativity, learn about their identity, and develop self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of well-being” (p.3). With this study considered, it appears Latin DanceSport meets these exact expectations—this style of dance permits the creative expression of emotions and movement, and dancers enhance their understanding of the self and others while developing confidence and improving well-being. Within the introduction of the Arts Curriculum, there is an emphasis on understanding, learning about, and respecting “others” (3). With the interpersonal development experienced by study participants considered, participation in DanceSport certainly addresses this ministry initiative.

Focusing specifically on the high school dance program, dance is recognized as an arts stream using the human body as an instrument (“The Ontario Curriculum,” 2010). Within this program, students are expected to develop in their awareness of the physical body and use “elements of dance” such as body, space, and time, to “compose dance creations” (ibid.). Typically, a dance course begins with teachers who lead in the composition of dance creations, ending the semester with a project where students take the initiative to complete such a task. Throughout the semester, dancers “develop dance technique” and “share” the art of dance through presentations and performances (ibid.). As my study reveals, the acquisition of new techniques contributes to improved confidence when dancers gain new skills (“Step One”), and the performance aspect of dance proves highly beneficial to one’s confidence as it forces dancers to face their fears (“Step Four”).

Dance teachers have the liberty to select the dance styles introduced in the course so long as they meet the expectations of the three curriculum strands. As far as I have seen, most dance teachers have been exposed to, and therefore teach, jazz, tap, ballet, and/or hip hop; all of which are solo styled dances. Therefore, dance students, let alone all students, generally miss out on the benefits of partner dancing. As previously stated, the benefits of partner dancing contribute to the development of the “whole” child, inclusive of well-being, as the benefits are cognitive, emotional, and social in nature.

From my own experience as a student within the high school dance course, my confidence actually decreased as a result of my participation in the course. In retrospect, this may have been a result of the very individual nature of the dances taught. As solo dance styles, there is no need for as much individual attention provided to students by either the teacher or peers. Additionally, as a solo art form, each individual dancer is solely interested in self-improvement creating an unhealthy competitive environment where dancers try to outshine their peers. This is unable to happen in an environment where dancers are forced to be concerned with the development of their peers; where dancers want to see the dancer beside them excel because to do so makes you a better dancer and performer as well. In partner dancing, such as Latin DanceSport, you are only as good as the individual dancing beside you. This encourages dancers to assist, rather than compete with, one another. I perceive self-improvement as the driving force of the dance course I was part of. In turn, the central concern was on surpassing your peers and the safe environment that is maintained within DanceSport was unable to develop and positively influence learners. Lacking this safe environment, recognized as “Step Two” within the DanceSport Steps of Increased Confidence, high school dance classes are

limited in their ability to positively influence the confidence of dancers. While I do not believe this is the intention of any dance teachers, in fact, my experience was likely the opposite of what my teacher had hoped for, I believe my negative experience was a result of the solo style of the dances taught.

How Partner Dancing Can Enhance the Current Dance Program

Expanding beyond dance education, I propose the use of partner dancing, more specifically Latin ballroom, for the unique way in which it does develop our “physical, social, emotional and intellectual self” (Humphrey, 1987, p. 14). Physically, as ballroom dancers, we become more in control of our bodies; we become stronger, faster, more flexible, balanced, coordinated and our endurance develops (Humphrey, 1987). We learn to love our bodies for what they are because they allow us to move in these different ways. Counter to what I felt was the culture of the high school dance classes, DanceSport welcomes different body shapes and sizes and, perhaps through the assistance of costuming, allows all dancers to feel attractive. We become disciplined in both our bodies and our minds. In terms of the social development, with the way in which my study reveals the interpersonal skills are gained, it is clear that Latin ballroom helps us on this level as well. Counter to jazz, tap, or ballet, ballroom, as a partner dance, clearly has a concern for one’s partner, or rather one’s peers, simply as a result of the nature of the dance style. In other words, I feel partner dancing has a greater impact on one’s social and emotional development than solo style dancing.

When it comes to emotional development, the ability dancers have to “feel” and “express” what we are thinking, how we are feeling at the time, or imagining how something feels, we are growing emotionally. We also learn our reactions to certain

situations and are forced to deal with them in an appropriate way (Humphrey, 1987).

Each of my study participants reveal developing on an intrapersonal level and in this way have developed both socially and emotionally. Finally, in terms of the intellectual self and developing in this way, always faced with new information, dancers constantly increase in their “capacity to learn and understand” (Humphrey, 1987, p. 27).

While I acknowledge benefits of a general dance course offered in schools, I suggest a program that incorporates the partnership of students. With exposure to such a style, dancers have no option but to engage in cooperation with one another, and in turn build relationships, and develop intrapersonally as they work through any potential social anxieties. More specifically, I understand there is a unique benefit to the dance partnership of male and female students. I believe the partnership between opposite sexes contributes to the personal development gained by my study participants. A great deal of the fear dancers work through, the social awkwardness that dancers face when they take their first Latin ballroom lessons, occurs as a result of close physical proximity to the opposite sex. In a society that objectifies the opposite sexes in relation to one another, presenting the male and female body as sexual objects, I see ballroom, a partnership dance, as a way to bring respect back to interactions between the sexes. I feel it is important for students to know there are more respectful, appropriate, and artistic ways of engaging and dancing with the opposite sex than the “bumping and grinding” most well known to our youth populations.

Pierre Dulaine, a former DanceSport Champion, is an educator who agrees that partner dancing has a unique way of developing respect between peers. In a documentary film, “Dancing in Jaffa,” Dulaine works to unite Palestinian and Jewish students living in

Jaffa, Israel. This is a war torn area where the children Pierre Dulaine works with are immersed in a society filled with hatred towards those perceived as “different” from the self. Teaching the students partner dancing, and bringing children from different backgrounds together, Dulaine provides an extreme example of how it is possible to nourish respect for other human beings through partner dancing. Dulaine believes that “if you start with a child, 9, 10, 11 years old, and somehow they learn to respect themselves first, then they will respect other people as they grow up” (Nabatoff, et al., 2013).

Through Dulaine’s program where children “dance with the enemy,” students start with eye contact, and then move to etiquette in terms of asking someone to dance and responding appropriately. These children learn that just because you dance with someone does not mean you have to get married, and they begin to see past the labels and stereotypes of their society. As one student says, “It’s not Jews and Arabs, Arabs and Jews... we became friends” (ibid.).

The program Dulaine used in Jaffa has become an international effort and goes by the title, “Dancing Classrooms.” This program is based on the premise that dance can be used as a “a tool for getting the children to break down social barriers, learn about honor and respect, treat others carefully, improve self-confidence, communicate and cooperate, and accept others even if they are different” (dancingclassrooms.com/). My study provides scholarly support that Latin partner dancing does have this effect. My research documents the ways in which partner dancing does break down social anxieties and therefore bearers, it does improve confidence, and it does enhance the interpersonal lives of dancers. Providing support that the effects of my study parallel the potential dance has in high school settings, a student from within Dulaine’s program reports the

following: “This class increases my confidence and it teaches me to respect my friends” (Zekas, 2010). This is all to say that through partner dancing, we develop on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level as we learn to respect ourselves and others. Growing in these ways, our confidence develops and we feel more secure with who we are.

Capitalizing on Ballroom as an Available Resource for Personal Development

Aware that the dance courses held within formal school settings often have very few male participants, perhaps the solution would be to hold a mandatory workshop for school students rather than limiting the opportunity of partner dancing to those enrolled in the dance curriculum. Again, this idea is not new, as Dimondstein stated in 1971 that, as a result of the many benefits of dance, “every child can and should participate in the dance program” and it should not be within reach of only the artistic or “gifted” (p. 4).

As H’ Doubler (2002) asserts, the education system should “capitalize every possible resource” to make the developing of ones personality “through conscious experience happen, of which dance is an option” (p. 12). My argument is that Latin DanceSport exists as such a resource, capable of developing one’s personality through conscious experience, and should become incorporated into the formal school systems. With the many benefits of Latin Ballroom considered, and with the awareness that such said benefits have been recognized for decades now, the question remains, why is it that formal education systems are not incorporating Latin ballroom, or ballroom for that matter, into consideration as curriculum and/or graduate expectations are established?

As indicated, such programs already do exist. Pierre Dulaine’s “Dancing Classrooms” is one of them, centered on the idea that ballroom dance can “positively influence the physical and intellectual development of children through their early teens”

(“Dance and Education,” 2014). Despite being an international program, out of Canada, only Toronto has experimented with the idea. Perhaps the absence of inclusion of such programs within the school systems is a result of a lack of education concerning the validity of the benefits of ballroom dance. With the popularization of Latin ballroom through shows like “Dancing with the Stars” and “So You Think You Can Dance,” I would understand the average persons assumption that ballroom dance is simply a recreational activity— something you do for fun or an excuse to wear fancy outfits. With such an understanding, society is missing out on the very meaningful and life changing impacts that partner dancing can have on one’s life. Additionally, if ballroom is to become a regular part of the education system, then it would mean additional required education at the level of formal educators.

Critical Questioning

This entire study was motivated by an internal conflict I experienced as a result of dancing the “different dances” of student, teacher, and competitive dancer. I felt my life as an academic and a Latin ballroom competitor were at war with one another, and needed time to realize how these two passions of mine can in fact coexist, or rather dance together.

At this point in my life, again, a struggle is stirring up inside of me, as the demands on my life have been pulling me away from practice, away from the studio, and away from competing. I am forced to question, what happens to us as Latin ballroom dancers when we can no longer commit as many hours to our practice as we once did? Will this affect DanceSport’s ability to influence and improve our levels of confidence? Will the decline in hours of participation instead negatively affect my self-perception?

With these questions considered, I am reminded that I ask them from a position of a single student, not even as a married individual, with a spouse and/or children to care for, or full time work to commit to.

Although my study looks at amateur dancers rather than professionals, the individuals who volunteered their time to participate in my study with no tangible reward are clearly extremely passionate about what they do; perhaps more so than other amateur dancers within the local DanceSport community. As such, the narratives shared, and the conclusions I have arrived at, are those of dancers who are very committed to DanceSport at this point in their lives. The positive impact that DanceSport has had on their confidence may or may not reflect those of the individual who is less motivated in their dancing, or who is unable to devote as many hours to the practice as a result of higher demands from work or family.

While I am inclined to say that my study remains relevant to DanceSport dancers with families, as one of my participants is married with a family, I realize this individual's ability to commit hours to practice despite familial responsibilities could be exceptional and not possible for most. Additionally, at least one of my participants demonstrates a more relaxed practice schedule, reflecting more closely a social dancers commitment to dance than that of a high level competitor. Although a wide range of readers could read this work and relate to the dancers in my study, the reality is that not everyone brings such commitment in terms of time and money to their recreational activities. I use the term recreational because although we may compete, we do so for pleasure and not as a career. I find myself asking, what does this variance in commitment do to the potential DanceSport has on nurturing one's confidence?

With the goal of incorporating Latin ballroom into the school system, questions also arise as to the consequence of amalgamating two separate cultures. If my high school past and current presence as a high school teacher leads me to believe that incorporating partner dancing would improve school culture, making it a more positive experience for those who dance, the question remains, what kind of a culture do we want to see develop within schools? While study participants agree that they value DanceSport for the way it offers and encourages freedom in terms of expressing feelings, emotions, fears, and passions, all of which yields positive consequences in their lives, what are we to make of the displays of intense “sexual passion,” “sensuality” or “flirtation” that are also associated with Latin DanceSport? How would differences to movements, costuming, and makeup for the purposes of ensuring the practice brought into schools remains “appropriate” in the eyes of school administration influence the way in which confidence is affected? Although we want to encourage freedom of expression, will it have to be limited to ensure the activity is “school appropriate?” For if the expression is limited, it is no longer free, and arguably an essence of the initial DanceSport culture is lost.

Looking at norms, do we want to encourage the overdramatic behaviors which are part of the “norm” and expectations of DanceSport to become the “norm” for our youth? Additionally, what are we to make of the heterosexual norm that is presented in ballroom? Are we open to breaking this norm? Would the Public and Catholic school boards react differently to such a suggestion?

Considering potential obstacles that arise when thinking about the incorporation of partner dance within schools, if it were to be mandatory, what would happen with those who face restrictions concerning dance as a result of religion? What modifications

would need to be made for students who are restricted as a result of physical differences? Would teachers trained in dance, and even partner dance, be prepared and knowledgeable enough to create the necessary changes to every lesson and choreography to ensure all body types and abilities could benefit from such a program and experience the same boost in confidence?

Throughout my study, I engaged in a very open ended discussion about Latin DanceSport. I was curious to see what ideas would naturally surface when dancers were asked what they have learned in their time dancing competitive ballroom. I focused on what role Latin ballroom played in the lives of those who are clearly committed to the practice and their response was positive — Latin DanceSport has transformed each of the six dancers, positively affecting their confidence. Although many implicit lessons were revealed, they generally dealt with intrapersonal and interpersonal development. I did not ask any pointed questions as to how audiences, or those outside of the DanceSport culture, might perceive the activity. For now, this remains an unknown. This perception, however, will likely affect the potential Latin ballroom has to be implemented as a tool used within our formal education system.

“A Round of Applause for the Dancers Please”

As the dancers finish their first dance, the samba, the M.C. for the evening engages the audience, encouraging our applause.

As live spectators, “Dancing with the Stars” becomes less fun when we realize we have the opportunity to interact with the athletes and artists in real time. We see the glitz and glam but we also get to see the muscle and sweat. We proceed to whistle, and shout,

yelling out the numbers of our favorite dancers who look at us and wink while taking breaths before their next dance.

While we applaud the dancers, we are thrilled knowing that although one dance is over, another is yet to come.

“Up next, the cha cha cha!”

Like the routines which will continue, moving from cha cha on to rumba, so should our efforts to understand and utilize the benefits of International Latin DanceSport. Having considered the implicit lessons learned by competitive Latin dancers from their participation in the hidden curriculum of DanceSport culture, it is apparent that dancers exposed to the this particular culture experience a “Hidden Curriculum of Confidence.” Within this curriculum, dancers incidentally acquire implicit lessons pertaining to the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge. Aware of the potential partner dancing has to enhance the confidence of dancers, and the increasing focus on well-being within formal education systems, “interpersonal and intrapersonal educational aims and values are becoming a priority” (Warin, 2010, p. 182). As such, Latin ballroom, as a partner dance, must be taken from our television sets and brought into our classrooms to enhance the lives of our youth.

Appendix A Collage Assignment

The Task: The Creation of a Collage Mind-map

Contributing to Ms. Pasco-Pacheco's study, participants are asked to complete a collage mind-map inspired by the term "**Ballroom Dance**," "**Ballroom Dancing**" or "**Ballroom Dancer**." The choice of term, and the placement of this term on the provided blank piece of Bristol board, are up to the individual. Research participants will be provided with a Bristol Board (with dimensions of 22.5" × 28.5") that can be cut into a smaller size if the participant wishes to do so. Choosing the size of their collage, interviewees will combine and display the "pictures, drawings, photographs, words, or objects" (Malone, 2011, p. 66) that come to mind when they think, hear, or speak about the selected concept. Magazines, newspapers, personal photos, are examples of material that may be cut up and used towards the collage.

This is a take home assignment of which the competitive dancers will have one week to complete. It is to be completed individually, without the influence of fellow dancers and/or potential study participants. If dancers are in need of any materials beyond those offered by the researcher or that they have at home, they are asked to inform Ms. Crestina Pasco-Pacheco who will accommodate any request.

The instructions for this task are minimal as the goal is to provide future interviewees with as much freedom in their expression as possible. The term mind map is merged with the term collage to eliminate preconceived expectations as to what the creation of either a "mind map" or a "collage" entail.

Appendix B

Interview One Protocol

Interview Protocol Project:

My Personal Paso Doble: An Autoethnographic Performance “Starring” the Hidden Curriculum of International Latin DanceSport

Date of the interview:

Time:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Preferred Pseudonym:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this autoethnography is to understand the subculture of competitive ballroom dancing from the perspectives of those involved in the International Latin DanceSport category, thus addressing the lack of participant voice in the current critical research on ballroom. This study will engage in a discussion of International DanceSport studios and competition floors as sites of education and, through an investigation of the behaviors and expectations particular to preparing for competition, implicit lessons, otherwise known as the hidden curriculum, will finally be identified. In exploring the implicit messages revealed through my research, this study will clarify the extent of which critical thinking is fostered and occurs within the educational environment of ballroom dance. Through such examination, I hope to develop the current understanding of the nature of learning and knowledge within the educational environment of competitive International ballroom dance floors.

Questions:

- 1) Looking at your collage mind-map, which of the three terms (ballroom dance, ballroom dancer, and ballroom dancing) did you select and why?
- 2) Let us talk about the images, words, phrases, colors etc. that we can see you have chosen to display on your collage.
- 3) If you were to create a title for this creative work, what would it be and why?
- 4) I would like to know what type of dance you compete in and what it means to you.

- 5) What have you learned in your time ballroom dancing? This can be related to steps, skills, characteristics you have learned about yourself as a person or a partner, or can be something you have learned about others, life, etc.
- 6) How would you say have you integrated these learning's? (In other words, I would like to discuss the way in which you learned the skills or traits that you have outlined as learning in the previous questions)
- 7) When did you decide to become a competitive DanceSport dancer and why?
- 8) Did what or how you learn change? Please Explain.
- 9) Can you describe to me the way in which you prepare for competition?
(From what you do in the weeks approaching, versus days approaching, and then while you are at competition.)
- 10) In regards to the behaviors that you have mentioned are involved in preparing for competition, what messages, if any, do you believe are promoted through these actions/ rituals/ behaviors?

Appendix C

Guiding Questions for Follow Up Interview

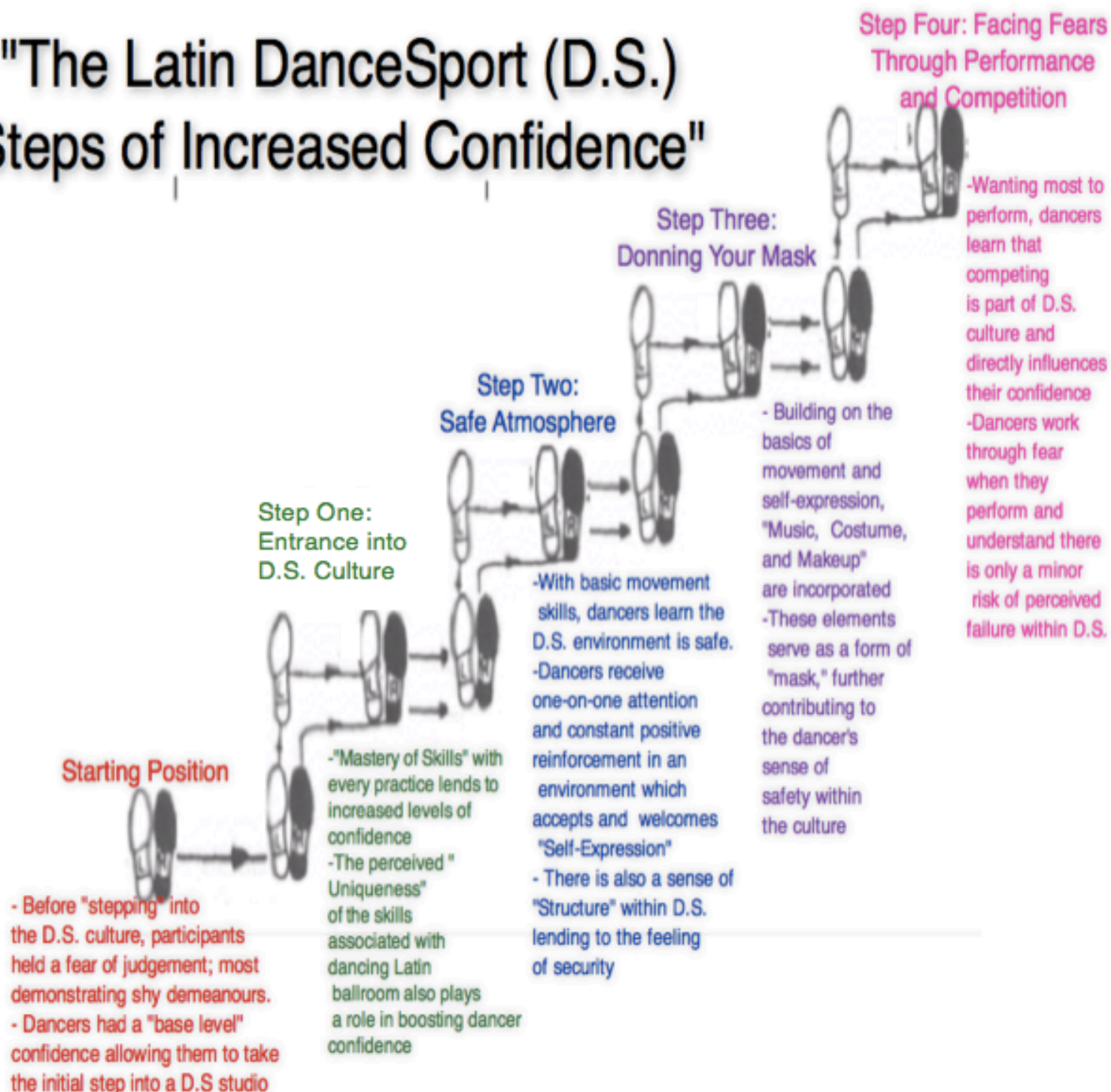
November 6, 2014 – Follow Up Interview Questions

In efforts to truly portray the views of my participants, other Latin DanceSport competitors, I wanted to follow up with a few questions. This way, I am not simply making personal conclusions based on the way I understand/understood the data. Instead, I have checked in with participants themselves to ensure my presentation is an appropriate reflection of dancer experiences.

- 1) From what I can see, the transcripts from our first interview clearly indicate that your experience in competitive Latin DanceSport has had a significant impact on your life. Would you agree or disagree with this statement and why.
- 2) How would you describe your life before engaging in Latin DanceSport?
- 3) How would you describe your life now, having been exposed to competitive Latin Ballroom?
- 4) What would you say has been the biggest impact that your involvement in Latin ballroom has had on you or your life?
- 5) If you acknowledge negative aspects to your participation in DanceSport, what are they?
- 6) If you are to describe the greatest benefit of your involvement in Latin Ballroom, what would it be?
- 7) If you were to expand on your previous response and indicate other benefits of DanceSport , what would they be?

Appendix D

"The Latin DanceSport (D.S.) Steps of Increased Confidence"



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Endnotes

ⁱ Scholars who *have* written on ballroom dance, or more specifically DanceSport, and criticize on an *academic* level the practices associated with the art/ sport/ passion without taking into account the *everyday* voices of those from within the dance community include Desmond (1993), Picart (2006), McMains (2006), and Bosse (2007).

ⁱⁱ See at <http://www.worlddancesport.org/> and <http://www.wdcdance.com/> for details.

ⁱⁱⁱ See <http://www.worlddancesport.org/WDSF/Membership>.

^{iv} See <http://advertising.bbcworldwide.com> for details.

^v Marion (2008) makes it clear that competitive ballroom can also be known as DanceSport (p. 21).

^{vi} The term “critical inclusive environment” used here relates to Ibrahim’s (2007) discussion on the importance of creating a critical inclusive curriculum within our education systems (p. 15).

^{vii} For information regarding how to assign and use a collage within qualitative research, see Malone (2011).