

▪ Presently, in Romania, the models of integration through the “inclusive school” compel the specialists in the field to carefully approach the problems of physical education within the mass schools where there are children with disabilities. Although in the specialty literature there are information about the adapted physical education, the inclusive education problem has been insufficiently researched. Inclusive physical education represents a new field to which theory and didactics may bring important contributions, in order to establish a unitary instruction methodology, beneficial to the disabled children’s development.

At the same time, this new development direction of our field requires an important effort from all the specialists, theorists and practitioners, whose training must be permanently refreshed with knowledge and competences allowing them to get involved into a modern and equitable instruction process.

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## Teenage use of public sport space in post-communist society

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the use of public sport space by teenagers as a function of social class in a post-communist society. Through an analysis of data collected through a questionnaire given to wrestlers and skateboarders in the city of Timișoara, Romania, we examine the significance of using public, covered gymnasiums for wrestling and public, uncovered skate parks for skateboarders. If the communist sport system was organized to promote performance in the classic and organized sports, the post-communist system permits the development of street sports and ideals of non-conformism. This comparative analysis between wrestlers and skaters reveals significant links between the social origin of the young sportsmen and their sports as an organized or no organized form. Our findings indicate that many wrestlers originate from a lower social class and use the sport as a way of winning respect in their peer group, while skaters are mainly from the middle class – an emerging social class in Romania – and skate as a way to express their non-conformism.

**Keywords:** social class, wrestling, skateboarding

### Rezumat

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Scopul acestei lucrări este de a examina modul în care spațiul public (destinat activităților sportive) este folosit în perioada post-comunistă, în funcție de clasa socială de către adolescenți. Datele au fost colectate prin intermediul chestionarului, care a fost distribuit la tinerii luptători și practicanți ai skateboardului din Timișoara pentru a examina semnificația folosirii sălii publice de sport - pentru luptători, și a skate-parkului public de către skateboarderi. Dacă sistemul sportiv comunist a fost organizat cu scopul de a promova performanța în cadrul sportului clasic și organizat, sistemul post-comunist permite dezvoltarea sporturilor așa-zise "de stradă" și idealurile non-conformismului. Această analiză comparativă între luptători și skateri relevă existența unor legături semnificative între originea socială a tinerilor sportivi și sportul practicat sub o formă organizată sau nu. Studiul nostru indică faptul că majoritatea luptătorilor care provin dintr-o clasă socială inferioară practică sportul în scopul câștigării respectului în grupul din care provin, în timp ce skaterii provin din clasa de mijloc a societății care este o clasă în formare în România, iar skateboardul este practicat ca o formă de manifestare a non-conformismului.

**Cuvinte cheie:** clasă socială, lupte, skateboarding

### Introduction

The communist sporting system had in its structure the "Sport for the masses" ideology (1), which was part of the State's efforts to promote of a fully holistic education available to every member of society (2). It was up to the State to fulfill its self-imposed goal of creating a physical culture that involved establishing programs to promote physical activity among the entire Romanian population (2). However, unlike the Soviet Union, where since 1966 a working week started Monday and ended Friday, Romania kept a six day working schedule, Monday through Saturday, which hindered the development of leisure sports and the practice of physical activity in general for the sake of enjoyment or amusement. During this period, the use of time and space were prohibitively controlled by the state even as they were promoting equal access to sports and gender and class equality in general. After 1989, however, as strictures on leisure activities, modes of dress, and work schedules were loosened individuals have had the chance to practice sports according to their own self-perceived needs and desires, rather than those dictated by the State.

Although new opportunities for identity formation and expression are opening due to transforming State ideologies in the post-communist era, in some ways sporting opportunities have also become more limited since with the end of communism also came severe cuts in state funding on which many sports clubs and institutions relied (2). Despite the drop in sports funding however, traditional sporting forms continue to develop alongside the development of the new sports forms. How are the contradictions and tensions between a society in the process of reconciling modernist and post-modernist tendencies manifested in the correlating physical practices that seek to either reinforce traditional cultural values or transcend tradition and move toward new expressions of post-communism? In this paper we address these tensions through an examination of urban sporting practices, namely wrestling and skateboarding, and the socio-cultural elements within each that we believe will continue to effectively divide the society on the lines of socio-economic standing.

### Wrestling and skateboarding – sporting culture and counter-culture

In this study we use Romanian sociologist Calinescu's (3) characterization of post-communist

Romanian culture as a pseudo-modern culture, in which traditional elements are combined with modern and post-modern elements. Romanian sporting culture may be defined as a pseudo-modern one due to the co-existence of various sports like wrestling (which corresponds to traditional values and ideals) and skateboarding (which corresponds to post-modern understandings and interpretations of the social world).

Skateboarding is a relatively new sporting form that was introduced to Romania after 1989. We view the development of skateboarding in Romania as being representative of the post-modern development of sporting culture in this region. Sports such as skateboarding are actively consumed by youth, who in their consumption of imported Western products and practices embody the struggles faced by the nation in general of negotiating the legacies of communism experienced by their parents' generation and the promises for their generation of individual freedom and choice in the post-communist era of transition.

In contradistinction to skateboarding, historically, wrestling has been a popular Romanian sporting tradition. The modern form of wrestling appeared in 1930, when the Wrestling Romanian Federation was founded. Since then, the tradition of this sport has continued and sporting clubs continue to actively select young athletes to participate in their clubs. As a traditional sporting form it continues to teach, reinforce and celebrate traditional values and ideals. Post-communist transformations are thus at once preserving traditional outposts of sporting practices and culture while also opening new spaces for street sports, such as skateboarding, where individual expression, non-conformity, and a counter-culture movement are developing, all of which prior to the collapse of communism in 1989 would have been nearly impossible.

An examination of wrestling and skateboarding within the current post-communist moment demonstrates the extent to which youth culture is simultaneously moving along two lines of development, communist traditions and post-communist transformations (4). As anthropologist Denise Roman (4) states, "Best reflecting the sensibility of post communist transformation, youth is the most propitious to be affected by the struggle between traditional nationalist versus Westernizing liberal-democratic agendas" (3).

### **Methodology**

The data have been gathered by means of questionnaires completed by fifty-six wrestlers (boys age 10-18) from the Scholastic Sporting Club no 1 from Timisoara (CSS 1 Timisoara) and the Municipal Sporting Club (CSM Timisoara), where the athletes practice both free-style and Greco-Roman wrestling, and sixty-four skaters from Skate Park located in Timisoara's Central Park. An interpretive analysis of the responses was conducted to provide information pertaining to the identity of the sportsmen, their socio-economic backgrounds, and their reasons for choosing one of the two types of sporting activity. From an analysis of the responses to the close-ended questions, we established a typology of sportsmen in socio-economic terms. Analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions allowed us to better understand the factors influencing the motivation for choosing to practice wrestling or skateboarding. The questionnaire used in this research is the next one:

#### **Questionnaire for wrestlers/skateboarders**

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you participated in this sport?
3. Who convinced you to do this sport?  
 parents     friends     alone     coach
4. Did you play another sport before?     No     Yes

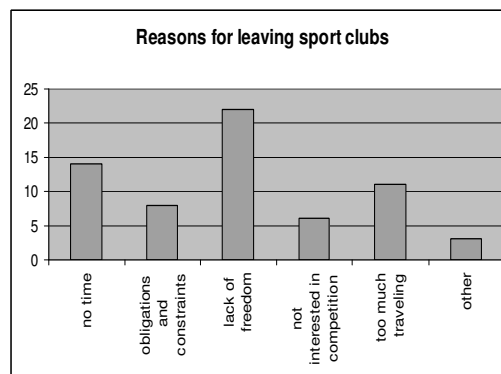
- Which one?
5. Are you /are you not registered in a sports club?
  6. How many times do you train weekly?
  7. What do you like best about this sport?
  8. Do your parents come to the training sessions and competitions?
    - no     sometimes     most of the time
  9. What are your plans for the future?
  10. How many people live in your house?
  11. How many rooms does your apartment have?
  12. Who do you live with?
    - mother(step)     father(step)     brothers
    - sisters     others
  13. What is their job?
    - mother.....     father.....     others .....

**Findings**

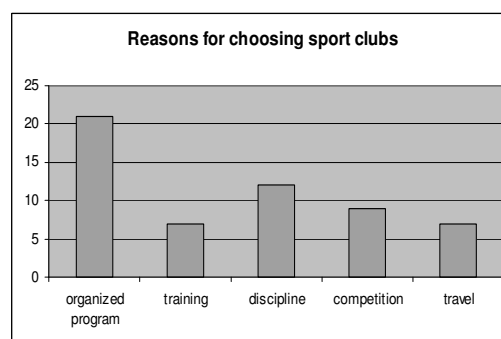
**a. Reasons for leaving and choosing sport clubs**

The reasons for choosing to practice a sporting discipline in an organized form or not (question no 6) underlines the opposition between the search for freedom from social limitations of the young skaters and the search for discipline through organized sports expressed by the wrestlers. In some cases, the opportunities offered by sports institutions – rising in the competitive ranks, participating in regulated contests, and traveling to other cities, for example – are what attract participants. Wrestlers seek competition and fighting while for skaters, competition is not so important.

The coach represents the tutelary authority, the one who leads the sporting activity; he remains the symbol and role model within the club. With his help high performance levels are more readily reached. Unlike in wrestling, skateboarding is practiced without a coach, promoting feelings of escaping rules and searching for freedom.



**Figure 1.** Reasons for leaving sport clubs



**Figure 2.** Reasons for choosing sport clubs

**b. Main reason for which they practice skateboard/wrestling**

The main reason (question no 8) wrestlers practice wrestling is competition and striving to defeat adversaries. They are thus able to find a place in the community by earning respect through their wrestling achievements. Through the practice of their sport, skaters are able to find a sense of freedom. Skaters also use their sport as a form of physical exercise. Skate is associated with pursuing improvement of the known elements, learning new elements and inserting one’s own interpretation of the body and uses of the body.

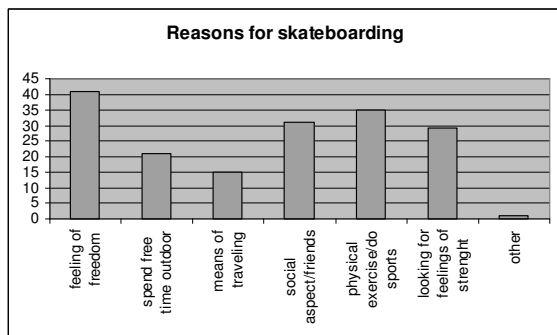


Figure 3. Reasons for skateboarding

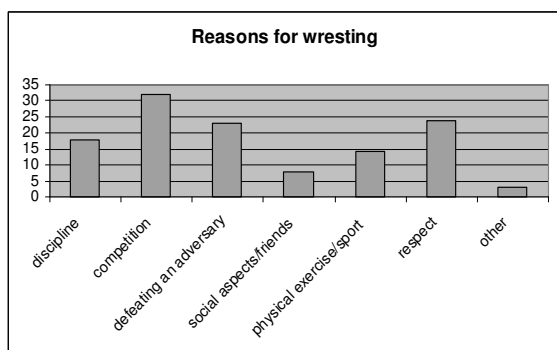


Figure 4. Reasons for wrestling

Whereas in wrestling a technical procedure has a certain rigorous execution technique, in skateboarding the technical requirements are more relaxed in that there are no official judges. Skaters and wrestlers alike see in sporting practice a way to make friends and to belong to a group. The difference between the two however lies in their views of the sport: for wrestlers, discipline and performance in competition is highly valued, while for skaters their outdoor practice is done less so for competition and more so for the pleasure and enjoyment of their sport. This is perhaps emphasized in the difference in training frequency (question no 7) of each group.

**c. Weekly training frequency**

In wrestling, where performance is pursued, they had six two-hour trainings a week at the level of the sporting club (as compared to the national team that

trains six hours a day, six times a week). In skateboarding, the average is three times a week. Even though there are some skaters who reported coming five times a week at times, usually this time was more dedicated to spend free time with the friends, rather than to specifically work on their skating skills and technique.

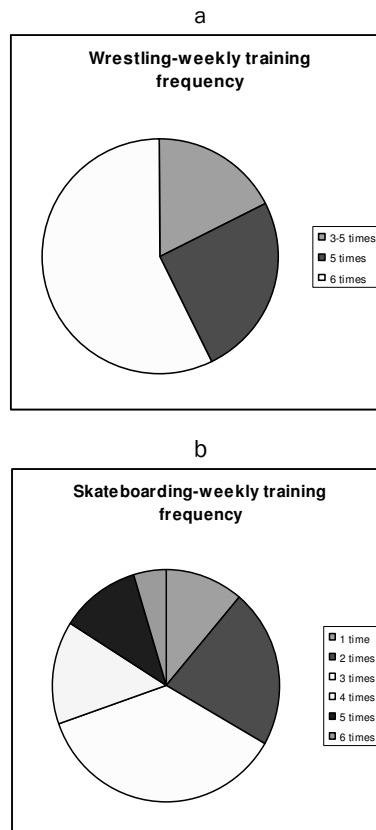


Figure 5 (a, b). Wrestling and skateboarding—weekly training frequency

**d. Classification of the trades of the fathers of skateboarders/wrestlers**

For the wrestlers, most of their fathers are blue collar workers (who have various trades: locksmith, mechanic, driver etc.) and for skaters, the majority of their fathers are in trades requiring a high level of education (engineer, physician, teacher).

In wrestling and skating, there are fathers who run or own a small business. In the case of the wrestlers,

these fathers namely develop small-scale personal and commercial businesses.

The skaters' fathers who were business owners generally had larger, more profitable businesses than those of the wrestlers. In addition, the skaters have far fewer fathers in the blue collar workforce than the wrestlers' fathers and there were no unemployed fathers for the skaters. In both cases, there exist homes without a father.

A small number of fathers of wrestlers have "left for work abroad," whereas this did not exist in the case of the skaters. Usually fathers will go to work abroad when they cannot find a job in Romania that will sufficiently support their family.

In general, the fathers of the skaters had a higher social status as exemplified by their more prestigious jobs.

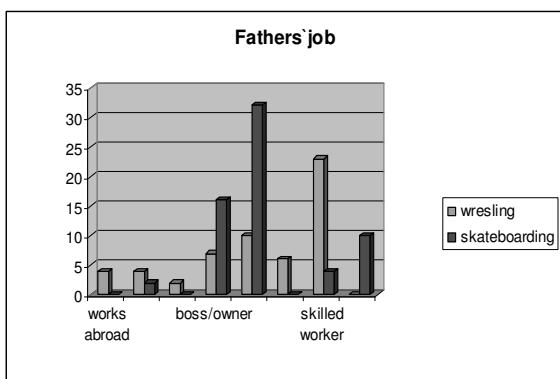


Figure 6. Fathers` job

**e. Classification of the trades of the mothers of skateboarders / wrestlers**

In the case of the wrestlers, some of the mothers are unemployed while others have gone abroad to work, away from the house and children. There were no unemployed or working abroad mothers among the skaters. Another difference between the two groups of mothers is that in the skaters' case, some of the mothers have and manage their own business, either together with their husband or separately;

there were no business owners or bosses represented by the wrestlers' mothers.

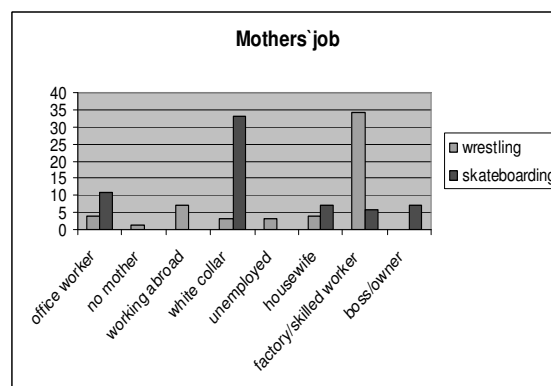


Figure 7. Mothers` job

**Conclusions**

**Romanian society - a pseudo-modern society**

The efforts of the totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to combine modernity and modernization with a command economy and anti-democracy have failed and what has developed from the former communist regime in Romania is a "pseudo-modern" state, a heterogeneous society (5), in which modern elements are combined with traditional and postmodern ones. The tensions produced within this pseudo-modern society are manifest in the field of sport which is evident in the visibility of efforts to preserve some traditional and modern sports while also promoting new sports associated with movements of youth counter-culture. In post-communism, young people searching for identity choose wrestling or skateboarding according to their social status, where Bourdieu would argue characteristics of that social class are learned. In our study we found that wrestlers came from lower class social environments, which are still dominated by traditional cultures, preferring wrestling because it is an environment specific to their physical and social development that incorporates learned family values. Skateboarders however represented the

middle and upper classes who are appropriating newly created post-socialist spaces to openly construct subversive and counter-cultural identities. We conclude that this study of wrestlers and skaters, of traditional and post-modern elements, demonstrates the “pseudo modern”, heterogynous nature of Romania society that currently is having to reconcile desires to retain and preserve traditional values with those that lean toward moving beyond what they perceive as restrictive social boundaries. Adding a further layer of complexity is the ways in which allocation of resources and the manifestation of socio-cultural values are woven into factors affecting the choice of sporting practices. The state has thus allowed “sport for the masses” to transform into “specific sports for particular masses”, which are symbolically practiced either in enclosed and covered (wrestling room) spaces, reinforcing ideas of

limits, and social norms, or in open-air spaces, (skate parks), reinforcing ideas of nonconformist and newfound freedoms of expression, the division between the two demonstrating a need to further explore truly opening spaces of sports for all the masses in these times of transformation in Romania.

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