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'I am roller derby' : a case study of layered impression management

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'I AM ROLLER DERBY:' A CASE STUDY OF LAYERED IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

by

Veronica René Ferreira

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Sociology in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa**

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Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor Sarah K. Harkness

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
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To my life partner, Brian, for being my sidekick on this adventure. To my children for all of the long days, and afternoons in my office. To ICB for being my inspiration. I love you all.

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ABSTRACT

I use a mixed methods, qualitative approach to explore whether individuals become so invested in an organization that they engage in impression management to influence others' perceptions of the organization. Additionally, I aim to reveal impression management strategies in an environment that is explicitly gendered in a transformative manner. I use roller derby as a case study because it is a rare example of a single-sex dominated organization that is voluntary and explicitly aims to be transformational of the current gender system.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

I explore how we can become invested in the public image of an organization. When we do, we choose behaviors in an attempt to shape the way others see the organization. We do this for our own personal image, as well. We have a sense of who we are, and we want others to see us that way, so we act to shape others' images of us.

I also explore *how* we manage others' impressions of us and our organizations. We use specific, predictable strategies to change the way others see us. I use roller derby as a case study for this exploration. It is an ideal environment to see these processes in action because it is a volunteer organization in which individuals actively seek to create a transformative environment for women.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It transcends everything - beliefs, race, creed,
gender. We've all got this thing that we love, and
deep down we all know it's kind of nuts, but...
- Shreddy Roosevelt

As you enter the venue, the first thing you notice is how *busy* the room is. Dozens of volunteers are scurrying in all directions, making last minute adjustments or preparations for the event. Chatter is incessant, creating an ongoing hum of voices. A dozen or more skaters are warming up on the track - despite the noise, the whir of wheels on polished concrete or wood is unmistakable. Those close enough to the track can feel the wind - and smell the sweat - the skaters generate as they whiz by. Whether this particular game is in an old, 1970s-era skate rink, a convention center conference room, or, for the lucky leagues that generate enough sponsorship revenue, a larger event venue, the constant motion and sound evokes a physical reaction - a sort of buzzed excitement. The spectators find themselves anxiously anticipating the culmination of the buzz.

Roller derby has undergone myriad transformations in its history. It began as a spontaneous idea from entertainment promoter Leo Seltzer, who had been tasked with filling a coliseum in Chicago (Deford 1971). In this original incarnation of roller derby, pairs of skaters, one man and one woman each, came from all over the country to set up a heavy wooden track and skate 3,000 miles over the course of several days (Rollerskatingmuseum.com). It was wildly popular, filling stadiums like Madison Square Garden to capacity, until World War II depleted the sport of its athletes (Deford 1971).

In the 1950s, roller derby reemerged, again as a coed sport, thanks to the invention of the television. It was inexpensive, with the traveling and set up performed by the skaters themselves, and heavily promoted by Seltzer and his son Jerry (rollerderbyhalloffame.com). It was at this time that roller derby was exported to Europe. Roller derby became very popular thanks to Jerry Seltzer (Deford 1971), until skaters began to weary of overwork and constant travel, and operational costs increased. Then the Seltzer family sold the roller derby, and a new era of commercialization began (rollerderbyhalloffame.com).

In the 1970s and 1980s, roller derby evolved as a spectacular, televised soap opera of sorts, with outlandish story lines, stereotypically attractive women, and staged stunts (rollerderbyhalloffame.com). Still gender inclusive, roller derby in this area was not only popular and well-known, it was more spectacle than sport. This public image of roller derby became the dominant perception of roller derby to most non-participants, which has implications for the next and current incarnation of roller derby.

In the early 2000s, a group of women in Austin, Texas, reimagined roller derby as a do-it-yourself, feminist sport exclusively for women (wftda.org). Note that this is a departure from previous incarnations of the sport, which were all mixed-gender. This created complications for the sport when, in 2006, the first men's teams were created (MRDA.com) and in recent years, where the role of intersex and transgender skaters has been debated within the roller derby community.

I was involved with roller derby prior to beginning this project. I have been both volunteer and spectator for several Midwestern leagues since 2010. I was attracted to roller derby, like many of the participants I interviewed, because of its promise of transformation and empowerment. This is a rare example of a sport for which the

female variant of the game is the default, with men's or gender-inclusive leagues as the lesser variants. The sport is lauded for its proclaimed commitment to showing spectators that women can be just as strong, just as skilled, as men, and that women can be powerful without sacrificing sexuality, friendship, or familial relationships.

My involvement revealed a more complicated story than the feminist fairytale that is promoted by skaters. Within the roller derby community, there is a tension between whether it is truly empowering to women, given the contentious position of transwomen within the community, and given the fact that most of the high-ranking officials are men. Further, women within the sport often find themselves trying to navigate the complicated tension between wanting to feel and be empowered and the reality of accountability to broader cultural gender expectations.

This helps make this setting ideal for the present project. I am interested in exploring the ways in which we manage others' impressions of us, and how we may do the same with organizations of which we are members. In particular, I am interested in how we manage gendered organizations, and how members of such organizations that aim to transform the status quo manage that work. As a confederation of explicitly gendered, volunteer-run leagues, roller derby brings these processes into sharp relief. This allows me to analyze complex, often hidden, impression management strategies because here they are not as subtle as they may be in other settings. These processes are likely not unique to roller derby, but the explicit nature of the leagues' organizations within roller derby makes these processes easier to detect. Ultimately, what I discover is that, even in a setting where the goal is explicitly gender-transformative, the lack of a ready cultural "toolkit" for maintaining that transformational mission is complicated by the readily-available cultural symbols of the status quo.

Inside Roller Derby

Regardless of the venue type, the basic setup of roller derby is the same. The track is the centerpiece of the room; not only is it the largest element, it is the focal point of the event. A 10-foot band of space surrounds the track - brave adults sit in this section, dubbed, “suicide seating” because of the risk of unwittingly becoming part of the action. Announcers often warn the suicide seating fans to be aware that “It’s not uncommon to wind up with a skater in your lap” (although it is actually rather rare). On the outskirts of the room are merchandise tables, where you can purchase buttons, stickers, or t-shirts to support the teams at the event. Unlike other sports, it is very common for roller derby fans and participants to collect merchandise from as many teams as they can - a physical representation of all of the teams one has played with or watched.

A roller derby game is played with two teams racing counter-clockwise around 88 feet of flat track to score the most points in two 30-minute periods. Game play is divided into jams. Each team sends five players onto the track for each jam: three blockers, one pivot, and a jammer. The “blocker” position is fairly self-explanatory; their job is to prevent the opposing team’s jammer from passing them. The *pivot* is a blocker who guides blocking strategy on the track – much like a coach, they read the other team’s behavior and select appropriate game strategy. The *jammer* is the point scorer. All players simultaneously engage in offensive and defensive play at all times. For example, a given jammer may often hit the opposing jammer in an attempt to knock her out of bounds and thus gain an advantage in getting through the pack. Similarly, a blocker’s job is to assist his/her jammer in getting through the pack while also preventing the other jammer’s safe passage.

In the thirty seconds prior to a jam, each team sends their five players out onto the track. The jammers line up on the jammer line, a solid line that crosses the track between the first and fourth turns. The blockers and the pivot line up, according to their strategy, somewhere between the pivot line (positioned ten feet in front of the jammer line) and the jammer line. A non-skating official (NSO) blows a whistle to start the jam. All blockers skate counter-clockwise in a pack. Legal blocking may only take place within a pack. Each jammer tries to work her way through the pack before the other, thus earning “lead jammer” status. A lead jammer is the only player on the track that is allowed to call off a jam early. If the lead jammer does not call off the jam (or there is no lead jammer), the jam lasts two full minutes.

Roller derby is a full-contact sport. Players are penalized for hitting other skaters with their hands, elbows, forearms, feet, or head. Shoulder blocks, “hip checks,” and “booty blocks” are common, and can be forceful enough to knock the recipient several feet. This risk is heightened when speed is taken into account. Skaters are required to be able to skate 27 laps in five minutes, and to go from a stand-still to a complete lap in 13 seconds. Maintaining high speeds as a pack is one strategy teams can use to try to prevent the opposing jammer from scoring. Points are scored each time a jammer passes an opponent’s hips (WFTDA.com).

Participating in Roller Derby

There are a number of ways to participate in roller derby. The most obvious is to skate. Each team will consist of up to 14 skaters, and will have up to two bench coaches. Ideally, there will also be 7 referees and 11-13 NSOs that work together to perform tasks that manage and officiate game play (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of officiating positions). Two or more individuals serve as medical support staff - unpaid

volunteers that are on hand to perform concussion checks, offer ice packs, and assess whether more extensive emergency medical intervention is necessary. There are also announcers, ticket sellers, security guards, and merchandise hawkers among the unpaid volunteers. Volunteers are usually either injured or unrostered skaters or relatives or close friends of skaters.

A key to keep in mind here is that no one is paid in roller derby. There are some cases in which teams might offer a small incentive to referees for participation, but in most cases, there is no compensation for anyone who participates in roller derby. In fact, most participants *pay* to be involved. Dues tend to cost \$20 or more per month, anyone on skates has to purchase additional insurance at a cost of \$75 per year, and gear purchases for skating participants can run from \$300 into thousands of dollars. Additionally, there are often significant time investments. For participants who attend practices, this is a time investment of 3-20 hours per week or more. Volunteering for a game can amount to an entire day's commitment. The voluntary nature of participation is a key interest of mine in selecting roller derby as a topic of investigation.

Roller Derby as Case Study

I explore roller derby in several settings throughout the Midwestern United States in order to answer multiple research questions. Social scientists have well-established that one of the factors that motivate behavior is a desire, conscious or not, to be seen a certain way (Burke and Stets 2009; Stryker 1980; Tajfel and Turner 1979). For example, if I see myself as an honest person, and this belief is important to my sense of who I am, I would be motivated to act in ways that convince others to see me as honest, too. There are many ways that we manage the impressions from others about how we are enacting our identities. This project explores the strategies that roller derby

participants use to manage impressions, particularly those centered around their role as roller derby participant.

I speculate that this concept can be extended to include, under certain conditions, a motivation to convince others to see a group or organization the way we do. I suggest we can become so invested in the way and organization is seen by others that we modify our own behavior in order to induce others to see such an organization in a specific way. I focus on roller derby leagues to explore whether this process seems to be happening. Its voluntary nature, along with significant economic and time expenses on the part of the participant, renders roller derby an ideal site for exploring this possibility.

Further, I am interested in strategies we use to convey self- and organization-meanings. While there are myriad strategies one can utilize to manage reflected appraisals, I focus here on the major strategies that emerged from my data. For managing impressions of individuals, I observe gender performance, stigma management, and emotion work as common strategies used to that purpose. For organizations, gender performance, stigma management, and authentication are the primary strategies observed. Again, I feel roller derby serves as an ideal site for study because gender is forefront among the aims of many within the roller derby community, with dueling claims that “all types” are welcome in derby and a tacit (at least) prescription for the “appropriate” femininity and masculinity within a roller derby setting. This brings each of these strategies into sharp relief, as they are interconnected (e.g., there are emotion norms describing the “appropriate” way of responding to social stimuli based on the gender of the actor). As Schilt (2011) notes in her study of workers who transitioned to another gender in the workplace, the use of a setting wherein the phenomenon of interest are expected to be highly visible is a useful strategy for studying

processes that are perhaps more invisible, more subtle, in ordinary settings. She notes that these process will still occur in a wide array of social situations, albeit more subtly.

Project Outline

The present examination is organized by the strategies discussed. Chapter 2 outlines the grounded theory approach, and discusses the theoretical foundations that drive my research questions and interpretations of data. In Chapter 3, I detail my methodological approach, and offer descriptions of the populations under analysis. 2) derby names seem to be a key component of each of strategies for shaping others' perceptions. I offer a typology of derby names that illustrates the kind of identity work one is doing by taking on a unique moniker for roller derby.

The next chapter is dedicated to the strategies for individual-level impression management: doing gender, stigma management, and emotion work. In each section of this chapter, I explore how these strategies are visible to observers, and how they help the actor attend to his/her/their identity commitments in sometimes complicated, contradictory ways. Chapter 6 focuses on the strategies use to manage organizational impressions: doing gender, stigma management, and authentication. Finally, I offer a conclusion that ties together the common themes and re-addresses the research questions mentioned above.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

On the most basic level, shared understandings of the world around us make social interaction possible (Mead 1934). While there is variation across individuals as to specific interpretations of social objects, generally, we have common understandings that ease or even enable social interaction. This extends to perceptions of others and how we perceive others see us, termed a reflected appraisal (Cooley 1902, Mead 1934). This concept is central to the present work, wherein I explore how we influence reflected appraisals. First, I discuss the major ways identity has been conceptualized in extant literature in order to situate this project theoretically. Next, I discuss the theoretical and empirical foundations associated with the strategies I observe in this project for managing reflected appraisals. Through my data, I discover three major strategies for influencing reflected appraisals of all types of identities: doing gender, stigma management, and emotion management. Finally, I explore the possibility that we might also attempt to influence others' perceptions of certain organizations. By drawing on the limited literature on managing organizational identity, I problematize the original models of reflected appraisal management by adding a new layer: management of perceptions of an organization.

Identity

There are multiple approaches to the study of identity in the social sciences. As Hogg et al (1995) and Stryker and Burke (2000) note, these approaches all draw on the work of Mead, and aim to refine and operationalize his concepts on how self and society are mutually constitutive. The basic premise of all of these approaches is that we are dynamic, complex, multi-faceted selves that shape and are shaped by the social

networks in which we are embedded. A basic assumption is that we do not have a single identity, but rather multiple identities relating to various aspects of our person and of the groups with which we identify. This draws on the famous James (1890) assertion that we have as many selves as unique situations in which we interact.

Types of Identities

Turner (1978) conceptualizes *identity* as a merger between social role and self, or the point at which we come to see a given social role as descriptive of ourselves.

According to Turner (1978, 1990) a *social role* is a pattern of expectations for behavior and demeanor, a strategy guide of sorts for a socially-identified set of recurring social situations. Examples of social roles include *mother*, *student*, or *congregant*. For example, a woman may come to understand herself in terms of the role “mother” and its associated characteristics. These characteristics are culturally-specific, and can therefore vary regionally and temporally (James 1890). In Turner’s view, our own self-understandings are rooted in our cultural knowledge of the social roles that connect us and the associated culturally-informed behavioral expectations.

Social roles are not the only basis for identity that identity researchers have theorized. Burke and Stets (2009) argue that there are three bases for identity: roles, individual self-concepts, and social categories. The first is as described above. In roller derby, there are clearly-delineated roles: skater, skating official, non-skating official. The second, individual self-concepts is defined by Burke and Stets as “meanings that define a person as a unique individual.” Examples of personal identities are being emotional or dominant. For example, Stets (1995) analyzes what she refers to as the “mastery identity,” defined as the individual’s perception of his/her/their control over the world. Personal identities are similar to personality traits in terms of content.

Finally, Burke and Stets (2009) discuss social categories as a basis for identity. Examples of this include being a part of a Parent-Teacher Association, a member of the American Sociological Society, a political conservative, or a member of an online group. According to Burke and Stets (2009) we can identify with any socially-constructed group, so long as membership in said group gives the individual a sense of “we-ness.”

Some root identity in our membership in certain groups (Hogg et al 1995, Hogg and Ridgeway 2003, Burke and Stets 2009, Tajfel and Turner 1979). Hogg (1995) notes that at the core of social identity theory is the presupposition that we possess a *social identity*, an awareness that we belong to certain social groups and that emotional significance accompanies this membership. This view holds that social interaction is driven by a desire to improve one’s own status and prestige relative to others by promoting one’s group. For example, if I identify as a woman, I am motivated to enhance the prestige of the category *women* because if women are seen positively, I will be, too. Note that this is different from Burke and Stets (2009) conceptualization of identity confirmation, in which we aim to convince others to see us as we see ourselves, regardless of how positive or negative that identity is.

The assumption here is that “group evaluation is self-evaluation” (Hogg et al 2004, p. 256). Additionally, this view holds that social interaction is a way of reducing uncertainty (Hogg et al 2004). In order to make sense of our social world, we want to make distinctions, categorizing social objects (including people) in ways that create order and reliability. This often connects groups and group members to common cultural understandings, or stereotypes (Hogg et al 2004), of our social identities because those understandings are readily available and often sharply contrast one group from another and one person from the next.

Tajfel's (1970) classic experiment on this involved sorting boys into groups after a visual judgment exercise. In one condition, the boys are told that there are no real group differences in accuracy, whereas in the other, they are told that some groups are consistently more accurate than others. Then, they are asked to remain for a second, unrelated study that is actually phase two of the experiment. They were informed that they were being grouped on the basis of their accuracy in estimating the number of dots on a screen in phase one, but were actually randomly sorted into groups. Finally, they were asked to award money to individuals who were only identified as belonging to one's own group or the other group. Consistently, the boys award higher amounts to one's own group members over the other group's members. The conclusion is clear: once we identify with an *in-group*, we seek to enhance others' view of that group as a means of self-enhancement (Hogg 2016).

At the same time, we begin to see out-group members in terms of stereotypical characteristics, as an undifferentiated unit, rather than a collective of individuals (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This is important to our understanding of roller derby because participants are united in terms of their membership in a given league. As I will demonstrate, they come to see themselves as representatives of the league's identity, defining the league in terms of what "we" are. Additionally, we see that they note diversity of group members, but only for their own leagues - other leagues are described in monolithic terms.

It is important to note that the various identities a person holds do not equally influence situations. Each approach to the study of identity describes a hierarchy of identities that a given individual carries into social situations. Various theories of identity differ in their conceptualizations of how identities are ranked. McCall &

Simmons (1966, 1978) describe a pair of hierarchies: the prominence and salience hierarchies. The *prominence hierarchy* is based on the support we receive from others for performing a certain identity, the rewards associated with performing a certain identity, and our affective commitment towards a given identity. The more support and reward associated with an identity, along with how affectively attached we are to an identity, the higher that identity would be in our prominence hierarchy. This ranking influences our *salience hierarchy*, which is based on the individual's preferences for enacting certain identities over others in social situations (McCall and Simmons 1978). In contrast, Strykerian identity theory (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000; Burke and Stets 2009) conceptualize *salience* as the likelihood that a given identity will be called forth in interaction. The greater the salience, the higher that identity is placed in the hierarchy.

Adjudicating between these approaches is beyond the scope of this analysis. *How* identities are ranked is less important to the present examination than the impact of that ranking on the situation. According to all variants of identity theory, the identity that is most salient in that situation is the one most likely to be enacted, and which identity “prevails” will affect the remainder of the interaction. For example, consider a boss demanding that a female employee work late. The female employee considers her daughter's piano recital that evening. Whether the worker identity or the mother identity prevails will likely alter the way that situation plays out, regardless of *how* the ranking of identities was initially formed.

I suggest that the way a social identity like *gender* would influence situational behavior will differ from a role identity like *student*. This is because categories like the former are often immutable in the situation, which seems to suggest different processes

will be at work for identities based on social categories than on a social role. For example, in most situations, I can suppress or ignore my identity as *student*, but it would be considerably more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to do the same with my association with the category *woman*.

Further, research suggests that those in a high-status category rarely have to consider the image of their group, so the salience of categories is also dependent upon which category one occupies (McIntosh 1988; Ridgeway 2011). This is because the high-status category tends to serve as the default, or reference category (Ridgeway 2011; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). In other words, white male becomes the “standard” against which all others are compared. Indeed, as suggested in McIntosh’s (1988, 1996, 2012) work on privilege, and Eagly and Kite’s (1987) work on nationality stereotypes, majority category membership is largely invisible, a default status. We would expect that the identity associated with a high-status category will be lower in the salience hierarchy because of its lower visibility.

Here, the idea is that masculinity, for example, is less likely than femininity to be impactful on our evaluations of someone as *voter*, for example, because for gender neutral and majority roles the default *is* the majority category. In a study examining individuals’ perceptions of the causes of the gender gap in voting patterns in the 1988 presidential election, Miller et al (1991) found that individuals were more likely to attribute the gap to *women’s* “deviant” voting behavior. Further, Eagly and Kite (1987) found that stereotypes about various nationalities tended to align with stereotypes of men rather than with those of women. The authors suggest that men (of the dominant racial category) are seen as the prototypical members of a category. Thus, to return to the example from Miller et al (1991), *voter* is assumed to be a (white) male, and female

voters are “different than” and, in Miller’s case, therefore deviant. This is confirmed by Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz (2013), who note that there are freedoms and constraints associated with being unprototypical in terms of various statuses. Since stereotypes about men and women tend to apply to *white* men and women, there are unique constraints and freedoms experienced by non-whites. For example, as Chen (1999) notes, Asian American men are viewed as more feminine than white men, and Browne and Kennelly (1999) find that black women are viewed as stronger and more independent than white women. It is for this reason that I expect status-differentiated categories like race and gender to function differently in interaction than social roles like occupational categories or organizational membership.

To sum, as a way of making sense of the world around us and our place in it, we categorize ourselves and others. The complexity of social life leaves us with multiple identities that are more or less salient in various social situations. Consideration of how we are perceived by others is important for shaping interaction, and we are motivated to improve others’ evaluations of us. Below I suggest strategies for accomplishing this in interaction.

Strategies for Self-Image Promotion/Maintenance

There are a variety of strategies people use to manage self-evaluations. I focus on the primary strategies I see at work in this project: doing gender, stigma management, and emotion management. These strategies emerge here as a way of attempting to transform the way outsiders see roller derby, and of challenging common cultural understandings of gender. Understanding how we attempt to manage self-evaluations is important for revealing how social change can be achieved. The strategies presented here are not an exhaustive list of ways of managing self-evaluations. Instead, the

strategies I discuss are informed by my data. They represent the ways that my research subjects utilized, in this setting, to manage reflected appraisals.

Doing Gender

Gender is one of the three primary systems of inequality at work in contemporary US society (Ridgeway 2009). Gender sociologists today primarily look at gender as a performance, as something we do. West and Zimmerman's (1987) piece outlined a perspective on gender that transformed the entire discipline. They argue that individuals seek to align their behavior with the way they believe others perceive them (West & Fenstermaker (1995). For example, if a woman believes she is going to be judged on how "ladylike" she behaves, she is likely to align her behavior with that expectation of stereotypical feminine behavior. When she does this and others see her in this fashion, her performance of gender becomes an accomplishment. These gender performances must be achieved over and over on a daily basis. It is also situational, as it depends on those with whom one is interacting (West & Fenstermaker 1995; West & Zimmerman 1987). The "doing gender" approach treats gender as a "master status," (Ridgeway 2009; West & Fenstermaker 1995; West & Zimmerman 1987), influencing other roles in a multitude of situations. For example, the word "nurse" has a certain cultural image attached – in the contemporary U.S., the word probably evokes the image behaviors like nurturing, taking temperatures, and serving as a mediator between doctor and patient. The image may be different if we add the modifier "male." Perhaps a male nurse is seen as less nurturing than a female nurse. The idea is that maleness is not a separate identity or role, but rather the man's gender impacts the kind of nurse he "should" be.

This view holds, first and foremost, that sex and gender are distinct. Doing gender is a theoretical framework that defines gender as something we “do,” rather than as something we “are” (West and Zimmerman 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987) describe sex/gender as a tripartite system, consisting of three distinct, but interrelated, concepts: sex, sex category, and gender. Sex is presumed to be biologically rooted (particularly in reproductive functions), and, in the contemporary US, is typically limited to two categories, male and female. We have a vested interest, according to this approach, in knowing others’ sex. It is important to know with whom we can/should mate, for example. However, we can rarely, if ever know someone’s sex. Measuring sex is complicated: do we measure genitalia, chromosomes, or some combination of the two? Hormones maybe? Typically, we cannot see most (or all) of these traits, and as Fausto-Sterling (2000) notes, even when we can see these traits (as scientists have the potential to), measuring sex is far more complicated, and many individuals do not fit into the binary (male/female) on which our culture relies. Furthermore, measuring sex is a fairly inconvenient practice for everyday interaction.

To resolve this issue, we utilize sex categories. A *sex category* is a label applied based on appearance and behavioral cues that are presumed to stand as a proxy for sex. For example, if we see an individual on the bus wearing a skirt, high-heels, and makeup, we would likely sex categorize that individual as female. We continually sex categorize people, often before we are consciously aware that we are doing so (Ridgeway 2011; West and Zimmerman 1987).

We “do gender” in order to reproduce distinctions between men and women, and to convey to others how we wish to be sex categorized. Gender is therefore the set of practices that creates/maintains gender difference. Once we are sex categorized, we are

held accountable for our behavior in light of that sex category. For example, consider the individual we sex categorized as female above. If we were to notice that her legs were not shaved, we would react to this in light of her sex category. Our cultural expectation currently is for women to have smooth, shaved legs. Other bus patrons may sanction her, via a dirty look, or staring, or even by expressing offense at her appearance, for her supposed gender deviance. Note that in this approach, individuals are not “required” to conform to cultural expectations. The strength of this approach is that it explains consistency of trends without precluding the possibility of variation, change, or resistance.

This interactional approach has been used to explain how men and women behave as wait staff (Hall 1993), how husbands and wives divide household labor (Brines 1994), and how transmen “pass” in the workplace (Schilt and Westbrook 2009). Scholars have also explored how individuals do gender in predominantly single-sex environments. For example, Gorga (2017) explores how women actively reconstruct a hierarchical gender system in a women’s prison, noting that women who perform masculinity gain status as “studs.” Armstrong et al (2014) notes that there is a prescribed set of gender expectations in sororities, with negative sanctions for those who fail to perform the “appropriate” femininity. Goldberg (2013) revealed how same-sex couples are influenced by heteronormative expectations regarding the division of household labor. She noted that in some cases, same-sex couples create a normative division of labor in which the more feminine partner invests in domestic labor, while the more masculine partner invests in paid labor.

Gender scholars describe gender as a “background identity” (Ridgeway 2007), in that it is continually operating to modify other identities, and it operates as “a social

standard to which you can always be held accountable” (Ridgeway 2007, p. 69).

However, the degree to which gender is salient in a given situation depends on the context of the situation, including the gender composition of group members and the gender of the tasks being performed in that setting (Deaux and Major 1987; Ridgeway 1997, 2007). *Saliency* in this case refers to the extent to which gender stereotypes are relevant to a situation. For example, when a mixed-gender group faces a task like moving boxes, for example, gender becomes highly salient because 1) gender differences draw our attention and are used as an heuristic that “informs” us about the members (Wagner and Berger 1997) and 2) lifting boxes can be seen as a more masculine activity because of the physical strength required to lift them and gender stereotypic tasks increase the saliency of gender in a situation (Deaux and Major 1987).

Gender is thus highly salient in roller derby, particularly because the current incarnation of the sport began as a female-only endeavor, intentionally challenging the stereotype that full-contact sports and aggressive behavior are firmly man’s domain. Men’s roller derby did not emerge until approximately five years after the newest incarnation began in Austin, Texas, and its very existence has been (and continues to be) a matter of controversy in the roller derby community. The controversy will be discussed in further detail in chapter 6, but it centers on gender, including whether gender-exclusive places are desirable or fair, and whether men and the negative aspects of performing masculinity can be separated from one another. Since its reemergence in the twenty-first century, roller derby has been a fringe sport. As Gieseler (2014) notes, lifestyle sports tend to attract those who are otherwise marginalized, providing for them a space in which they can cultivate “performative resistance against” (p. 761) the status quo.

It is important to note that doing gender is not solely about intergender relations, but rather, individuals perform gender even in competition with same-gender others. This is because gender performance is not just a signal to the “opposite” sex that one is appropriately behaving within the expectations of the sex category to which one has been assigned. It is also a signal to members of one’s own category. In many cases, it can be a signal that one is behaving within the cultural expectations of someone assigned to that sex category. For example, a mother might be judged negatively if she does not volunteer for events at her child’s school. CJ Pascoe (2007) depicts high school boys in competition and thus using the projection of inferior masculinities onto “opponents” in order to appear to conform to culturally-valued masculinity. However, in some cases, performing a different style of gender may be appropriate.

Connell (1995, 2002, 2009) argues that there are not just one masculinity and femininity, but rather that there are multiples of both. In a patriarchal society, like the US, the most valued is hegemonic masculinity, which is the variant of masculinity that legitimizes and perpetuates male dominance in that society. Complementary to hegemonic masculinity is emphasized femininity (Connell, 2002, 2009). This is the variant of femininity that supports and enhances hegemonic masculinity. For example, in the contemporary US, hegemonic masculinity would manifest as physical strength, confidence, stoicism, and heterosexuality. Emphasized femininity in the same context would include such traits as heightened emotional expression, softness, weakness, insecurity, and heterosexuality. All other variations of masculinity and femininity serve to reify the predominance of hegemonic masculinity in that society.

Some femininities, known as pariah femininities by Schippers (2007) and alternative femininities by Finley (2010), exist as contrasts to emphasized femininity.

While often invoked to illustrate one's compliance with the expectations of emphasized femininity, which I discuss below, in some settings, alternative femininities can exist as the standard. I argue that roller derby is one such setting, where a distinct alternative femininity seems to predominate, and hegemonic masculinity is often expressly denigrated.

Stigma Management/Defensive Othering

Stigma management draws on Goffman's (1963) discussion of managing stigmatized identities as a way of preserving one's (positive) sense of self. Examples of stigmatized identities in the contemporary US include childless adults or LGBT individuals. The key idea here is that when someone occupies a stigmatized identity, they often adopt strategies to gain social acceptance. Roschelle and Kaufman's (2004) ethnographic study of homeless children in the San Francisco Bay area reveals a variety of strategies for stigma management, including creating an in-group/out-group dichotomy, and attempting to erase boundaries between those with the stigmatized identity, and those without. The latter was common amongst the homeless kids, who found that befriending other, newly homeless kids, buoyed their self-esteem, which is an important way of managing a stigmatized identity.

For example C.J. Pascoe's (2007) qualitative study of high-school-aged boys reveals that boys demonstrate their embracing of hegemonic masculinity by calling out other boys' presumed failings in the same regard. She notes that by calling other boys "fag," a teenaged boy can demonstrate to others the distance between himself and a lower-status, homosexual masculinity, thus *de facto* asserting his embodiment of hegemonic masculinity.

In another case, researchers (Armstrong, et al 2014) conduct a longitudinal ethnography and interview project to demonstrate that female college students use the practice of “slut shaming” to highlight the “appropriate” way of doing gender. *Slut shaming* refers to negative judgments surrounding a woman’s presumed or actual sexual behavior. Drawing on the work of Lamont, they argue that this practice establishes and reifies the boundaries between one’s own identities relative to others. In other words, much like Pascoe’s teenagers, by calling a woman a slut, college women attempt to show that they are distanced from that identity. It is a way, according to the authors, of declaring oneself to be in the higher-status end of a low-status category. This strategy is alternatively known as *defensive othering* (Ezzell 2009), a term that clearly captures the intended focus of such labeling: to mark as “Other” that with which we would rather avoid association. In this way, defensive othering becomes a way to manage/deflect stigma.

While both examples here represent attempts to distance oneself from the marginalized, and to underscore and association *with* the dominant, categories, I contend that it does not necessarily manifest in this way. For those who embrace marginalized or non-hegemonic categories, defensive othering might be employed to illustrate that one is part of the marginalized category via denigration of those who embody the dominant category. For example, Phillipov (2006) theorized about members of punk culture in the 1970s and 1980s. She noted that in order to be successful, the goal (however paradoxical) was to reject financial success or popularity, because widespread acceptance meant one was no longer “punk.” This is a type of defensive othering, then, that rejects the mainstream (or hegemonic) identity in favor of an alternative.

In the case of roller derby, defensive othering appears to be used to manage the stigma associated with predominantly female groups as “drama-filled.” Female roller derby participants often draw boundaries between their leagues and “other” women’s clubs or organizations, explicitly referencing the stereotype that women are “catty” and emotional. They point to this stereotype as a reason why other women’s groups, including other roller derby leagues are “drama-filled,” as opposed to their own, more harmonious “sisterhood.” In this way, they embrace an alternative femininity that frequently is demonstrated by denigrating common characteristics of emphasized femininity.

Emotion Management

Another strategy for managing reflected appraisals is emotion management, as men and women are culturally expected to express emotions in somewhat divergent ways. Every culture has feeling rules, norms that tell individuals the appropriate way to feel in specific situations and with different types of individuals (Hochschild 2003, 1979). For example, an individual in the United States will, on average, know that the appropriate emotional response to news of a pending funeral is sadness, not joy. Regardless of the actual or “authentic” emotion one experiences, the expressed emotion should conform to these feeling rules. For this reason, we engage in what is known as emotion management (Simon and Nath 2004; Hochschild 2003, 1979). Our social roles have feeling rules or emotion norms attached to them. For example, a cashier at a grocery store is expected to be cheerful and welcoming, rather than sullen and surly. In order to convey that one is conforming appropriately to this role, one would convey those emotions, regardless of how one actually *felt*. In this way, emotion management is a way of managing impressions.

According to Hochschild (1979) there are three ways to manage emotion. The first is cognitive: this is the attempt to change the emotion altogether, to *not* experience a specific emotion. The second is bodily, and is the attempt to minimize or stop the physiological symptoms of an emotion, such as quickening pulse. The third is “expressive emotion work.” This last form is the attempt to manage others’ views of the self by changing the outward expression of emotion (Hochschild 1979). An example of this would be trying to cry and look sad at a funeral. This form of emotion work can coincide with attempts to change the actual emotion felt, but it does not need to. For example, Hochschild (2003) interviewed flight attendants about their emotional labor as part of the job. The women reported feeling anger towards obnoxious or rude passengers, but expressing anger was forbidden for the flight attendants. Instead, they were to always appear to be in a pleasant mood, as one who welcomingly greets guests at one’s home. The outward expression was to be of a positive emotion, then, regardless of the anger that may well persist under the surface (Hochschild 1983).

There are gender differences in emotion management, as well. Erickson (2005) notes that women, particularly those that viewed themselves as more feminine, performed more emotion work for their families than did men. Additionally, men were less likely to view emotion work as “work” than women were (Erickson 2005). Hochschild (1983) argues that women are more likely to engage in emotion work because of their low status relative to men. Since women have less power, money and other resources than men, on average, emotional labor becomes a resource women exchange for financial security and other material resources. This coincides with Ridgeway (2011) and Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin’s (1999) assertion that individuals in lower-status positions are tasked with demonstrating agreeability and supportiveness.

In other words, individuals can engage in emotion work to convey to others our adherence to the emotion norms associated with our sex category, or our embodiment of a specific variant of gender. For example, a mother who takes deep breaths and assumes an intentionally-calm demeanor and tone in addressing a child who's just colored on the walls is demonstrating her complicity with emotion norms that are associated with emphasized femininity (and "good" motherhood).

While emotionality is often considered a characteristic of emphasized femininity, this excludes anger. Women are expected to be "hysterical," weepy, or even elated, but never angry (Birnbaum et al 1980; Plant et al 2000). A woman - particularly a mother - who displays anger is therefore deviant. Managing anger thus becomes a way of doing gender.

Just as I described with respect to defensive othering, I find that emotion work is not necessarily exclusive to those attempting to embody the most dominant or culturally-acceptable type of masculinity or femininity. Just as other ways of doing gender can be utilized to display an alternative masculinity or femininity, so can emotion work be employed to convey alternative masculinities or femininities. For example, as I will show, crying or other displays associated with sadness or weakness are often considered taboo in roller derby, due to the fact that many see roller derby "girls" as representing a new, transformative, empowered femininity.

These are some of the ways that we convey our sense of self to others, in an often non-conscious attempt to induce others to see us as we see ourselves. Some identity theorists stop at this level. However, the data suggest that there are other levels of meaning making in social interaction, such as the image or meaning of an organization. To the extent that this is true, it is reasonable to expect that we must

negotiate among them periodically. This is particularly true where the expectations of various levels are in conflict. I turn to a discussion of these layers now.

Multiple Layers of Understanding

One of the main conclusions from my research is that the reflected appraisal process extends beyond the motivation to shape others' perceptions of ourselves, and can also be applicable to our desire to shape a group or organization into which we invest ourselves. Social identity theory predicts that we select behaviors that depict a group (race/ethnicity or gender, for example) of which we are a member in a positive light (Hogg et al 2004). I contend that the same holds true for *organizations* to which we commit ourselves. For example, one might expect a Girl Scout to want people to think positively of the Girl Scouts organization. Theoretically, the desire to act in ways that convey positive images of an organization would be positively associated with our level of investment in or commitment to said organization. For example, the founder of a charitable organization could be expected to be significantly more invested in the image of the organization than a brand new volunteer. It is beyond the scope of the present investigation to determine what specific factors best predict our level of investment or commitment, but I do speculate that commitment should be fairly high, on average, in an organization like a roller derby league, which requires significant time and monetary expenditures of its participants.

Organizations scholars talk about managing/constructing organizational identity, and the role of individuals in performing this work (Corley et al 2006; Gioia et al 2013; Hatch and Schultz 2002; Kjærgaard et al 2011). The body of research on organizational identity construction is rather small, likely owing to its relative nascence as a topic of study. Both Corley et al (2006) and Gioia et al (2013) are reflections on the state of

research on organizational identity, with only scant discussion of research on organizational identity construction. Corley et al (2006) review the debate about whether organizational identity is even “real,” with some researchers arguing that organizational identity is no more than the collective traits of the members of the organization, as opposed to a phenomenon in its own right. Gioia et al (2013) note that organizational *change* actually preceded organizational identity construction as a topic of study, with the latter still in its infancy as a field of research. They note that what little research there is on organizational identity formation suggests that organizational identity is critical for organization success because of its instrumental role in fostering attachment and identification with an organization among individuals.

The focus of extant research is on how the organizational identity is shaped by micro-level actions. Hatch and Schultz (2002) are exemplary of this in their theoretical discussion of how to apply Mead’s “I” and “me” concepts to organizations to explain the relationship between internal and external impressions of an organization, and how organizational culture is related to both.

Hatch and Schultz (2002) mention that one way of maintaining organizational identity is by convincing employees to align their values with those of the organization. The extent to which an individual’s sense of self is aligned with their sense of the organizational identity is known as *organizational identification* (Ravasi and van Rekom 2003). However, there is virtually no discussion of how that process plays out. In other words, it’s not clear from the existing literature *how* individuals convey an organization’s image, nor how they adjudicate amongst conflicting identity commitments. Kjærgaard et al (2011) conduct a longitudinal study of how positive media attention shapes organizational identity, and how it induces members to feel

positively about the organization. The focus is on how individuals are moved by external actions, and how the external action (media coverage) shapes the organizational identity.

Extant research discusses management of organizational identities, and how shaping organizational members' feelings about the group is important for maintenance of an organizational identity. However, no research of which I am aware discusses the ways in which individuals negotiate between commitments to self-meaning and commitments to organization meaning. I suggest that the presently-proposed project could begin to address this gap in the literature. I suggest that the process here might work out similarly to that of negotiating conflict that results from multiple identities.

Identity Conflict/Strain

There is a rich literature on the consequences of possession of multiple identities. We all hold multiple identities; for example one can simultaneously be a mother, a daughter, a student, and a volunteer. Thoits (1983, 1986) notes that possessing multiple identities can be a source of relief from anxiety and can ultimately be a boon to mental health. She argues that because identities tell us "who we are," they can give us a sense of purpose, a "what it all means" - and thus can reduce feelings of anxiety or despair (Thoits 1983, 1986, 1991). Identities often serve as linkages to others, as well, which Thoits (1991) argues fosters social integration that actually disincentivizes self-destructive behaviors.

However, there is also the potential for added strain and, thus, distress, when we hold multiple identities. Drawing on Pearlin's (1975) review in which he asserts that women experience a greater number of stressors in marriage, Thoits (1986) and Coverman (1989) both explore the impact of occupying multiple roles/identities on

mental health outcomes. Both analyze the impact of commitments to a worker role/identity and a spouse role/identity on marital satisfaction, work satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Coverman 1989), and on anxiety and depression levels (Thoits 1986). Both find that when the demands of both roles are contradictory, or when fulfilling the demands of one identity threatens successful performance of the expectations of another, negative outcomes are more likely. In both studies, this is especially true for women, which both researchers attribute to the greater overall role demands of women in the spouse role/identity and lower status of women in both role/identities.

Similarly, I expect that roller derby participants experience the consequences, positive and negative, associated with their multiple identities - for example, skater, mother, spouse, friend. In addition, the grassroots nature of the sport renders every participant a guardian of the league's public image. This, then, becomes another identity that needs to be managed. I turn to this idea now.

Multiple Identities, Multiple Layers

When we add organizational identities to the picture, it is not clear where they fit. It seems inappropriate to assume that personal identities would be more important than organizational identities. That is, we would not expect all personal identities to be higher in any hierarchy of identities than all organizational identities. For a person who lives nowhere near extended family might be a cousin, but is rarely expected to act on that role, the *cousin* identity may be ranked lower than, say, the reputation of the charity for whom they regularly volunteer.

Regardless of how they are prioritized, we have a collective of personal and organizational identities that help define our sense of who we are as individuals. Just as

we use a variety of strategies to shape reflected self-appraisals, I suggest that we utilize a variety of strategies to shape others' evaluations of organizations with which we identify. The key difference is obvious - in this case, the actor is shaping the image of the organization, as opposed to shaping their own self-appraisals. However, my data suggest that the same processes of identity (re)construction - including stigma management, and doing gender/difference - will be utilized for the re(construction) of organizational identities. An important contribution of the present project will be to explore how individuals seek to manage others' evaluations of organizational identities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT OUTLINE

Empirical support for the idea that we select behaviors, consciously or no, based on reflected appraisals is strong. Similarly, the available literature makes it fairly clear that we attempt to change reflected appraisals in an attempt to bring others' perceptions in line with our self-understandings. I use roller derby as a case study to explore the specific strategies used to modify reflected appraisals.

In addition, I am interested in the way people behave in grassroots volunteer organizations. Particularly, I suspect that individuals can become so invested in others' perceptions of an organization that the desire (conscious or no) to maintain the image of the organization begins to function similarly to our desire to manage reflected appraisals. To explore these issues, I employ a multi-method approach. I conducted participant observation of several leagues and public events, with concurrent interviews with 35 roller derby participants. In addition, I conducted an analysis of roller derby names to explore the ways roller derby participants represent themselves. In this chapter, I detail the methodology for each component of the study and describe my research sites.

Gaining Access

To gain access for the observations, I sent e-mails to each league's leadership. I informed them of my basic research questions and credentials, and the purpose of the project. I promised to maintain confidentiality for each participant, and I assured them that I would be as unobtrusive as possible. League leadership for all four leagues took a vote to allow people to choose whether to allow me to observe practices. I was not present for these votes. League leadership then informed me of anyone who did *not*

want to be observed. Only one individual did not give consent and is not a part of this study in any way.

To further ensure subjects' confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for each league observed, and use derby-name pseudonyms to refer to participants and those they reference for the practices, games involving the four leagues I observe, and the interviews. I conducted a participant observation of four leagues, which I dubbed Midwestern Roller Derby (MRD), Capital City Crushers (CCC), Dude Derby Destroyers (DDD), and Mid-City Maulers (MCM). The selection of these leagues was intentional as their composition was distinct from each other, allowing for informative comparisons. MRD contained more women in professional or skilled jobs: social workers, massage therapists, educators. They were ranked in the top 100 among over 3,000 teams, and at the time of my observations, were making preparations in an attempt to make the playoffs that year. MCM was situated in a primarily working-class town and seemed to contain more blue-collar workers: daycare workers, welders, cashiers. The league ranked in the top 300 of 3000 teams, and did not seem to be working to improve that ranking; instead, they seemed focused on holding their organization together. CCC is a top-twenty team worldwide, and contains more lifelong athletes than other leagues. They are the only women's league I observe that pays a professional coach. DDD is similar to CCC in that they are a top-ten team worldwide, pay a professional coach, and are primarily comprised of lifelong athletes. The difference is that DDD is a men's league, and competes in a smaller circuit of 74 leagues. CCC and DDD frequently practice together, so their observations occurred concurrently.

Participant Observation Technique

For each league, I was a participant observer. I worked as a non-skating official (NSO), which still afforded me sufficient invisibility that I could be unobtrusive. In MRD, I also served as their NSO Coordinator, but this role did not afford me any greater visibility. The NSO Coordinator does not work directly with skaters, but merely interacts with other officials training and supervising NSOs. I observed practices and home games for MRD for 4 months, and the remaining three leagues for two months each (see *Figure 1* for timeline).

Despite my presence as a volunteer and spectator at events for all of the leagues I observed prior to beginning this project, only a handful of the skaters from any league actually knew who I was. This is likely due to the relatively low status of NSOs within the roller derby community. Several skaters, upon meeting with me for interviews, even asked if they knew me from somewhere because I “looked familiar.” The benefit of this for the project is that my low status rendered me largely invisible, even when I was right next to skaters. This provides a perspective distinct from existing studies of roller derby, where the researcher often becomes a skater to gain access (Pavlidis and Fullagar 2014).

Most of the time, I tried to sit on the sidelines, rather than become actively engaged. The exception to this was attending games played by these four teams, in which case I served as an NSO. Working as an NSO is often an ideal way to be “in the middle” of what is happening while simultaneously being virtually invisible. For example, for most of the games I officiated for CCC and DDD, I filled the position of lineup tracker. Essentially, the lineup tracker stands near the track and records all of the people on the track in each jam, along with their trips to the penalty box and/or injuries (for a more detailed description, see *Appendix 1*). My close proximity means I overheard

quite a bit in this position, but the fact that I was not actually *in* the action means no one really notices or pays attention to my presence.

Observations

I attended the championship tournaments for both the WFTDA and the MRDA in 2015, and watched the online streaming feed for both tournaments for 2016. I attended a two-day tournament featuring 22 teams from around the world in 2015 and recorded observations. I observed these the same way an ordinary participant might; I remained anonymous. I used a small notebook to jot notes. I used actual names for those I observed on television because these came from publicly, freely available footage.

Summary of Observation Times		
Research Site/Method	Dates	Total Hours
Site 1: MRD	11/9/2014 - 5/27/2015	111
Site 2: CCC & DDD	8/16/2015 - 2/16/2016	52
Site 3: MCM	9/2/2015 - 10/14/2015	23
Interviews	11/25/2014 - 4/22/2016	20.1
Content Analyses	8/15/2017 - 10/19/2017	N/A

Figure 1: Summary of Observation Times

I completed a total of 144 participant observation hours of 45 member teams of either the Men’s Roller Derby Association (MRDA) or the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA). See the breakdown on *Figure 1*.

Interviews

In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 34 roller derby participants and 1 skater’s romantic partner that was not otherwise involved in roller derby. Interviewees came from eight teams spanning 3 states and 2 countries. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours, with the majority of them taking around 30-40 minutes. All interviews were conducted individually, with the exception of

one romantic couple that insisted on being interviewed together. I recruited interview subjects via the e-mails I sent to forty-five leagues in the United States and Canada. In the e-mails, I noted that I was also conducting interviews with interested roller derby participants. I closed the e-mails by asking each league's leadership to forward the e-mail, along with my contact information, to their league members, and asked that any interested participants contact me directly. This way, it is at the discretion of the participant to "opt in," and even their league leadership would not know who I was interviewing.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed each and uploaded them to NVivo, a qualitative analysis program. I searched for themes relevant to my research questions. For example, I searched for "drama" because my notes indicated that it was commonly mentioned and that it seemed to refer to undesirable persons and/or behavior. My use of NVivo was limited to keyword searches, and from there, manual evaluation of content was used to determine relevance of search results.

Media Content

I include archival research to underscore some of the most important findings my data reveal. I use ProQuest Newspapers to search for newspaper articles in the United States and Europe from 2000-2017. I search for "roller derby" and "men's roller derby," limiting the results to include only newspaper articles. Since my primary argument centers on the idea that individuals manage reflected appraisals, the use of newspapers as supplemental data enhances the findings from the interview and participant observation data. We can reasonably expect that when a skater gives an interview, they are putting their "best foot forward." They are presumably presenting the image of themselves, and of their league, that they want the public to hold. In this

project, media content is supplemental. It is designed to support the claims I derive from my data.

Grounded Theory Analysis

Grounded theory informs the basis of my approach. *Grounded theory* is an approach that calls on researchers to distance themselves from extant literature in order to avoid essentializing social categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Thus, while I am familiar with the pertinent research on meaning making in interaction, I avoided relying on the literature to inform my categories for analysis. The advantage of the grounded theory approach is that relying on the data to inform relevant categories allows for the discovery of nuances that prior literature has left unnoticed (Connell 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The notes from my observation sessions informed the way I observed in subsequent sessions. I took note of the kinds of identity-related symbols I observed, and compared notes over time.

This also informed my interview schedule (see *Appendices 2 and 3* for the full interview schedules). I had a base of questions, which I reproduce in the appendices. These included baseline demographic questions, questions such as “How did you get involved in roller derby?” and “Do you think a roller derby career is compatible with romantic relationships.” I wanted to get a sense of how they saw themselves, and how typical they felt they were relative to other participants. To get a sense of how they felt roller derby was related to their sense of self, I asked questions like, “Has the way you see yourself changed since roller derby?” with a follow-up, if applicable that allows them to articulate, in their own words, how they feel they have changed. Additionally, I ask, “Do you feel like roller derby makes it easier for you to be who you really are?” Again, this is designed to tap into the relationship between roller derby and their sense of self.

Initially, it was not my intention to ask about the construction of meaning making for an organization. However, I noticed in my interviews that when I asked individuals about roller derby, they responded either by talking about their own league exclusively, or by comparing their league to other (usually lesser) leagues. The effect was, for most participants, almost an advertisement for their respective leagues. I got a sense that they were trying to define their leagues for me, and to hold them up as exemplars of what roller derby *should* be. This is an example of the strength of a grounded theory approach; I would have missed this process had I been basing my categories of analysis on extant literature's findings exclusively.

For the analysis of names, I relied on the International Rollergirls' Master Roster (IRMR), a database publicly provided by twoevils.org. Despite the name, the database contains derby names for both male and female participants. I randomly selected 100 names first. The list of categories is emergent; I jotted a list of potential categories as I reviewed the initial list of names, rather than beginning with a set of categories (Krippendorff 1980; Stemler 2001; Weber 1990). I then reviewed and refined the categories to eliminate redundancies (Weber 1990). Note that categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, one naming convention involves creating puns out of popular culture references, such as M.C. Slammer. Another is to create a sexualized name like Booty Pop. The roller derby name Agatha Frisky is both a popular culture reference *and* an example of sexualization through naming. The goal here was exhaustiveness of categories rather than mutual exclusivity of categories.

Once I refined my categories, I randomly selected another 50 names from the IRMR. This time, I conducted *a priori* coding, attempting to sort the second sample of names into the categories that emerged from the first set. Finally, I look to the rosters,

available on the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) and Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) websites, of the top ten teams for both organizations, according to their most recent rankings. I then sort those names into the categories created above. The only names I came across that did not fit were those in which the participant used their legal name instead of adopting a roller derby pseudonym.

While I recognize that this is perhaps atypical, it is appropriate for the present analysis. First, while mutual exclusivity is commonly expected as a way of avoiding ambiguity, mutual exclusivity is not a concern with respect to naming categories. Additionally, there is no second, independent reviewer (Haney et al 1998). This is standard for content analyses to verify content validity of the categories; that is, that they accurately measure the concepts being measured. However, my purpose is not to formalize a process of naming conventions, but rather to highlight a facet of the broader project. In particular, I aim to give the reader a *sense* of the ways in which the adoption of pseudonyms can serve as a symbol of the self-image participants wish to convey. In this vein, the pseudonyms become a strategy of self-presentation.

Summary

In the next three chapters, I present my data analysis. First, in Chapter 4, I elaborate on a typology of naming conventions within roller derby. I discuss the types of pseudonyms roller derby participants adopt, and what the names represent for those who adopt them. In Chapter 5, I discuss individual strategies of impression management. This focuses on three major ways, informed by my data, that individuals seek to manage reflected appraisals that apply to themselves. In Chapter 6, I discuss impression management strategies for reflected appraisals that apply to organizations. Again, the specific strategies are informed by my data.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT'S IN A NAME? DERBY NAMES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN ROLLER DERBY

If one were to listen to the announcers during a WFTDA playoff game, one inevitably hears repeated references to jammers with names like Snot Rocket Science, Biceptual, and Smashalottapuss. This is not an attempt to shock the audience, but an ordinary part of the job in roller derby. Roller derby names seem to be as much a part of the sport as knee socks and elbow pads.

It is one of the first acts one takes to become a full-fledged derby player: selecting a derby name. Some participants come in with a derby name in mind, and some have names given by teammates. There are tens of thousands of derby names, some registered on websites like twoevils.org, where attempts to develop an inclusive name database emerged. Derby names have been contested in the legal system (Cisar 2009) such as when Frito-Lay sued Madison skater Crackerjack over her derby name on the grounds that it was a copyrighted name. Derby names become so important to skaters that some even tattoo their derby names onto their bodies (Derby Helper, Oct 2009).

Why are derby names so important? In this chapter, I discuss the importance of names more broadly, as they impact one's self-impression and psychological well-being. Then I explore the importance of derby names to participants, theorizing about the function of the derby name for individuals. I then describe a typology of derby names, exploring the commonalities among derby names, despite the fact that derby names now likely number in the tens of thousands. Finally, I discuss controversies in naming within the derby community, including the recent trend in which skaters choose to skate under their legal name instead of adopting a pseudonym to help the sport to become more

mainstream, and a trend among male roller derby participants in selecting names that are contradictory to the feminist, empowering mission of the sport.

What's in a Name?

Names are ubiquitous, but often taken for granted. Outside of expectant parents, most of us do not ponder the significance of our names, but the scant research on names shows us that what we call ourselves matters. For example, Erwin (1999) found that students with Anglo-American names rated as unattractive tended to display higher academic achievement (in terms of course grades) than those with names others deemed attractive. However, research shows that what one thinks of one's own name is of greater consequence than what peers think. Using a paired-sibling design, Twenge and Manis (1998) found that an individual's affinity for his/her own name was a bigger predictor of whether one is psychologically well-adjusted than others' ratings of the name. Personality and adjustment controls are operationalized using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck and Eysenck 1985), and additional controls are included for self-esteem, overall life satisfaction, independent ratings of the attractiveness and prevalence of the name, and family background via the use of twins as research subjects. They find that self-satisfaction with the name was more important for self-adjustment than others' evaluations of the same. Similarly, Luo et al (2014) conducted a study of 304 pairs of twins and revealed that one's affinity for one's own name was a moderate, but significant, predictor of subjective well-being among Chinese individuals, independent of baseline life satisfaction. Additionally, research suggests that our name is central to our sense of self. Allport (1961) argued that one's name is the focal point, the center, around which all identity is organized. Indeed, studies utilizing the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland 1954) found that individuals often

included their name among their responses to the prompt, “Who am I?” For example, Gordon (1968) found that 30% of college students who took the TST referenced their name at least once in their twenty responses. He contends that this is because one’s name is a handy descriptor, distinguishing us from other family members, indicating (often) our sex, and marking us as a (more or less) unique individual. We paint our names on our bedroom walls, we look for our name on vanity plates at tourist shops, and we get excited when we meet another person with the same name as us. Thus, it appears, naming matters.

Derby Names

Of course, a key difference here is that derby names are voluntarily adopted. We might expect the centrality of the name for a derby player’s sense of self to be even stronger here. What is the purpose of names in derby? WFTDA.org claims that the purpose of derby names is to facilitate skaters’ “escape from day-to-day life” and allow them to “embrace a tougher, edgier side” of themselves. As the site proclaims, “When you step into the rink, your derby alter ego takes over” (WFTDA.org). The question then becomes, what function does the alter ego serve? Does it make them feel braver, stronger, or is it meant to signal some meaning to others? One potential purpose lies in the fact that some derby names are similar to *noms de guerre* - warrior monikers, or superheroes’ alter egos. The Portia hypothesis (Coffey and McLaughlin 2009, 2016), so named after the *Merchant of Venice* character who posed as a man to practice law, holds that female lawyers with more masculine-sounding names will be more successful than those with more feminine-sounding names. Coffey and McLaughlin found that female lawyers with more gender neutral or masculine-sounding names tended to get promoted to judgeships and also tend to earn more than those with more feminine-sounding

names. This would suggest, if it extended to roller derby, that a more masculine-sounding name, such as Weird Al Shankabitch, would be expected to be more successful than, say, Strawberry Jam.

Another is a naming effect: that those with more masculine-sounding names feel freer to adopt more aggressive, masculine behaviors that happen to prove more successful in legal occupations. Indeed, Pilcher (2017) argues that names are a form of doing gender. She notes that, despite the common claim that names help distinguish among diverse individuals, the United States and the United Kingdom have very homogenous naming patterns. There are a handful of names in each country that appear over and over, and they are very gendered. Pilcher (2017) argues that this is intentional - a parent's way of clearly labeling their child as male or female. Moss-Racusin et al (2012) conduct a double-blind experiment in which science faculty are asked to review application packets for two fictional applicants. Applicants are randomly assigned a masculine or feminine name. They find that, despite equivalent applications, those given a masculine name were consistently rated as more competent than those assigned feminine names. This suggests that others with whom we interact intuit behavior traits based on the gender of our names.

There is some evidence suggesting that the gender of one's name affects one's own behavior. Figlio (2007) notes that there is no significant difference in male students' behaviors based on name gender until the sixth grade. Then, a sharp divide occurs, wherein boys with more feminine-sounding names experience far more disciplinary problems relative to boys with more masculine-sounding names. Figlio (2007) compares this to the Johnny Cash song, "A Boy Named Sue," in which the eponymous man grows up tough and aggressive because of the hardships associated

with his feminine moniker. While this is a *negative* effect, Pilcher (2017) argues that it is because the gender-contradictory naming is tantamount to *gender contamination* in this case. Gender contamination is Thorne's (1993) term for the stigma that stems from boys being associated with more feminine activities because they are lower status. For women, however, Pilcher (2017) suggest that gender-contradictory naming can actually provide a boost for women by allowing them to embody higher-status traits associated with masculine names. This is supported by Thorne (1993), whose study of school-aged children revealed that tomboys actually benefit from their association with masculinity. Translated to the world of roller derby, then, adopting a name like Dora the Destroyer may induce one to *feel* stronger and more powerful.

In addition, derby names serve as a form of self-expression, including the expression of an aggressive, often-feminist, hostility towards stereotypical femininity (Carlson 2010). Taking on a name of one's own choosing is perhaps the most quintessential form of self-expression; it is the literal renaming of oneself as one sees appropriate. There is a lot of variation to this, but I break down some common themes below.

A Typology of Derby Names

There are over 4,000 roller derby leagues worldwide, comprised of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of players, officials, and volunteers. Derby name registries, which are formed in a (mostly failed) attempt to ensure that everyone's derby name is unique, are typically backlogged for months. It is extremely difficult to get a sense of how many roller derby names exist. There are multiple databases accessible online, but there is nothing compelling one to register, so each is limited to those who are aware of that database *and* self-motivated to register their pseudonyms. The databases vary in

the number of registrants. Derby Roll Call (derbyrollcall.com) claims 31,732 registered names. However, the other two top search results on Google, International Rollergirls' Master Roster (twoevils.org) and Roller Derby Roster (rollerderbyroster.com) contain 40,551 and 40,563, respectively. I rely on the International Rollergirls' Master Roster to create my typology, as it is the one I have overheard mentioned most frequently. I randomly draw a total of 150 names from this database, sorting them into emergent categories in two separate stages.

However, I submit that there are a small subset of naming conventions, such that a typology can be formulated to describe the system of naming within roller derby. A *typology* is designed to simplify and organize data to render it more understandable (McKinney 1969). To create this typology, I kept jottings of potential categories inspired by the actual roller derby names of my interview subjects. From there, I refined the set of categories to eliminate redundancies or categories that were too narrow. The remaining categories, presented below, are ideal types, and are not mutually exclusive. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of the typology. I select 100 names at random to test the categories developed, and then another 50 for a second, confirmatory analysis. These names are self-selected, which is significant because it is the ultimate sign of self-expression. To literally choose the label one owns before the world might be the purest form of identity construction.

Roller Derby Name Groupings	
Category	Example
Empowerment/Toughness	5 Scar Jeneral, Zilla D. Killa, 2Tough4U
Occupational References	Testy Teacher, Professor Sk8, PhDiesel
Punny Names/Linguistic Tricks	Ova Achieva, Shanita Penalty, Allie AssassinateHer
Sexualized Names	Groper Cleavage, Wheelie Hot, SexyCutioner
Popular Culture	Grazed Anatomy, ¼ Pound-Her, Abbey Roadkill

Figure 2: Roller Derby Name Groupings

Empowerment/Toughness

According to some skaters, like Princess Slay Ya, derby names give participants a confidence boost. She tells me, her roller derby moniker is freeing, that it “helps me get the rage out. I have a lot of rage.” Tough pseudonyms presumably improve confidence by providing some distance between the act of playing derby and being a person with, say, social anxiety, who might appear unlikely to engage in such an open display of aggression and bodily display. By donning a tough derby moniker, a normally-meek woman can “get out of her own way,” and embrace a confidence and ability that she already possessed. Names like Jawbreaker, Ivanna Kick Ya, and Blood Bath and Beyond are designed to evoke a sense of aggression and toughness, however campy and/or tongue-in-cheek it might be (for example, it is extremely unlikely for blood to spill at a derby game). Farrah Fracture may not set out to break bones, but as Princess Slay Ya’s interview reveals, adopting the name can be the boost one needs to take a deep breath, get out on the track, and shove other women around. Male derby participants also tend to adopt names that evoke a sense of toughness, like Tom Bruise, Max Power, or Jack Slaughter.

Additionally, I include in this section names that reference drinking. The justification is that names like Jackie Daniel and A Shotta Whiskey imply the image of the rough-and-tumble drinker at the bar, a decidedly masculine image. Its inclusion in this category acknowledges that imagery, and is a recognition that such a presentation is supposed to convey a toughness similar to names like Abb-literate-Her.

Here, the idea is similar to the notion of an alter ego. Peter Parker is timid and shy, but SpiderMan is tough, confident, and quick to intervene when evil is being done. The same is presumably true of the derby participant. Alice Smith is soft-spoken and susceptible to harassment, violence, and so on, but Albee ChooUp stands firm in the face of opposition, and even knocks it down.

Occupational References

The second type of derby name comes from people making a (usually a pun) reference to their occupation. This has two subtypes: their position within derby, and their professional occupation.

Those who adopt monikers that make reference to their position in roller derby are not as numerous as those adopting names related to their profession, particularly among the skaters. This is because many skaters expected to play all three positions at some point or another, and do not specialize. However, there are exceptions. For example, Sweet Home Alleyjamma, Your Lead Jammer, and Jammie DodgeHer are establishing an identity for themselves *as jammers*. Blocker-Bye-Baby, Blockabitch, and A Block convey to the rest of us that they are ready to stop a jammer.

Officials also adopt names related to their position in roller derby. NSOs embrace names such as Plenty O'fficial, Whistle Blower, and The Mad Statter, all homages to their role as game managers and statisticians. Kent C Forshette and So Sue Me! are both

puns that poke fun at the negative reactions referees often receive for calls perceived as “bad” by spectators and skaters alike. FN Zebra, Johnny Zebra, and Zebra: Warrior Princess all refer to the standard referee stripes all referees are required to don for games. Finally, names like A-Damn Ref and ERMAHGARD, RERFERER! are clear declarations of one’s position as a skating official.

More common are those who make use of their paid work field to create a derby name. Some directly play on the occupational title. Examples of these include Anthrobrowlogist, Nurse Throttle, and Battle TeachHer. Others are more subtle; a psychologist named Phineas Rage, for example, or a nurse named Compound Fracture.

Punny Names/Linguistic Tricks

Derby names that are puns derived from common names are also frequently found in derby. Sometimes derived from the skater’s own legal name, and other times, a name selected for the pun it creates. A common one is twists on the name “Eve:” Eve Elle Darling, Eve L. Angel, Eve N Deadlier, and Eve of Xtinction is just a small sample. In this case, “Eve” is used because of its literal meaning, or its ability to be combined with initials to create a pun variation of another phrase. “Eve L” is common, appearing in ten unique names on the International Rollergirls’ Master Roster, because when read out loud, it sounds like “evil.” Names like “Anita” that sound like short phrases already can be found in most leagues. Among these are names like Anita B. Naughty, Mae Q. Fall, One Hit Wanda, and Ivanna B. Blockin. Similar to “Eve,” these are selected for their ease of combining with other words or initials to create phrases. For example, “Anita” is selected because of the auditory similarity to “I need to,” which creates a slew of interesting phrases like “Anita Block.” Others are more unique, like Lil Mary Conceal N’ Carry or PyroMAGniac.

Male participants also fall into this category. Referees Code Adam and Ben Drinkin play on their names. Others include Rob'n Ur Dignity, Cleveland Stever, and Brutally Frank. Finally, other linguistic tricks include alliteration, with names like Maggie Mayhem and Pyro Polly, or even unique twists like Slot Ma Sheen, where words are broke down and/or symbols used.

Sexualized Names

In a sport that proclaims itself to be empowering, it may be surprising to see so many references to women or their anatomy as sexual objects. However, this is rather common. This is a point of contention for some within the roller derby community as the sport edges towards mainstream exposure. One can hardly imagine ESPN featuring athletes bearing monikers such as GladI8her or Fistfucker.

Names that reference breasts are popular, particularly among busty women. Glory S. Tits, Betty Bodacious Boobs, and Coup d'eTatas are pretty obvious examples of this. Vaginamite and Pussy Bumper are also clear references to female anatomy.

In part as sexualization, and in part as a result of its function in the game, the rear end also finds its way onto rosters. Names like PocaHotAss and Boom Boom Booty represent the former, while names like Booty Blocker and BootyVicious refer to the rear end as a weapon.

Still other derby names in this category refer to sexual behavior. For example, Miss Goody Two Screws, Reff Sex, and Smashalottapuss are clear references to sex acts. Others play on the stereotype of the dangerous sexy female, with names like SexyCutioner, Shameless Hussy, and Danger Muffin.

Finally, there are references to the PMS-crazed, raging female. Names like Menstrual Mayhem, Cuban Menstrual Crisis, and Joan Cougar Menstrualcramp are

obvious in their references. PMS on Wheels seemingly warns people to watch out for the hormone-induced rage.

There are substantially fewer references to male anatomy, and many are still owned by female athletes. Dick Tater, Penis de Milo, and Raging Cock are all female skaters. Dick Joke is an extremely rare example, according to the registry of names, of a male skater adopting a name that references male anatomy.

Popular Culture

Perhaps the largest category is popular culture references. These are so common, I will break them down into subsections.

First, political and historical figures are frequently turned into derby names. Michelle O'BombHer, Artillery Clinton, and Barbara AmBush are examples of contemporary political figures, while John Ref Kennedy, Julius Seizure, and Babe Lincoln are exemplars of historical figures represented.

From my observations, non-white skaters tend to choose political and/or historical figures that represent their racial/ethnic background. MeX-Rated, Jefe Verde, and Macho Mexi-CAN are all nods to the skaters' Latinx heritage. African American skaters commonly choose famous African American figures for inspiration, generating names like Rosa Sparks, Harriet Clubman, and George Squashing-Fun Carver are prime examples of this trend.

There is a large number of roller derby participants who seek out literary names, either representing the author, the book title, or main characters. A simple google search for "literary derby names" yields several lists of suggestions. Literary references in derby names are numerous, such as Nancy Shrew, Mary Efn Poppins, Maul E. Weasley, and Rose Madder.

Others reference characters television or movies, such as Rose Nylons, Meri-Death Grey, or Punky Boobster. Harry Potter references (e.g., Ron Sleazely, Bellatrix LeStrangle, Whoremione Granger) are quite popular, as are references to Star Wars (e.g., Fluke Skywalker, Obi Quad Kenobi, Princess Lay-Ya Flat). Still others refer to the celebrities themselves. These include actors (e.g., Matt Demon, Rosario Dodge-Em, Screw Barrymore), singers (e.g., Ziggy Bloodlust, Beyonce Rollz, Britney Fierce), and others like Kim Karslashian or Tyra Shanks.

Derby Names: a Dying Tradition?

Colorado Public Radio reports that derby names are being phased out in an effort to prepare for mainstreaming and to become more inclusive. They interview a skater with Denver's "Mile High Club," a league that recently changed its rules to include men's and juniors' teams in addition to their women's teams. In addition, they changed their logo from a pig-tailed, feminine silhouette to a gender neutral wheel with wings. Finally, derby names are no longer used; instead all skaters use their last names on rosters.

The skater interviewed argues that this is a step towards mainstreaming roller derby - the idea here is that in order to be "taken seriously" as a "real" sport, they need to use legal names and be gender neutral. The abandoning of derby names and the push towards gender neutrality is seemingly connected to the phenomenon, described by Messner (1988) that authentic sport is masculine. As Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz (2013) observe, maleness, and by extension, masculinity is prototypical - it is the default, or neutral "setting." Ultimately, then, a push for "neutrality" can actually indicate a push for masculinity, particularly in the highly-masculinized domain of sport.

There are several examples of media declarations, like the Colorado Public Radio piece mentioned above, that there is a "trend" towards the abandonment of derby

names, but I am not convinced that it is as widespread as it is sometimes claimed to be. I scanned the websites of several leagues to get a sense of how prevalent the use of legal names over derby names really is. In MRDA, I looked at the rankings at mrda.com, and then looked up websites for teams at various ranking positions. First I looked at unranked teams, finding websites for teams out of England, Arizona, and Detroit. Among them, names like Wrecks Merriment, ManLeigh, and Eat Chip and Die seem to be the norm, while 1 skater is listed using his legal name, and a handful of Detroit skaters listed by what appears to be their last names. None of the low-ranked leagues (36th and below) listed skaters with legal names. The top-ranked teams (5th and above) are more likely to use their derby names, but it is still rare. One skater per team (from Des Moines, New York, and Portland) were listed by legal name, although I note that during the MRDA championships this year, three Des Moines-area skaters were identified by announcers using their legal names.

I was unable to look at unranked women, as the WFTA does not list rankings for teams ranked below 307th place. Among the lowest ranked (296th and below), names like Racey Anthony and Snow White Trash are the standard; no legal names were identified on the rosters. Among middle-ranked (100th-200th place), the use of legal names is similarly unlikely. Among the top-ranked WFTDA teams (16th and above), there does appear to be a shift. Teams ranked 5th-16th are more likely to have a skater that uses her legal name. The all-star team for the 3rd-ranked Rose City Rollers identifies nine skaters by their legal names, but still features the fan-favorite Suzie Crotchrot, and their “B” and “C” teams do not identify anyone by legal name. In contrast, the 1st-ranked Gotham Girls Roller Derby skaters are identified using derby names like OMG WTF and Sexy Slaydie. So, while it does appear that a handful of teams

at the top of the ranking structure are trending towards the use of legal rather than derby names, it does not seem to amount to a “trend” by any stretch, nor does it seem necessary to use one’s legal name to be “competitive.” If the argument that women use derby pseudonyms to feel braver and stronger is supported, it is then possible that the use of legal names signals those who feel confident enough in their own abilities that the use of a pseudonym is unnecessary. Future research could consider whether the selection of naming differs on the basis of one’s locus of control.

Derby and Men

Derby names also reveal a gender controversy within roller derby. There is some debate over whether or not men should even be allowed to play roller derby in the new incarnation. Reasons given for this vary widely. They include concerns about whether it is “fair” to “just give over” equality to men in the only female-dominated sport when they themselves had to fight to be treated the same within sports. Some are concerned that men’s involvement will lead to them transforming the game into something unrecognizable by the women who founded and play roller derby (<http://harlot.media/articles/2186/problem-men-roller-derby>). Still others refer to essentialist notions of gender, claiming that men in roller derby smell worse than women and do not look as graceful on the track and/or are too aggressive (<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/arts/five-reasons-there-shouldnt-be-a-mens-roller-derby-6576589>).

Another reason, which I suggest is underscored by naming practices, is that the kitsch and camp exhibited by women in roller derby does not come across with the same connotations in men’s roller derby. For example, fishnet stockings, tutus, even coconut bras, can be seen on women on the track. For them, it is perceived as an intentional

disruption of the gender status quo - they are tough, but also flaunting exaggerated displays of femininity. When men do the same, however, the message can come across as predatory. It is not seen as transformative, empowering, or liberating, but as farcical. In fact, it is possible, as some argue, that the very presence of men in such a comical presentation actually obscures the message of empowerment and dismantling of gender norms that women's roller derby is supposed to exemplify.

Men's choice of roller derby names can sometimes underscore the distortion of gender play when enacted by women versus men. For example, a Snidely Bitchslap or Femifist is perhaps mildly vulgar or obscene, but the intent is one of self-empowerment and decisive action. In men's roller derby, the humor can quickly turn dark and disturbing. For example, Ray Pugh and Chase N Urdaughter, both real roller derby names used by active skaters, do not have the same message of empowerment or equality that many women's names suggest. For example, Chase N Urdaughter has almost a predatory connotation when applied to a man. It still strikes one as predatory if you imagine a female with this moniker, although decidedly less so. Additionally, while still connoting violence, Ivanna Riot seems to imply less sinister intentions than Chase N Urdaughter. Even less offensive monikers like those of referees Major Wood or The Pantichrist seem out of place in a setting that is supposedly uniquely focused on promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, given that they amount to sexual innuendos.

This is not to suggest that all, or even most, men engage select names that appear predatory or sexist. Contrarily, the vast majority of names seem to fit the typology outlined in *Figure 2*. This suggests that overall, they conform to the status quo *as it appears in roller derby*.

Summary

In sum, while there are thousands of derby names, they can be distilled down to these basic types. Whether the convention of adopting a derby name fades or not is yet to be seen. However, regardless, what we choose to call ourselves *matters*. Research shows that we organize our sense of self around who we are. So when Arya Brave steps out onto the track with her derby name emblazoned on her back, she is telling the world who she wants to be, how she sees herself, and how she wants us to see her, too. In some cases, as with Power Tough Girl, there seems to be no contradiction between how she wants to present herself, and how the WFTDA promotes roller derby. Others, like That Skinny Bitch or Daterape Dawn embrace monikers that seemingly contradict the notion of empowerment.

CHAPTER 5: “WE WERE ALL THE AWKWARD KID IN JUNIOR HIGH”: INDIVIDUAL IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ROLLER DERBY

As I discuss in chapter two, once we have adopted an identity, we become invested, consciously or not, in shaping how others perceive us in relation to that identity. We want people to view us, not just as one who embodies that identity, but as one who embodies that identity *the way we understand it*. For example, Apocahips Wow describes the “typical” derby girl, and she tells me that while there is no typical derby girl, they are generally “confident, helpful, tough, and kind.” However, she says outsiders see them as “crazy, tattooed alcoholics.” This incongruence will lead a skater, like Apocahips, to act in a way that hopefully changes the reflected appraisal. In this case, she bares her arms and says, “See? No tattoos,” directly denying the reflected appraisal’s validity.

A major contribution of this project is to reveal strategies that we use to manage reflected appraisals under specific conditions. I use roller derby as a case study to show how individuals accomplish impression management in settings where the status quo is being intentionally challenged and disrupted. Roller derby is an ideal case because many of the participants see themselves as engaged in a project that is transformative, and many report feeling transformed by roller derby, as well. This means that attempts to manage impressions are likely to be in sharp relief because actors are consciously attempting to manage impressions in a way that subverts mainstream cultural expectations.

In this chapter, I discuss three major ways perception management is accomplished for individuals in roller derby, as revealed by my data. The first, *doing gender*, involves engaging with our current gender system to either maintain or

transform existing understandings of gender, and using those understandings to make understandable connections between mainstream society and roller derby for bystanders. The second, *stigma management*, draws on Goffman's work on impression management for those stained by a stigmatized or "spoiled" identity. In this case, they are responding to stigma associated with both, "deviant" female athletes and the culturally-appropriate femininity. Finally, *emotion management* pertains to the way we regulate our own and others' emotional displays to align them with our identity commitments, thus conveying "appropriate" affect. Each strategy represents participants' attempts to convey the image of the powerful transformer of gender expectations which must be balanced with expectations of their other identity commitments.

Doing Gender

"They all coexist, and nobody judges the girly-girl who wants to wear tutus and do the hair and makeup and all that, and nobody judges the masculine girl who's out there to just kick some ass." - *Apocahips Wow* when asked if more or less feminine women would be accepted in roller derby.

The dominant understanding of how gender manifests in society today is an interactional view of gender known as the *doing gender* perspective. *Doing gender* is a theoretical framework that defines gender as something we "do," rather than as something we "are" (West & Zimmerman 1987). For example, if we see an individual on the bus wearing a skirt, high-heels, and makeup, we would likely sex categorize that individual female. We sex categorize people all the time, often before we are consciously aware that we are doing so (Ridgeway 2011; West & Zimmerman 1987). The incessancy of doing gender is what makes it so powerful as a motivator for behavior. Note that in

this approach, individuals are not “required” to conform to cultural expectations. The strength of this approach is that it explains consistency of trends without precluding the possibility of change or resistance.

Roller derby represents a unique case study for doing gender because it is a rare setting in which gender is explicit. The national organization governing sanctioned women’s play, the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA), explicitly refers to the sport as “revolutionary” (WFTDA.org). It is designed to be grass-roots, so that every skater is involved in the development of her league. As Schilt (2006, 2011) notes, social reproduction processes, such as doing gender, are typically invisible. This lends to the appearance that they represent “natural” variation. However, in cases like this where many are consciously attempting to transform the status quo, the process is suddenly observable. Several skaters express the opinion that roller derby is a setting that allows women opportunities for personal growth that are not typically found in other settings. For example, Must Jam Sally notes that it is “huge that roller derby is a space for adult women to be empowered.” While not all participants view roller derby as a setting ripe for transforming gendered expectations, the narrative is prominent enough that all participants must contend with it. Here, I discuss some of the ways roller derby participants do gender.

Doing Transformation

There are many participants who see roller derby as a site ripe for transforming our mainstream cultural gender system. The WFTDA logo is four words: “Real. Strong. Athletic. Revolutionary.” There is a recognition that the sport is doing something innovative and progressive. One major aspect of gender performance in roller derby

involves the explicit attempts of many to forge a uniquely feminist - and feminine - way of doing sport. In the words of Apocahips Wow:

I think we try to, like, give a voice to...women who don't. Like telling - like showing people that you can do whatever you want, like there's no boundaries, like, if you want to go be a welder, like, go be a welder, you know, like, but, we are just as good as guys, but I don't think, like, I don't know...

There is an explicit attempt to demonstrate that despite the fact that they reject the hypermasculine stereotype of hardened, singularly-focused athletes, they are still equal to men in terms of athletic prowess and occupational ability. Newcomer bell hooksyouup (capitalization style intentional) immediately notices that women are in power positions, and tells me, "There are all these women that are like, 'Here I am, and I'm making it happen.'"

Indeed, skaters often speak of the freedom to be who they "really" are in roller derby, to be the kind of women they want to be. I ask Betty BlockHer to describe who she "really is," and she tells me:

A person, I'm a lady, I'm a GIANT lesbian, I'm an athlete, and I'm uhhh - [LONG pause] It doesn't matter; that's it"[After several moments she says], I want to add that I'm strong, and I like to help people.

Her hesitation suggests that this was more of a conscious decision, as opposed to unconscious recitation of a core sense of self. It is something she is specifically choosing to represent herself. She further asserts this vision of a strong, assertive female when I ask her how she thinks others see skaters:

I think we're intimidating, because we're kind of like a pack. We're rambunctious, and we're all in team jackets. We don't really take shit from anyone.

It is notable that many women in roller derby are survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence, including Betty BlockHer's girlfriend. This may inform their efforts to convey a gender identity that is strong, independent, and menacing. In this way, women who may sometimes feel fragile, broken, even weak, can convey a sense of empowerment, triumph, and transformation.

For these women, roller derby offers the opportunity to be braver, more confident, and to feel free to present as they see fit. Apocahips Wow expresses this sentiment well, when I ask her how she had changed since joining her derby league two years prior:

My body size hasn't really necessarily changed, but like, the way that I see myself and my self confidence has changed. Yeah, like I would never have worn half of the shit that I do outside of the house before derby. Like, I - it's more, more now that like, I just don't give a fuck what people say about me, and I'm like, yeah, I - I don't know I just wanted....I'd heard for so long that like, my legs were too big and they were too muscular because I had like, these big, huge rock muscles that kinda look like, dude legs? And I'd heard that a lot, and so like, I would just cover them up...so like, I'd wear in the summer, like, long baggy, like men's cargo shorts, to cover those up, and now I like, actually own shorts that aren't, like - I feel like sometimes mildly inappropriate, but they're very short for me, and they show off a lot of my legs, but like, I really like my legs now, like, I like how muscular they are, and...I don't know, like, you wanna make fun of me for my large legs? Like, I will choke you out with my large, muscular legs.

She credits roller derby with giving her the confidence to wear whatever she wants. She is explicitly rejecting gendered beauty standards that call for thinness, and finds a new

comfort with her body as a woman. Arya Brave also talks about how transformative it is by relaying a conversation she had with another skater, Miss Demeaner:

I know [Demeaner] told me once that her favorite thing about derby was me and people like me and I asked her what she meant and she meant that, she said, “You know when you started skating with us you were really quiet, and you would always look at the ground, and now you’re really loud-mouthed, and you crack jokes, and you look people in the eye when you’re talking to them,” and she’s like, “that’s so awesome.”

Here, Brave here refers to the markers of confidence - looking someone in the eye when speaking to them, for instance - that came about as a result of her place in roller derby.

Another skater, Guillotina Fey, noted that she became comfortable with her gender performance as a result of derby. Before roller derby, Fey, a transwoman, reportedly was “constantly paranoid of being discovered” to have been born a male. She said she worried that if her eyeliner was a little “off,” she would be read as trans or male and would be violently attacked. Through derby, she learned that there are many ways to be a woman, and began to let go of that fear. Now, she exclaims, “Just being one of the girls is the greatest thing ever.”

This is not to say that they do not still adhere to stereotypical expectations of women. Gender norms are powerful in our society, and are often so embedded in our understandings that we can sometimes conform without consciously choosing the conforming behaviors. For example, Ivanna Kick Ya leans in towards me at a practice and embarrassed, murmurs,

I only shaved half a leg because the water turned cold. But at least I shaved under my arms. That’s the important part.

While she often speaks of the empowerment of being a tough “derby girl,” clearly, in other ways, she conforms to broader cultural gender expectations. This is typical of many of the participants. When I asked Apocahips Wow what identifying as female meant to her, she replied:

Um, I like to get my nails done *laughs*
That’s like the super girly part of me is
that I really like to get my nails done. I
don’t know why, but like, if I’m coming
here to work, I like to look, you know - I’m
interacting with a lot of people, so I like to
look - be put together.

She later backtracks and tells me that clothing and makeup do not necessarily make one a woman. However, it is significant that this was her immediate response. There was little to no hesitation for her to note that being female entailed feminized beauty rituals. This is a testament to the difficulty in fully rejecting stereotypical gender expectations. While she is observed above talking about how comfortable she has become with her size, she is here noting that getting her nails done is important for her sense of feeling “put together.” This reveals that doing gender is not an “all or nothing” endeavor, but a repeated accomplishment, and in each moment, in each situation, we more or less follow or reject the status quo. The result is a more complex, more nuanced depiction of gender, and of our gendered selves, than the categories suggest. Note how Joanna Piece-O-Me compares herself to her teammates:

I’m surrounded by a lot of fit women with
bodies that I see as ideal compared to myself,
and sometimes I feel like derby actually makes
it worse for me because there are more fit
women around me in derby than anywhere else.
I hate bout photos because they make me
incredibly self-conscious and feel like everyone
sees what I see.

While most of the skaters I spoke with note how they are prouder and more accepting of their bodies after joining roller derby, there are still a couple of examples like this one, where the combination of tight-fitting outfits and relatively-slimmer women makes larger women feel self-conscious, even embarrassed by the contrast. Indeed, one can feel empowered in some respects and still feel trapped by the broader cultural expectations of gender. After all roller derby is but one setting in the lives of these women; after practice, they return to families, jobs, and social groups that often still promote cultural gender standards. The participants themselves appear largely unaware of the contradictions until some aspect of their conformity with stereotypical femininity emerges in conversation. Then, as with Apocahips Wow's mention of getting her nails done above, they tend to look sheepish, apologetic. This is a true testament to the difficulty in dismantling the status quo when the status quo *is* our cultural toolkit.

If the women are transformed pertaining to gender by their experiences in roller derby, then we might expect the gender structure to reflect this transformation. However, similar to the female prisoners in Gorga's (2017) study, the gender system that emerges more closely approximates the traditional model of gender relations, with more masculine, aggressive women dominating the discourse while more feminine women complain quietly behind the scenes or leave the league altogether. Those who exhibit more stereotypically-masculine traits, such as off-track aggression, interrupting others' speech, using a deeper, more authoritative tone, tend to be the ones wielding the most influence over the league. Betty BlockHer, Arya Brave, and Princess Slay Ya seemed to actually be in charge, despite the "for skaters, by skaters" rhetoric that is oft repeated and even printed in by-laws for most leagues. Behind the scenes, skaters like

Angelicatastrophe note that there is an inner circle that seems to make all of the decisions, and “you have to get a special invite to hang with the cool kids.” Similarly, Ginger Slap expressed bitterly in her interview that, “most skaters don’t seem to have a voice” because the power to effect policy lies in the hands of a select few.

Angelicatastrophe is probably one of the most feminine skaters on the league - she still selects outfits with care, she is open about her battles with mental illness, and often appears needy and emotional to other skaters. She frequently asked for confirmation that she was performing well enough, and cried often. Around the same time I stopped attending practices for observation, Angelicatastrophe was asked to leave the team because she was not considered a “team asset.” In this respect, it seems that empowerment in roller derby is only available to women who do not act overtly feminine. Note the tension here between wanting to appear welcoming to all women and also to reject the cultural standards of femininity.

In contrast, those who seem to wield the most influence over the direction of the league tend to be the most masculine. For example, Betty BlockHer frequently fails to make the attendance percentage (60%) required by the league in order to be eligible to skate in bouts. However, the idea that she should not be allowed to play has only been brought up once, and was immediately shot down because, “We can’t lose such a strong hitter.” The skaters do not interpret their behavior in masculine terms - instead, seriousness and skill level seem to be euphemisms that mask the masculinity being performed. Princess Slay Ya, for example, notes that she cuts an intimidating presence, as does Betty BlockHer, but notes that:

People who are good at this sport are people - people who are passionate about it tend to be intimidating.

Betty BlockHer and Arya Brave are both also known as prone to physical aggression that others deem excessive. At an away game I observed, Betty BlockHer made a point to lean down, putting her face very close to the face of an NSO who had penalized her for leaving the penalty box before she was released. The goal was clearly to intimidate, and left the NSO visibly shaken. In the same game, BlockHer hit an opponent in the chest hard enough to give her whiplash, and grinned widely as she was being ejected from the game. Arya's own teammates often complain about her flagrant disregard for the "douchebag rule," and unspoken rule in roller derby that maintains that you never use more force than necessary on an opponent, lest you hurt them. This rule is as old as the newest incarnation of roller derby, and when discussed, is noted to be an explicit attempt to avoid the type of careless, harmful aggression that often characterizes professional football. Finally, a disagreement between Arya Brave and Pearl Jammer, a meeker, shyer, quieter skater, led to Pearl leaving the league in tears, as other teammates sided with the tough, aggressive Arya.

The situation at Mid-City Maulers (MCM) is a bit more complex. Chin Up Buttercup and Suzie SlamHer both dominate all league activity, and opposing them seems to be taboo. Indeed, Jamtastic left MCM during my observations, and when I asked her why she was quitting, she told me she "just couldn't take their mess" anymore. Chin Up and Suzie are unique as leaders because unlike the other leaders observed in other leagues, these women were less athletically-skilled, and both took great pains to perfect their bout day makeup and accessory ensemble. While stereotypically feminine in appearance, the demeanor is gruff and uncompromising. Both women promote the image throughout the league that skaters obey their rules or leave.

CCC and DDD is organized differently from most other roller derby leagues, in that they pay a coach to professionally coach them. They adhere to the motto that, “what coach says, goes.” At a practice immediately following a double header in which both teams won, the head coach berated the skaters for being “lazy,” telling them that the only reason they won was because the other team happened to “suck” more than they did, and if they were to go up against a “real” team, they would surely lose. This is typical behavior for the coach, who is infamous in the roller derby community. An official, Fleur de Lethal, who worked the MRDA championships that I observed in 2015, tells me that the coach yelled at his team so much and so loud at the bench that day that the officiating crew actually debated ejecting him. Ejecting a coach is rare enough that I never knew such a thing was possible.

I asked Helen of Destroy, a CCC skater, if she would like to comment on her coach’s reputation within the derby community. She replied:

So growing up, I ran track my whole life
and so I ran track in college and in High
School, so I’ve been always really competitive,
so to me I’m used to that kind of coaching,
and wanting to win and stuff.

What Helen is referring to here is the traditional model of sport that emphasizes winning and aggression as a motivating force. She is affirming that CCC is the kind of organization that embodies this traditional model. DDD skater JJ Blocker seconds this in his discussion of the coach of these leagues. He says:

It [the coach’s attitude] is what you have to
deal with if you want to win. He’s trained
more champions than most, so you put up
with the fact that he’s a little gruff because
you know he know his stuff.

Blocker is conveying his perception of the league of which he is a member. He is depicting a league of obedient athletes who willingly place their trust in a man who attempts to embody a hegemonic masculine leadership style because they collectively believe that winning is the most important goal.

All of those who lead their teams were very familiar with the traditional, more masculine model of sport thanks to their childhood participation in sport. It seems reasonable that those who observed this model from the outside might have found it distasteful, as bell hooksyouup, whose name is a play on that of social scientist bell hooks, tells me when explaining why she had never really played sports as a child. It also seems reasonable that those raised on that model would be less likely to question its validity. Indeed, in the case of CCC and DDD, the majority of skaters on both leagues are lifelong athletes, with several even competing on the Olympic level in the sports they played prior to joining the roller derby community.

This results in a very complicated organization, where the members actively promote a message of empowerment that challenges traditional gendered expectations, but off the track, often end up reconstructing the more traditional, masculine-headed hierarchy that reflects and reinforces the status quo.

DDD is an atypical league due to its organization and centralized leadership. My data do not allow me to speak to men's leagues that are more typical. However, there is some evidence from my interviews that suggests that men in roller derby need to show that they are supportive - and in some ways, subordinate - to women and women's roller derby. No female skaters ever tried to legitimize their participation in roller derby by highlighting their support of men's roller derby, but both of the men I interviewed who

were not part of DDD told me that they view their role in derby as supportive of the women in their “sister” leagues. For example, when I ask referee and skater Skate Crime how and why he got involved with roller derby, he tells me:

I saw roller derby about six years ago. I thought it was amazing and my wife instantly wanted to get involved, and I wanted to support her so I started as a Non-Skating Official for the team she join, and found out about men’s derby and when I did I hadn’t played competitive sport since college and I missed playing competitive sports, I’m very competitive. That was kind of a motivation to join as a player, but even before I became a referee I still volunteered a lot, as I found out more about the sport and more about how women specifically join this sport, I started to kind of believe in its mission.

Additionally, Skate Crime acknowledges that women’s roller derby is the standard that drives the sport when he tells me:

It’s [roller derby] equalizing, because women “control” the sport by large, women run the sport, women compete in the sport, and it’s acknowledged that women are driving the whole thing.

This is perhaps unique to roller derby, in that male participants seem to *need* to acknowledge that the women of roller derby are the ones who control the direction and image of the sport. They also seem to be aware of the difference. As male skater Violent Bob noted about participating in a sport where the women’s team brings in larger crowds than his own, “it’s interesting, that’s for sure.”

A major reason men may find the need to justify their existence in the sport because that existence is controversial from the start. A sizable proportion of female derby players oppose the inclusion of men in roller derby at all. Indeed, the roller derby

community has been divided about this ever since the first men's teams were established in Chicago and New York City in 2007. Those opposed argue that roller derby is "all about" women's empowerment, and including men dampens this mission. The fear is that men's roller derby will "take over," becoming more popular and therefore dominant, and that the hypermasculine model of sports that is characteristic of male-dominated sports like football will become the culture of roller derby. In this view, it is therefore "pro-woman," feminist even, to support the exclusion of men from roller derby. (Midwestern Roller Derby) MRD skaters largely fall into this camp, with some becoming openly hostile when asked about men's roller derby.

Those in favor of men in roller derby - like every Capital City Crusher (CCC) skater with whom I spoke - argue that it is feminist to *support* inclusion. They contend that women are just as strong, just as fast, just as tough, as men, and that there is no legitimate reason for the exclusion of one gender from the sport. There is also a sizable proportion of skaters that seem to feel this way across the country; in areas where both men's and women's leagues exist, they often practice together, scrimmage one another, and officiate for each other's games. Many of this persuasion point out that if we are not inclusive of men, we risk excluding nonbinary persons, which seems to contradict the tenets of roller derby. For example, Diagon Allie tells me, "How are we empowering anyone if we're excluding our trans-sisters?"

The officials organize separately from the skaters in most leagues. They still have a gender hierarchy, but it manifests a little differently. I turn now to gender performance among roller derby officials.

Roller Derby Officials and Gender

Officials in roller derby are almost as numerous as the skaters. The experience of roller derby is quite different for officials. There is a fairly stark hierarchy within roller derby that I observed as virtually incessant throughout my time in the field. Team members (those who are official “derby players”) enjoy the highest-status. Team members are further stratified, as I showed above, by ability, with higher-skilled skaters often receiving “all-star” labeling and status, with all-star jammers being afforded the highest-status of all league members in most cases. After skaters are skating officials (SO) or referees. As Skate Crime, a skater-turned-official, explained to me, SOs are afforded higher status than non-skating officials (NSOs) because, “At least they skate.” This hierarchy leads to participants having different experiences based on their group membership (SO, NSO, skater) within the league.

The low-status of NSOs was most notably revealed to me when, after two years of volunteering as an NSO for one of the teams I observed, I began interviewing for this project. Roughly a half-dozen skaters that I interviewed were oblivious to the fact that I volunteered with their league, introducing themselves to me when we scheduled interviews as though we were strangers. They expressed surprise to discover that I had been part of the background “noise” at all of their home games for over two years. A major artifact of NSOs relative low status is their invisibility. This is ironic given their standard uniform (bright pink tees) and their presence in the dead center of the track. Skate Crime underscores the invisibility of NSOs in her expression of irritation at how many people refer to officials by saying, “The officials...and NSOs, too.” First, and perhaps most obvious, the designation “NSO” includes the word “official,” so to list them in addition to the non-descript “officials” is redundant. Second, the frequency with

which this happens (virtually every time I have ever heard anyone refer to a group of mixed officials) demonstrates that including the NSOs is an afterthought.

This is similar to the less visible work of the domestic laborer. Just as the domestic laborer keeps the household functioning, a roller derby bout cannot happen without NSOs. NSOs keep the score, they maintain the game clock, and they time penalties. They maintain the paperwork that is the sole record that a bout occurred, a critical task for sanctioned game play. They maintain the basic housekeeping, then, of any bout. Despite this, many leagues go through a period in which they have a hard time retaining NSOs because they feel unappreciated. MRD went through this during my observations, as several NSOs suddenly became aware that other leagues nearby offered free meals or merchandise coupons as a token of appreciation for NSOs on game day. In situations like this, it is typically the longest-tenured NSO (in this particular case, it was me) to first, reassure the NSOs that they are valued, and then, to attempt to mediate. My attempts to talk to skaters about NSO retention were mixed. Lower-status skaters like Apocahips Wow and Luna No Good expressed the sentiment that, as volunteers, NSOs should be made to feel as welcome as possible. Higher-status skaters like Princess Slay Ya argued that NSOs should take more initiative to include themselves in off-the-track skater-held events because “skaters are awkward people, and it’s hard for us to approach [NSOs].” Thus, the onus for making NSOs feel valued was placed on the NSOs themselves. It is actually rare for NSOs and skaters to interact at all, save for the scant required interactions in game play. The fact that NSOs take on this more feminized “housekeeping” labor, along with their underappreciation within many leagues, underscores the idea that, despite the transformative image skaters present, the gender status quo is reproduced within many leagues in roller derby.

With respect to status, referees are centered between skaters and NSOs. They often have a closer relationship with NSOs, but there are many referees that are intentionally rude and condescending to NSOs. For example, Sarah Impalin' fills both NSO and SO positions, depending upon the needs of the league. I observed a double header in which Impalin' served as an SO in the first game, and then changed and filled the role of an NSO. A male referee, Al B Watchinyu, was observed by myself and affirmed by two others as treating Impalin' like an equal for the first game. He appeared, by all accounts, to treat her similarly to the way he treated the other referees on the track. During the second game, however, where she was an NSO, I noticed that he spoke condescendingly to her. On one occasion during this game, he leaned over her and explained the rules to her in a haughty tone. She recounted this scene to me, as well, noting that, "He didn't question my rules knowledge until my shirt color changed." This exchange reifies the established hierarchy that affords greater status to skating officials versus NSOs in a rather stark way.

During my observations with MRD, NSOs began to organize their own "after party" to gather and socialize after a game, consciously segregating themselves from skaters and referees alike. bell hooksyouup notes that the motive behind this was for NSOs to feel comfortable, rather than feeling like they had crashed someone else's party. In other words, they failed to fully integrate with the community in which "everyone is welcome." Their relatively lower status all but excluded them from the feeling of sisterhood and camaraderie other participants report.

Among referees alone, there seems to be a gender hierarchy. There is a certification process for referees that is dependent upon 1) desire to become certified (it is not required) 2) demonstrated knowledge of the rules of roller derby, 3) evaluations

from skaters, fellow referees, and Head NSOs of game performance. There are five levels of certification. The majority of certified officials are men, and this disparity becomes larger the higher the level of certification (WFTDA.org). This creates a hierarchy in which male referees are more likely to be in positions of authority over female referees, since there is a deference given to certified referees under the assumption that higher levels of certification are tantamount to greater knowledge of the sport. Again, this is in direct contrast to the image that individual skaters present of an inclusive community.

However, even where there is no difference in certification level, there seems to be greater respect and opportunity given to more masculine SOs over more feminine SOs, seemingly regardless of gender. For example, male SO Acid Reign relays to me how he observed a female SO get passed up for the opportunity to skate in a game in favor of a more masculine male SO:

[The head referee] said that he had one position open on the officials' roster for the next game, and so he asked [male SO] and [female SO] who wanted it, and uh, [female SO] said, "I'd like to but if you prefer -" and [male SO] cut her off and said, "I'll do it," and so the head ref picked the guy, even though [female SO] can clearly skate circles around that dude.

In an environment in which staffing decisions are made without any system of accountability, this result is hardly surprising. As Williams (1992) notes, men in settings with heavy concentrations of women tend to be given advantages that propel them into higher-status positions. She observes that men in female-dominated professions like nursing tend to be promoted at a much faster rate than equivalent female nurses. While roller derby is a leisure pursuit, the same pattern seems to hold true. The example above

shows that a less-qualified male skater with the same tenure on the team can be given greater opportunities than his more-talented counterpart.

Notice here that Acid Reign reveals that the “deciding factor” giving the skating opportunity to the male SO over the female SO seems to be her kindness, her willingness to pass on the opportunity as a courtesy to her colleague. Kindness is considered not only a feminine trait, but a required feminine trait in settings where women must be assertive (Pierce 1996) such as when she is in a position of authority. Indeed, during a quadruple header I observed in which two women shared the Head Referee position, both took pains to let the other officials know before the games began that, in the words of Damage Patch Kid:

If I sound curt or gruff, I don't mean to be.
It's not personal - it's a way of coping with
the heavy demands of the bout. Things move
fast once the game starts, so if I seem like I'm
being mean, please know I don't mean to be.

During all of the games I observed, I have never heard a male referee preemptively explain his behavior. This distinction reveals that even in a setting supposedly focused on women's empowerment and transcending traditional gender stereotypes, in mixed-gender groups, like referee crews often are, those traditional gender expectations are still effectively shaping interactions. Female SOs are expected to maintain the balance between assertiveness and kind. They have to be assertive, because it is the job of all SOs to enforce the laws of roller derby and to defend their calls when asked. Referees are expected to be loud in making their calls - females, especially, repeatedly receive feedback from skaters and NSOs that they need to be louder. However, at a certain point, “loud” can sound aggressive, which then leads to grumbling among skaters that

some referees are just “power drunk.” As the example above illustrates, female referees feel the pressure to maintain that balance.

In addition, in accordance with predictions about women’s influence in mixed-gender groups (Ridgeway 2011), *Skate Crime* and *Acid Reign* both note that female referees seem more likely to have their calls questioned by other referees, even when no referees are certified. This line of research holds that, when all things are equal, men’s opinions are more highly-valued and more likely to be accepted than women’s. So, it is understandable that in the derby setting, when a referee crew is gender diverse, women’s contributions would be questioned more frequently.

Gender, Stigma Management, and Roller Derby

It took me about a year before I got comfortable saying
things out loud - Princess Slay Ya

It is well-established in the social sciences that female athletes are often considered deviant in contemporary US society (Adams et al 2005; Hargreaves 1994; Messner 1988; Theberge 2012). The idea here is that athleticism is a masculine trait, and not appropriately embodied by women. Messner (1988) notes that historically, when contemporary conditions seem to be threatening the dominance of masculinity in broader society, sport becomes an important space for reaffirming and validating masculinity. The aggression, physicality, and strength that is characteristic of American sports models is decidedly masculine, and therefore validates masculine “superiority” by displaying men achieving feats of physical prowess that are presumably unattainable by women (Adams et al 2005; Hargreaves 1994; Messner 1988; Theberge 2012). Indeed, sport is often considered so firmly a masculine endeavor that, as Cahn (1995) notes, women who participate in sport are often negatively stereotyped as overly “mannish” or

as lesbians. In other words, they are deviant *because* of their participation in sports, based on the notion that women who participate in sports are less than “real” women (Cahn 1995; Blinde and Taub 1992).

This stigma creates in female athletes a need to balance the desire to assert themselves as athletes and to manage or deflect that stigma. According to Goffman (1963), a *stigma* is a negative attribute that is experienced as a contradiction between how we see ourselves and reflected appraisals. The experience of stigma is negative, and the individual will typically seek to distance themselves from the stigma. *Stigma management*, then, refers to any strategy the individual utilizes to dissociate from the stigma. As I discuss in chapter two, one of these strategies is known as *defensive othering*. Defensive othering entails, first, drawing an in-group/out-group distinction between two subcategories of a marginalized group. An example of this might be gender, where a person identifies as male, then draws a distinction between individuals within and without his group, *males*. Next, defensive othering involves denigrating the outgroup as a way of demonstrating one’s position as an elite within the marginalized group.

Within roller derby, women still actively engage in these practices of stigma management. As Angelicatastrophe tells me when I ask about how she thinks others see derby participants:

It’s just like the stereotype of softball, that they’re all lesbians, and it just bothers me. Not that there’s anything wrong with that, I just don’t like that it’s assumed that we’re all lesbians.

She seems to be reacting to the tendency of outsiders to assume that roller derby participants are gay. Further, it is not only heterosexual women who resent the stereotype. As Betty BlockHer tells me in an interview with her and her girlfriend:

I think we get lumped into categories as “Oh, strong independent women: hmph, lesbians.”

Another skater, Angelicatastrophe, relays an incident in which she attended a relative’s wedding. Friends of her relative at the wedding asked her where her girlfriend was. She explained that she was not gay, and did not have a girlfriend. The friend exclaimed, “But I saw pictures of you on Facebook! You play roller derby!” The friend clearly assumed that playing roller derby and being sexually attracted to women were synonymous.

It seems that the primary way that roller derby participants deal with this particular stigma is via insulation from the non-derby aspect of society. Many of my respondents reported that roller derby “takes over” their lives, and it is something they embrace. They actively seek out other roller derby participants for networking and socialization. They create, in roller derby, a safe space from those who would defame the sport or its participants. They construct an “us-vs.-them” that draws boundaries between roller derby participants and the rest of the world, where “us” is an understanding, sympathetic minority and “they” perpetually fail to understand “us.”

Apocahips Wow informed me that her boyfriend was urging her to leave roller derby. According to her, he did not understand why it was so important. “He just wants me home,” she says. She left the league shortly after telling me this, and did not return until after the relationship was over.

Referee Acid Reign noted that it is simply difficult to maintain relationships with “non-derby folk.” “They just don’t get why we’re so passionate...and quite frankly, I

don't get why they're not." I have personally noticed this since beginning this project, as well. I suffered a serious injury that required that I walk around with a medical boot for several weeks. Dozens of acquaintances in that time frame spoke to me about my injury, and many assumed it was roller-derby related, despite the fact that I do not actually skates.

It is important to note that, in addition to distinguishing between an in-group and an out-group, the distinction made for defensive othering may be to contrast "elite" and ordinary members of a marginalized group. An example of defensive othering can be found in a study of college women, in which Armstrong et al (2014) noted that the use of the term "slut" to describe other women was for the women she observed to stake their claim as a member of the "good" women - the "elite" category of a marginalized group, *women*. In roller derby, this latter form of defensive othering seems to be a common way to draw distinctions between "strong, empowered" women and "normal" women. This is yet another way that women reconcile the dissonance between skaters like Arya Brave claiming that they do not get along with women and their simultaneous desire for "sisterhood."

Roller derby participants, like other female athletes, are often labeled as lesbians, a way of noting their supposed deviance as athletes (Blinde and Taub 1992; Krane 1997; Sartore and Cunningham 2009). In addition to the stigma outlined above, roller derby participants also contend with stereotypes about women as weak, dramatic, and feminine. Thus, roller derby participants find themselves with the paradoxical responsibility for both asserting that they are not deviant women *and* demonstrating that they are empowered because they are not like stereotypical women. In other words, they must simultaneously demonstrate that being strong and athletic is not deviant or

abnormal for women *and* distance themselves from being considered weak, soft, and ultra-feminine. In the words of CATastrophic Menace when asked about her gender identity, “Like, I identify as female, but I don’t think I have most of those things that females supposedly have.” Skaters like Menace distinguish between “typical” women and “us” to dissuade others from perceiving them as stereotypically feminine.

Emotion Management

Finally, emotion management is a common strategy for impression management, and one that has been explored in both the workplace (Hochschild 1983) and the home (Erickson 2005). Less explored is the role of emotion management in volunteer organizations, making this an important contribution of the present work.

As discussed further in chapter two, idea of emotion management comes from the work of Arlie Hochschild, whose groundbreaking work on the emotion management of flight attendants (1983) pioneered this area of research. She found that, along with normative expectations for behavior, there are also normative expectations for emotional displays in a variety of social situations. For example, it would be inappropriate to show sadness at a birthday party, or for a cashier to scowl at work.

Part of the goal of emotion management is to convey a particular sentiment in the moment. Another goal is to convey specific self-meanings. For example, a mother who maintains the outward appearance of being calm and peaceful despite feeling anger is not only trying to shape the flow of the interaction via restraint, she is also conveying to others her belief that mothers should be calm in the face of conflict.

As with other social norms, we do not simply regulate our own emotions, but rather we also regulate the emotions of those with whom we interact. This is a form of

sanctioning in which we convey to others that we believe their emotions are inappropriate given the current social context. I contend that in roller derby leagues have their own set of emotion norms that are designed to convey a specific impression of the kind of woman who plays roller derby.

First, derby girls are expected to be tough and strong. We see evidence of emotion regulation in this respect when skaters are injured. Referee Bill Igerent fell and broke his hip during a practice I was observing. Attempts to move the referee yielded screams of pain. I overhear skater, Helen of Destroy, complaining to teammate Arya Brave:

Oh god, what a baby. Like, I broke my leg and
Did you hearing me crying like a baby? So dramatic.

Comments like Helen's inevitably lead to swapping of stories of bravery. The most notorious among Midwestern Roller Derby is that of a skater who suffered a severe ankle break during a game. Though her foot was bent at an angle that betrayed the obvious break, she remained fairly calm. Spectators watched as she calmly asked for her purse so she could call her husband, then requested music to wait for the ambulance by. What stories like this reveal is that there is right way to express pain in roller derby - with a sense of humor and nonchalance.

This expectation extends to mental health, as well. Arya Brave is one of many derby participants who suffer from severe anxiety. She discovered that she needed mental health treatment when teammates suggested she get help for outbursts early on in her derby career. She gets frustrated on one occasion during a game, and is crying. I overhear Angelicatastrophe grumble to a teammate, "I don't know what her fucking problem is, but she needs to get over it now."

Crying is clearly associated with weakness in this setting. In one practice, Diagon Allie feels slighted by the coaches and I notice her eyes well up. I ask if she is okay, and she quickly modifies her outward expression, wiping her eyes, shaking her head, and looking at me with a large smile. “It’s fine,” she says.

I see the expectation that negative emotions be contained as an extension of stigma management. Expressing pain or weakness endangers the performer’s credibility as “not like other women.”

In contrast, the expression of positive emotions like joy seems almost a requirement. This helps convey the “sisterhood” image to newcomers. At a MCM practice, I listen as Coach Han Yolo admonishes the skaters for coming to practice in a foul mood:

We come here to get away from the crap of our ordinary lives, to be with each other and have fun and skate...not to hear your bullshit about your ex or your job or your teammate that’s pissing you off. If you need to do that shit, keep it out of practice.

Note that this is an explicit expression of the expectation that all skaters express positive emotion. It certainly does give the impression, a room full of smiling women, that the atmosphere is truly familial. However, as Hochschild (1983) discusses, expressed emotion and truly-felt emotion are not always one and the same. The implicit message here, similar to the “drama free” expectation, is to keep your negative emotions - and presumably the thoughts and concerns that lead to those emotions - to yourself. This actually contradicts the notion of a sisterhood by precluding the possibility of genuine support.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the strategies that individuals in roller derby use to manage reflected appraisals of themselves. Skaters “do gender” to convey to others the kind of person they want others to see them as. For some, that means showing their conformity to stereotypical gender norms, such as apologizing for not having shaved legs. For many, it means demonstrating that one intentionally embodies a more marginalized gender identity. By defining their leagues as “sisterhoods,” female skaters “do” gender by identifying themselves as a collective of a given type of women - supportive, empowering, and cooperative.

Another, related strategy, is defensive othering. Here, skaters refer to a negative “other,” in this case, ultra-feminine women, to demonstrate what they are *not*. This negative self-definition effectively defines the skaters themselves as the “opposite” of that which they are not.

Finally, skaters engage in emotion management to modify reflected appraisals. Here, they demonstrate that even something as physical as pain must be expressed in appropriate ways in order to define themselves, and their leagues, in a specific light.

CHAPTER 6: MANAGING REFLECTED APPRAISALS OF ORGANIZATIONS

I think that we're just like a - we're trying to be a positive influence on people. Like I feel that we are such a great team, like we, there are charities that we donate to and I think that we're just, like, a positive force. - *Apocahips Wow when I ask her to identify the benefits of roller derby.*

As I have discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 5, we select behaviors, more or less consciously, in order to modify others' appraisals of us. We all carry multiple identity commitments; for example, skater, mother, daughter, friend. In some situations we do not worry about reflected appraisals of some identities and focus on others. For instance, when a skater goes to a conference with her child's teacher, she is less concerned with how the teacher perceives her as a skater, and is instead likely more focused on being perceived as a good mother. This process is frequently non-conscious. In this chapter, I add a new element to this process.

I suggest that we can become invested in an organization to the extent that we want others to see it the same way we do. These roller derby participants have certain understandings of their league and their sport that they want others to accept as reality. Here, I explore the strategies individuals use in their attempts to manage the way others perceive certain organizations. Theoretically, one could become so invested that they are motivated to manage appraisals of any organization of which they are a part. This is a major contribution of the present work - to extend our concept of reflected appraisals for identity commitments to include organization-level impression management.

I explore these issues in a volunteer organization because the processes should be more explicit and easier to detect in such a setting. Roller derby leagues tend to be non-profit organizations and boast about being skater-owned and operated. The grassroots

nature of these organizations makes it more likely that individuals will be interested in influencing how others see the organization, since they are literal stakeholders in the league's continuity and success.

In this chapter, I detail the main strategies I observed roller derby participants using to control or manage reflected appraisals of their league and roller derby writ large. In my own data, however, when individuals make claims about "roller derby," they are typically implicitly making claims about their own league. This is because leagues are independent with grassroots origins - most individuals' understandings of roller derby are based on their own league. Through the use of any number of these strategies, we can see individuals laboring to confirm these organizational identities.

I identify three major strategies for organization-level impression management: doing gender, defensive othering, and authentication. Doing gender entails the same process I outline in Chapters 2 and 5. The difference here is that, instead of performing one's own gender, one is choosing behaviors (either consciously or not) that are designed to convey a specific *gendered* perspective of the organization. Likewise, the process of defensive othering is similar for organizations as it is for individuals. Here, participants compare their leagues to others in such a way that their own leagues look favorable relative to others. Finally, authentication represents explicit attempts on the part of roller derby participants to convince others to see roller derby as a "real" sport that is professional, athletic, and evocative of skill.

Authentication

There are countless examples of media articles and promoters that remind us that roller derby is a "real" sport. In fact, the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) logo even includes a tagline that proclaims authenticity: "Real. Strong.

Athletic. Revolutionary.” This reveals what they value most, and one of the most important concepts appears to be “real.”

Much of this desire for authenticity stems from memories of roller derby’s past. Roller derby prior to the twenty-first century resurrection of roller derby was a spectacle in the style of professional wrestling. It was televised, with staged hits, fights, and spectacular falls (Deford 1971). Roller derby from the 1950s through the mid-1980s was televised several times per week. This overexposure ensured that most people have heard of the wild antics and theater of the “old” roller derby (Joulwan 2007). This perspective of roller derby is one that modern roller derby participants must contend with regularly. The problem, as exemplified by a reporter for the online news forum, Madison.com, is that roller derby is frequently seen by outsiders as entertainment rather than sport:

The mainstream media, in general, do not cover roller derby as a sport. Articles and newscasts focus on the showy part of roller derby: the fishnets, the stage names and the ‘professional-by-day, rollergirl-by-night’ theme. The coverage produced by most publications - from the small daily newspapers to the media giants - rarely appears in the sports section. Instead, it’s considered entertainment news.

Skaters train extensively for roller derby, often training for months to even years before playing in an official bout. Understandably, they want that work recognized and respected, not reduced to a caricature of itself. Instead, they actively attempt to create the perspective in others that roller derby is a legitimate sport that people with skill train and fight to play. For this reason, there are ubiquitous references to how “real”

roller derby is. For example, Van Velsor (2008) from the San Francisco region describes roller derby for his readers:

The competition can be fierce and fast, a cacophony of rolling skates, hollow wood, cheers of the fans, shouts of the players and that peculiarly identifiable sound of human meat slamming into the ground.

This rather graphic depiction of roller derby conveys a sense of toughness, of brute competition, that is missing from accounts that liken roller derby to professional wrestling. Playing up the brutality of the game is a common strategy for authenticating roller derby. My informants never mention this, likely due to the fact that they knew, as an NSO, I did not need to be convinced. However, the announcers at every game I observed mentioned it at least once. This is to convey to newcomers how they should perceive of the spectacle they are watching. In addition, this narrative abounds in media accounts. For example, in an interview with the press, one skater quipped, “Do not kid yourself. This is a contact sport. I once broke my finger on a boob” (Downs 2009).

Another claims:

Players clash, crunch and collide with such ferocity that spectacular wipeouts are the norm, with broken bones and hospitalisations not uncommon.
(Craughton 2009)

Again, skaters use imagery of violence and injury to convey the authenticity of the league. The idea then, is that “real” sports are characterized by violence and injury. Reporters like this anonymous one from the Washington Post (April 21, 2009) show the need for this authentication when they report on their own misconceptions:

Like a kid who thinks she can be a doctor until she realizes how much blood is involved, I had the misconception that this wasn't a 'real' sport

and that it didn't require much training.

The ubiquitous references to violence and injury appear to be a way to legitimize the sport by comparing it to male-dominated contact sports, such as football. The following description underscores this notion, as a skater describes the misconceptions they deal with to a reporter:

The biggest stereotype we're trying to break is that it's fake...It's not. It's really real and it's empowering for women. We still have campy nicknames...We've got Cocoa Booty and Mary Lou Wreckin'. But nothing is fake.

This example reveals that, at least for some, there is an explicit goal to convince others to see roller derby as a legitimate. This is an attempt to manage reflected appraisals, but specifically, to manage the perceived impressions others have of *the organization*, as opposed to managing impressions of an individual. Further, this is not just an attempt to manage impressions of outsiders. Authentication also occurs as a way of integrating new skaters or volunteers into the community. For example, a skater out of San Antonio tells a reporter how she trains new skaters to be prepared for contact:

'I usually tell people, at some point or another, you're going to get hurt,' Feuerbacher said. 'Nothing we do is fake. If you see a girl hit a wall, that's because she wasn't expecting that, and she's hitting the wall. It's a pretty aggressive sport.'

Here, managing an organization's impressions is an important way of training newcomer's, to shape how they see the organization so that they can behave accordingly. The process is similar to that which we use to convince others to see us as we wish to be seen, just with a unique object of attention. Finally, the debate within roller derby about whether the use of derby pseudonyms should be abandoned is totally focused on the

issue of authentication. One issue with derby names stems from the fact that they are unregulated. While many leagues insist that roller derby is a family-friendly event, some names are not what many parents would want their (small) children to overhear. The international roller derby name roster (which is not nearly complete), lists seven derby names containing the word “fuck,” for example. They list 215 derby names and one league name containing the word “bitch.” Fifteen names on the list contain the word “slut,” and twenty-eight with the word “whore.” As blogger Ginger Snap (http://www.derbylife.com/2011/09/derby_names_not_ready_prime_time/) notes, this is problematic for those who endeavor to help roller derby attain mainstream popularity. She writes, “Do you think FoxSports is going to want to touch us when they hear that a skater’s name will always have to be censored like... “Clitty Clitty Bang Bang?”” Further, what message is being sent by a league that embraces skater names like “Rose Hypnot?” It certainly does not seem to be a mainstream message.

The WFTDA’s policy on this has always been that roller derby is skater-run. If skaters want names like “Mexi-cunt,” then that is allowable. If they vote and decide to do away with those names in favor of more consumer-friendly monikers, that would be fine, too. This debate then stalls under the umbrella of the broader debate about whether mainstream is even desirable.

Much discussion is given about mainstreaming, and this is, again, contentious. There are some who are ambivalent, or even opposed, to mainstreaming out of fear that outsiders will fail to “get it,” thus ruining the social dynamics of derby. They point to the fact that some teams are doing away with derby names, or the normalizing of a certain style of “uniform” for players (as opposed to the “bout fits” that are frequently discussed as a part of derby - fishnets, tutus, and so on). To these individuals, mainstreaming - or

creating uniformity to prepare for mainstreaming - dampens the self-expression aspect of derby, thus limiting women's empowerment.

Others argue instead that mainstreaming is good for skaters. This seems to be driven by a desire for relief from the frequency with which derby participants have to explain that, "yes, derby is a real sport," as opposed to its choreographed spectacle variation in the 1970s and 1980s that was so memorable for those outside of derby. Regardless, despite minor steps towards expansion to a wider audience (such as broadcasting the women's championship game on ESPN3 and hosting playoffs in countries other than the United States), roller derby appears to be in no real danger of being coopted by mainstream any time soon, derby names or not.

Since gender is omnipresent in our interactions, it is reasonable to expect that organizations may also be gendered. Just as we have an interest in our own gender presentation, it appears that we can also be motivated to shape the gender of an organization.

Organizational Doing Gender

As I discuss in Chapters 2 and 5, individuals "do" gender in order to convey to others the way we wish to be seen, relative to our gender. Under certain circumstances, my observations indicate, we also perform organizational gender. This entails utilizing the cultural information comprising our broader gender system to convey specific meanings to others about the organization. The first way that individuals in roller derby do this is via repeated references to their leagues as "sisterhoods."

The practice of referring to leagues as sisterhoods is incredibly common in roller derby. At the first practice after a long break, coach and skater Princess Slay Ya

addresses the skaters in attendance, reminding them to avoid letting conflict “fester,” telling them:

We’re a sisterhood [glances at the male referees]...
but we accept guys. Er, we’re a family.

Roller derby is often hailed as a revolutionary sport. As Simon Copland (2014) notes, the for-women-by-women endeavor is “a direct challenge to the male domination of sport.” As this reporter suggests, the “revolution,” to the extent that there is one, is a gender revolution. For instance, when I ask Sociosmash if she thinks roller derby has a feminist mission, she tells me:

To some extent yes because, I think everyone who plays it is, I assume, a feminist, because they’re doing something that’s not in line to what expectations are. I would generally say yeah, because it’s women doing everything for themselves.

Sociosmash notes that participants are defying cultural expectations, creating an organization that subverts the status quo. Media coverage also boasts about the potential of roller derby as a revolution:

“Gone are the days when male promoters called the shots while the women took all the hits on the track. The new roller derby leagues are likely to be organized, publicized, and operated by the skaters.” - Willis, Feb 2008

Note that this is not just about the women themselves. They are promoting a transformational gendered *organizations*. Diagon Allie tells me that she thinks outsiders view roller derby as collectives of “badasses.” This is seen by many as revolutionary. I ask Arya Brave how roller derby is viewed by others and she tells me:

I think their eyes have really opened because

girls can play sports, everybody knows that, but they don't really get to see women be assertive and aggressive and physical in away they do in derby.

From this perspective, roller derby itself, and its member leagues is transformational in that it shows people, often for the first time, the real potential of women in sport.

Women, like men, can be physical, aggressive, and strong.

Not everyone agrees that it is transformative. Some argue that the "boutfits" - a campy, sexualized blend of short shorts, fishnets, and makeup - preclude the opportunity for roller derby to be truly transformational. Apocahips Wow distinguishes between athletic teams and frivolous teams when I ask her why she left her last league:

Like, I know at [previous league] it was all about the cute outfits, uh, and you were always like, your boutfit, and it was all about fun, and like, it's still fun, but it's more, it's more serious fun. It's like, going for what you want and getting there.

For her, leagues seemed to exist along a continuum with "fun" on one end and "competitiveness" on the other. It is important to note that the use of boutfits tends to be an informal league decision. As Apocahips reveals, her entire previous league wore boutfits. Many leagues abandon the use of boutfits as they decide to become more competitive, favoring black capris and tank tops. Reporters have been known to question skaters as to why they should be taken seriously considering bout attire. For example, Geoff Griffin (2007) interviews skaters in Salt Lake City and concludes:

The new roller-derby movement already seems to have solved what is, unfortunately, a very old conundrum. Many people will not come to a women's sporting event simply to watch females do something athletic. There has to be something more. Of the most popular women's sports-tennis, figure skating, gymnastics-all rely heavily on the

appearance and clothing of the athletes. Roller derby simply acknowledges this, lets the skaters take control of it and then cranks the whole thing up a notch.

The reporter argues that the motive behind boutfits is marketing - skimpy, campy outfits attract people who would otherwise not be enticed to watch women's sports. This is controversial, as many women see themselves not as beholden to the male gaze, but finally free to express themselves as they see fit. As a Pittsburgh skater tells a reporter (Yogmas 2007) for a local paper:

"If we're going to be empowered women and try to break away from these stereotypes, why would we want to do the hair-pulling and the cat-fighting just to please a crowd?" says [skater]. "Because there's sex appeal to it? I don't think we care about that. There's such a big misconception that we're wearing these [clothes] because we want people to watch us in our outfits and not watch us skate. It's really because we've mastered the sport and now we can have fun with it."

This contradicts the conclusion that women in derby use sexy outfits to entice spectators. Instead, this view presents "boutfits" as the product of leagues of women filled with "masters" of their sport who can wear whatever they like. One of my own informants, Sarah Impalin' wears sparkly leg warmers and short skirts on bout day. I asked her why she chose her outfit, and her reply was simply, "Why not? It's fun." Depending on the league, either interpretation could be accurate. The distinction between those who favor "boutfits" as empowerment and those who view them as a hindrance to revolution have become part of the debate over how best to authenticate roller derby in the minds of spectators and other outsiders.

Defensive Othering

As I discuss in Chapter 5, defensive othering is a common strategy for conveying self-meaning by denigrating what we are *not*. Here, that same concept is applied to organizations. This process functions similarly to social identity theory predictions, discussed in Chapter 2, wherein group (organization) members convey meanings that present their group in a positive light relative to other groups. Roller derby participants utilize this strategy to present their leagues as better, more serious, and more harmonious than other leagues. One major way they do this is via frequent references to “drama.”

When observing a roller derby league, it is almost inevitable that someone will mention “drama.” *Drama* refers to conflict, tension, or discord among members of the same league. It is frequently mentioned by derby participants, usually as a way of denigrating another league or praising one’s own, or as a way of enhancing one’s own image by pointing out where another individual falls short. It is not uncommon to hear a transferring participant note that their former league was “drama-filled,” prompting their exit from that league.

Pascoe (2007) observes teenaged boys’ interactions at a high school to note how they achieve masculinity. She notes that the repeated use of the epithet, “fag” is a strategy for drawing a distinction between a stigmatized masculinity and the more highly-valued variant of masculinity with which they wish to be associated. The use of “drama” in roller derby, I argue, is a euphemism for stereotypical feminine behavior. Just as the boys in Pascoe’s (2007) study use the word “fag” to denote behavior or individuals that were not appropriately masculine, roller derby participants seem to be using “drama” as a way of identifying behavior inappropriate for roller derby. In short,

they are noting that they are not “typical” women. In this case, because roller derby is hailed as a sport that empowers women by freeing them from the constraints of stereotypical, mainstream femininity, such stereotypical behavior becomes inappropriate. “Drama” is an umbrella term in roller derby that refers to such stereotypically feminine behaviors as cattiness, pettiness, and emotionality. This is evidenced in Ritner’s (2009) article on roller derby recruitment in Sacramento:

Deep in the heart of Roseville at the Roller King skating rink, it’s derby girl recruiting season for the Sacred City Derby Girls, and they’re not interested in beauty queens or butterfly-chasers. They’re looking for athletes - women who work hard, bruise well, and live to show off their battle wounds to bars full of intimidated men.

“Beauty queens and butterfly-chasers” is presumably code to indicate weak, pretty, “soft” women. This is meant to be transformative - a space where women who are otherwise marginalized are suddenly “in charge.” In the words of reporter Morelli (2008), the message for outsiders is simple: “This is not a sport for the weak....It’s showing the world how to be real women.”

When there was drama in the leagues I observed, it usually ended with someone being ousted from the league. One example of this came from the conflict between Pearl Jammer and Arya Brave. As I mentioned above, Arya is an assertive, aggressive, muscular woman, and Pearl is a quiet, submissive, insecure woman, new to the league and recovering from a history of abuse. Their conflict initiated in private, and became volatile enough that they had to seek mediation from the league. The league’s leadership initially avoided dealing with it because, “we don’t have drama here. We can work things out like sisters.” However, the animosity between the two just grew. One could not have

a conversation with either woman without having to listen to them vent about the other. Finally, league leadership stepped in and informed Pearl that, if she was unable to get along with other skaters, she should consider taking a leave of absence or moving to another league. The same was not said to Arya. What this example shows us is that league leadership, when called to mediate “drama,” responded by working to rid the league of the more feminine of the skaters. This suggests that to this league’s leadership, “drama” is a feminine task.

From the outside, roller derby leagues appear harmonious. Each of the leagues I observed appeared close-knit, even familial from the outside. It was only after several observation sessions that cracks in the veneer of blissful harmony began to appear. Then, it became apparent that in some cases, deep-seated conflicts existed between various skaters. However, roller derby participants, particularly *female* roller derby participants, mention drama frequently. Several mentioned drama in interviews. For example, when I ask CATastrophic Avenger if there had ever been a case in her league where a romantic couple breaking up had a negative impact on the league itself, she begins by recounting one such instance, and that the tension “just went away on its own” because no one “dealt with it.” She then follows with, “I mean, we have drama, but it’s not as much as I hear that other leagues have, so...”

Karla Marx Ya tells me that the leadership in MRD constantly reminds skaters that “we are a drama-free league.” She feels like this is a warning to the skaters. “No one wants to be the one to bring the drama,” she tells me, so conflict is actively avoided. When faced with the reality of “drama” within her league, she quickly minimizes the severity of it, and deflects by referring to other leagues that presumably are more drama-laden.

The idea here is that “we” might be a group of women, but not like “those” women who “bring the drama.” It is a classic example of defensive othering. This, again, is a way of distinguishing between stereotypical women, and the marginalized women the sport attracts. It is a way for them to note that, though they claim to be unable to get along with women, some women can find comfort within their ranks. In this way, “we” are women who embody marginalized genders, and “they” are the stereotypical women with whom “we” fail to get along. For example, as Betty BlockHer tells me:

Generally, when you get a group of 35 women together, it will get weird, but the drama levelat [MRD] is relatively low and athletic.

Here, Betty contrasts drama and athleticism, implying that a league with a high “drama level” will also be characterized by low athleticism. The idea here, again, is that her league is represents the category of women that are better than the stereotypical, “drama-hungry” women that people are presumably more familiar with. Here, Apocahips Wow tells me how her league is just different from the rest:

I think that has a lot to do with our league, because you hear about leagues that have a *lot* of drama with the cliques and that...you know, there’s a league to the North that we get a lot of transfers from because they don’t want to deal with all the drama. So, I think it’s just that our league in itself doesn’t lend itself to drama.

Note here this underscores the idea that this “othering” is defensive in that she elevates the image of her organization at the expense of other leagues that presumably experience more drama than hers as a way of demonstrating a sort of legitimacy and

status for her own league. This is very similar to the notion many present that they are somehow different from the exemplars of the categories in which they claim membership.

An important observation here is that the skaters who criticize the prevalence of drama in other leagues describe those leagues as incredibly homogeneous. For example, when Apocahips Wow describes her former league, she complains that, “They were all about the drama.” Contrast this to when I ask her if she thinks there is a “typical derby girl:”

Like, I don't think so. I mean look at us [MRD]:
we have women of all shapes and sizes, and
different personalities...we have lesbians and
straight women, moms and young women...
No, there's no such thing as a typical derby girl.

Note the distinction between in-group and out-group evaluations. Here, “we” are a heterogeneous group of individuals, while “they” are a monolith.

Summary

My observations reveal that roller derby participants actively manage reflected appraisals of their leagues and, by extension, roller derby itself. The strategies they use are similar to those we use to manage individual reflected appraisals. They perform organizational gender and engage in defensive othering to shape the way outsiders and newcomers perceive of the organization - to influence what kind of organization they think a given league is. In addition, they grapple with the memories of roller derby as a theatrical, scripted spectacle by actively working to authenticate roller derby. They do this by focusing on injuries and violent contact to demonstrate how “real” the sport really is.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Amidst the whirl of skates, the screeching of whistles, and the screaming fans, individuals are working to shape how we interpret what we see. I spent twelve months observing leagues throughout the Midwestern United States. I observed them in interactions with each other, with newcomers, and with the public. I had the opportunity to interview 34 participants from several different leagues. These data allowed me to deeply explore the processes through which individuals engage in impression management.

In this project, I have shown that we can act to shape how others see an organization of which we consider ourselves a member. In my case study, roller derby leagues became organizations with stakeholders who engaged in impression management to convince others to see the organization as they did. This process layered over the processes of impression management we engage in as individuals.

In addition, I explored the strategies we use to manage reflected appraisals. For individuals, I revealed that roller derby participants engage in gender performance to convey a sense that they are the “right” kind of women, and to indicate that they are empowered and strong. They endeavor to dodge the stigma in that environment of being a culturally-appropriate feminine person by engaging in stigma management. They denigrate the cultural standard to demonstrate that that category does not apply. Finally, they employ emotion norms to convey the image of toughness by normalizing injuries and bragging about remaining calm, even amused, when one suffers an injury. They do this in seemingly contradictory, nuanced ways, revealing as

they do the difficulty of being consistently transformative when the status quo is as firmly embedded as it is.

For organizations, some of the same strategies are employed to manage the images of leagues. They engage in organizational gender performance, wherein they manage the gendered image of the leagues of which they are a part. They engage in defensive othering, as well, by denigrating other leagues that they feel are more undesirably feminine or weak than they are. Again, this is a means of defining one's own group by negating its presumed opposite. Finally, group members engaged in authentication of their league, and of roller derby in general. They repeatedly attempted to convince others that roller derby was "real," in part by focusing on the fact that skaters get injured.

I reveal the main impression management strategies that are associated with being a roller derby participant. Roller derby participants, particularly female participants, attempt to influence reflected appraisals to convince others to see them as strong, empowered, and equal to male athletes. They often see themselves as revolutionizing sport and transforming the gender status quo that posits women as weak and emotional. However, this is not a seamless, consistent presentation. Even as participants seek transformation and empowerment, they are held accountable to the cultural standards, which can be incredibly difficult to reject in the moment, particularly in the absence of readily-available cultural symbols for resistance.

There are volumes devoted to establishing that we engage in impression management to influence others to see us as we see ourselves. My data allow me to offer an innovation to this canon. Roller derby participants reveal another layer to the process of impression management. Not only do they engage in impression management to

shape how others see them, they also utilize impression management strategies to convey desired images of their roller derby leagues, and of roller derby in general. As I have shown here, the process is similar to that which they use to convey self-meanings. Some, in the case of gender performance and stigma management, even utilize the same strategies for self- and league-meanings.

Limitations

While the present project makes several important contributions to a variety of sociological subfields, there are a number of limitations. Gender comparisons would have been stronger had I been able to interview more men, for example. I was only able to interview three male skaters, each from different leagues. This prevented more detailed analysis of the ways in which male skaters might differ from female skaters in terms of the ways in which they engage in impression management.

While I attempted to interview and observe participants from a wide array of locations, the majority of my informants come from the Midwestern United States. It is unclear if, and how, my findings might be different with a broader sample from a more diverse array of locations.

Finally, without a comparative case, it cannot be determined whether my findings reflect a pattern that is exclusive to roller derby, or if there are other organizations that are similar. While I asked my interviewees for their opinion on this, I cannot go beyond speculation as to the uniqueness of roller derby for these processes. However, my data reveal several important features that future research will want to explore.

Key Contributions

Layered Impression Management

The present analysis reveals that we engage in impression management for some organizations. It also highlights strategies that can and have been used to this end.

Roller derby participants seek to shape the way others see their leagues through gender performance strategies, stigma management, and authentication. This is an important addition to the well-established findings on impression management. These processes layer onto our self-reflected appraisals. We balance our own identity commitments, choosing behaviors, depending on the situation, that manage reflected appraisals for any one of our identities. This project supports the idea that part of that collective of identity can include certain organizations. In this case, the leagues are grassroots organized, owner operated. This means that skaters are literal stakeholders in the organization. Their behavior, then, in shaping the image of the league is perhaps unsurprising.

Future research should explore the existence of this level of impression management in other types of organizations. It is possible that any organization that has a strong ideological identity may be ripe to induce members to engage in impression management. Political groups, some schools, activist organizations - these are all potential sites that should be considered by future research.

In addition, future research should explore the consequences of this additional layer of impression management. My data precluded the opportunity to explore situations in which various identity commitments conflicted. The addition of organization-identity commitments is expected to add another degree of strain. It is difficult to predict how this conflict or strain is ameliorated by the individual.

Researchers that explore how we respond to role conflict/strain among personal identities find that we eventually become so distressed that we try to distance ourselves from the relationships that are more likely to make the contradictory roles salient to minimize that distress (Burke and Stets 2009; Thoits 1991). As stress process and identity researchers alike predict for intrapersonal identities, I expect organizational identities to provide a source of fulfillment, self-esteem, and access to relationships that can provide important buffers against distress (Pearlin 1980, Thoits 1991). However, just as conflicts between intrapersonal identities can create additional stressors that lead to distress, I expect the same to occur when there are conflicts between the commitments of various organizational and intrapersonal identities.

Not only will future research want to explore the outcomes in terms of psychosocial well-being, it will also want to explore our responses to such conflict. When our organizational and individual identity commitments conflict, which identity commitments “win?” Which factors predict which identities win out this way? My data allow me to speculate on this. It seems that, under certain conditions, we may respond to the conflict by suppressing our own identity commitments in favor of the group identity. For example, I discuss Diagon Allie feeling slighted by her teammates in Chapter 5. She is nearly in tears, until she notices I am observing her. She immediately controls her emotional expression, and tells me it is probably a misunderstanding. As a strong, empowered woman, she could have asked for clarification as to why she was left out of the elite training group, or she could have demanded inclusion. However, she opted to manage her emotions, and in doing so, protected the league from questions about its treatment of its members. Interactions like this reveal the difficulty in

disrupting the status quo in practice, given the absence of an established cultural toolkit for transformation.

It is unclear, however, which conditions induce one to engage in organizational impression management instead of attending to one's personal identity commitments, and vice versa. It could be a situational response, or some individuals may be more likely to attend to one over the other. Future research will want to explore these relationships in multiple settings.

Transformative Gender Structures

A key contribution of this work is that it explores a rare example of a group of individuals attempting to create a transformative structure. These roller derby participants largely believe themselves to be a part of an organization that is innovative, transformative. They believe that they are creating a revolutionary shift in gender relations and gender expectations through roller derby. Thus, we get a chance to see the ways in which individuals try to change the status quo through management of reflected appraisals.

Despite proclamations that roller derby represents a new model of sport that does not rely on hypermasculinity, and the assertions that it is transforming the gender system, the roller derby leagues I observed did not appear to deviate too far from the masculine-dominant ideal already in place elsewhere. That is, despite this being a female-dominated setting, it still remained masculinity-dominant. Those who were seen as more masculine, male or female, tended to wield more authority and influence, in keeping with research on performance expectations (Ridgeway 2011).

Although not well-established in the literature, this is similar to findings in other single-sex settings, as I mentioned in Chapter 5. Gorga (2017) found that in a female

prison, the more masculine prisoners enjoyed higher status than other prisoners. For the most part, this line of research holds that these single-sex environments do little to transform gender relations, but instead seem to reproduce or reinforce the gender hierarchy. For example, Kraus (2014) reports that her belly dancing informants join to “play” with femininity, and that such leisure pursuits can lead to reduction in gender inequality. However, the belly dancers in her study participate in very culturally-appropriate gendered ways: the women, according to Kraus (2014) report that they join belly dancing because their children have grown up and moved out of the home, and they have “nothing” left to do. Rather than transformative, their participation in belly dancing does nothing to challenge the status quo. Further, this environment is not intentionally single-sex; Kraus (2014) notes that because belly dance is so strongly gendered female, men who are even aware that belly dance is available to men are incredibly rare.

This is similar to Connell’s (1992) research on gay men who adopt a “straight” masculinity. She finds that their ability to employ privileged identities reinforces masculine hegemony. Similarly, Bridges (2014; and with Pascoe 2014) find that straight men who borrow elements of gay masculinity fail to transform the gender status quo, and instead serve to maintain gender inequality. Gender stratification systems are incredibly resistant to transformation. Even groups that profess to be committed to dismantling the status quo often end up reproducing the same gender structure instead. Future research should explore other intervention strategies for effectiveness.

Volunteerism and Emotion Management

Finally, this project is among the first to explore the extension of emotion management to volunteer work settings. There is a rich body of literature on emotion

management in the paid workplace (Hochschild 1983; Lewis 2005; Smith and Kleinman 1989). Likewise, there is substantial work on emotion management in the home (Duncombe and Marsden 1993; Erickson 2005; Pfeffer 2010). What has not been explored is whether and how we engage in emotion management in volunteer settings. Unlike the workplace, where financial obligations can lead us to be compelled to perform emotional labor, or the home, where familial ties can induce us to perform emotion work, volunteer organizations presumably afford us greater freedom to resist calls for emotion management. In a volunteer setting, the stakes are presumably lower for individuals, because we are not necessarily bound by financial obligation or affective ties, leaving us “freer” to exit the setting rather than engage in emotion work that might be mentally taxing.

However, my data show that participants actively engage in emotion management in roller derby leagues, a setting comprised solely of voluntary participants. Future research should continue to explore the ways in which individuals engage in emotion management in volunteer settings. In particular, researchers should explore whether some volunteer positions are more likely to require emotion management than others. In addition, we need more research on the kinds of emotion management performed in volunteer organizations.

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APPENDIX A: OFFICIATING ROLES WITHIN ROLLER DERBY

It takes a number of volunteers to officiate a bout. Due to the fast pace and close proximity of skaters to one another, there tend to be more officials at a roller derby bout than one might see in other sports. Following is a breakdown of skating and non-skating officiating positions.

Skating Officials

Skating officials (SO) go through a rigorous training - many train for six months or more before being allowed to referee an actual bout. They are expected to be deeply familiar with the rule book, which, for the WFTDA, is a 70+ page document detailing all legal and illegal actions during a roller derby bout. They are also expected to exhibit the same skating skill as a derby player. While the grassroots nature of the sport means leagues often have to adapt to hosting bouts with a bare minimum of officials, the ideal is to have six SOs in a single bout. All SOs look for and assess penalties as they occur, but there are also particular positions among SOs.

Head Referee (HR)/Front Inside Pack Referee (IPR)

This position may be held by two officials, but usually is not. The HR is responsible for coaching and, if necessary, discipline of officials during the bout. S/he is responsible for verifying the official statistics of the game with respect to the final score and the number and severity of penalties assessed. S/he is the only person who may eject an individual from the bout, and s/he has final say on whether official reviews are retained.

The IPR determines the location of the “pack” - this refers to the collective of blockers on the track at any time. Blockers are required to be no less than 20 feet from one another on the track, and when they cross that boundary, the IPR alerts them to the

violation. If the skater does not immediately correct his/her position, the IPR assesses a penalty.

Rear IPR

The SO in this position watches the rear end of the pack. S/he monitors the rear of the pack for skaters crossing the 20-foot boundary.

Jam Referee (JR)

There are two JRs in any bout - one for each team. These referees count the points earned by their respective jammers. When the jammer passes the hips of opposing blockers, a point is earned. Since skaters are constantly in motion, it can be difficult to keep track of how many unique blockers each skater has passed. Once the jammer makes it through the pack, the JR then signals to the scorekeepers on the sidelines the score for that pass.

Outside Pack Referee (OPR)

Ideally, there are three OPRs on the track. They are the only SOs that are not positioned in the center of the track. Instead, they circle the outside "ref" lane. They monitor penalties on the outside of the pack, which can be more difficult for referees in the inner circle to observe.

Alternate

If personnel supply permits, it is advantageous to have an alternate SO on hand. This official observes, and steps in to officiate in case of injury or emergency calling a rostered SO away. S/he also typically take on the task of recording the content of official reviews and instances of ejected or fouled out skaters.

Non-Skating Officials (NSOs)

NSOs are, by necessity, more numerous than SOs. They handle all of the paperwork and timing for the entire game, including recording and disseminating the post-game statistics to the governing association and the team captains. As with SOs, leagues often need to “make do” with whatever available volunteers they can muster. Ideally, however, there should be 12-14, described below.

Head NSO (HNSO)

This official is responsible for the training, staffing, and supervision of NSOs for the event. S/he completes the “stats book,” the document containing all of the statistics associated with a given bout. Sometimes, this official only performs this job, but often, multitasking is necessary, and the HNSO takes on another NSO position, as well.

Scoreboard Operator

The scoreboard operator position is self-explanatory - this is the official that operates the scoreboard. A scoreboard is usually powered by a web-based program, and projected onto the wall. It keeps track of the score, the timing of the game, and time outs used by each team.

Scorekeepers (SK)

There are 2 SKs, one for each team. The SK communicates via hand signals with the JR to confirm the number of points scored in a pass. Then the SK communicates this information verbally to the scoreboard operator, and records the updated score on the paperwork for that game.

Jam Timer (JT)

The NSO in this position is armed with three stopwatches and a whistle. S/he keeps track of the time left in the period, and the timing of each jam. The JT signals timing via his/her whistle to the rest of the room.

Penalty Box Timer (PBT)

There are two PBTs, one for each team. They record when a skater enters and leaves the penalty box. They time penalties for the blockers who sit. Finally, they keep a running tally of the number of penalties incurred by each skater.

Penalty Box Manager (PBM)

The PBM monitors the behavior of the PBTs. Additionally, because there are tricky rules associated with timing jammers' penalties, this NSO times the penalties for jammers. The PBM communicates with the HNSO and the penalty tracker to alert them of skaters who incur too many penalties.

Penalty Tracker (PT)

The PT records every penalty that is incurred for each skater. They stand in the center of the track, and note for the official record which skater commits which penalty, and the jam in which it was committed. The PT confers with the PBT throughout the game to ensure that both have accurate counts for each skater.

Penalty Wrangler (PW)

The individual in this position stands in the center of the track. They follow the pack on foot, being careful to stay out of the way of the four SOs in the middle. The PW's job is to make sure the PT hears and records all penalties. S/he writes all penalties on a small dry erase board, and confers with the PT at the end of each jam to ensure that all penalties are recorded accurately.

Lineup Tracker (LT)

There are typically two LTs, one for each team. These individuals sit, usually in position to see the skaters' backs as they line up for a jam. Their job is to record the number of each skater on the track for a given team in a given jam. They note which position each skater plays. They also mark when a skater enters or leaves the penalty box, and when a jam is called for a skater's injury.

White Board Operator (WB)

The WB official records all of the penalties on a giant white board that is positioned in the center of the track, facing the team benches. It serves as a quick reminder to bench coaches, skaters, and officials. This position is increasingly obsolete, as leagues find alternatives to a large obstacle in the center of the track.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ROLLER DERBY PARTICIPANTS

1. Connection to the league?
2. How long involved with derby?
 1. Only with OCCRG?
3. How'd you get involved with derby?
4. Expect to be involved in 5 years?
5. Do you ever think about quitting?
 1. Why?
6. Would you recommend derby to others?
 1. Why (not)?
 2. [If yes] With this league?
7. How would you answer the question, "Who am I?" You can name up to 5 answers:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
8. I'd like to switch topics for a minute and ask you some questions about gender and roller derby. Sociologists generally understand gender as a social construct - something we do, that becomes a part of who we think we are. We have gender identities - like man, woman, trans, gender queer, etc. How do you gender identify?
 1. What does it mean to you to identify this way?

2. What criteria do you think someone needs to “fit” into this gender category? How could we tell the difference between this gender category and another?
9. Has your gender identity changed since you became involved with roller derby?
 1. If so - how?
10. Do you feel like it’s easier to be who you really are in roller derby?
 1. [If yes] How so?
 2. [If no] Do you feel the same before and after derby?
11. What do you do when you’re not in roller derby?
 1. Work/school? Tell me about this.
 2. Family? Tell me about your family life.
12. Do you plan to have kids? Why (not)?
 1. Do you feel like derby participants make good role models for kids? Why (not)?
 2. Do you feel like derby and parenting are compatible? Do you feel pressure from other derby participants to have kids?
13. Do you feel like derby is compatible with being a romantic partner? Does your partner ever complain about your involvement in derby (or vice versa?) Does derby shape the kind of romantic partner you are? Why (not)? Does having a romantic partner shape the kind of derby girl you are? If yes, why?
14. Are you the same person in derby and outside of it? Explain. How is it different? Has it always been this way? Has derby changed the way you see yourself? How so?
15. Alright, now let’s lighten up a little. What is roller derby, in your opinion?

16. What does roller derby mean to your life/what purpose does it serve?
17. What are the benefits of being involved in roller derby? Are these the same for everyone? Explain.
18. Do you think someone who embodied traditional gender stereotypes would fit in in roller derby? Explain. How do you feel about this? Is that the way it should be?
19. Do you think there are cliques in roller derby? Or a hierarchy of some sort? Explain.
20. Last question: What is a feminist? Are you a feminist? Do you think roller derby is feminist?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LOVED ONES OF ROLLER DERBY PARTICIPANTS

1. Which loved one connects you to roller derby? How are the two of you connected?
2. Would you have any involvement in roller derby were it not for this person?
 - a. [If yes]: Were you involved in roller derby before your loved one? By “involved,” I mean in any way, as a volunteer, or even a spectator.
3. Sociologists believe that gender is a part of our identity. A gender identity represents the way we see ourselves in terms of gender. Some examples of gender identities are masculine, feminine, genderqueer, and trans. How do you gender identify?
4. What do you do? Work/school/volunteer? Tell me about your daily life.
5. How would you describe the world of roller derby?
6. What is the “typical” roller derby girl like? How about the officials? Is there a “typical” official?
7. How do you think derby girls are depicted in mainstream society? By the media? By ordinary people? Do you think this is an accurate depiction? Why (not)?
8. Do you think [your loved one] is typical of the kind of people who participate in roller derby? Explain.
9. Do you feel like someone who fit a traditional gender stereotype (nurturing, quiet, emotional women, for example) would fit in roller derby? Why (not)? How do you feel about that?
10. Do you think [your loved one] is different since s/he got involved in roller derby? Explain.

- a. [If affirmative]: Do you think this change has been for the better or worse?
Explain.
11. What does [your loved one] do outside of roller derby?
12. Do you think [your loved one] is the same person (they act the same) in roller derby as at home/work/school? Explain.
 - a. [If affirmative]: Which do you think is more authentically [your loved one]? Explain.
13. What do you think roller derby's role in the community is? What do you think it should be?
14. Do you think roller derby is a family sport? Explain.
15. Do you think roller derby *should* be a family sport? Explain.
16. Would you recommend participating in roller derby to others? Why (not)?
17. What do you think are the benefits (if any) of participating in roller derby? Do you think this is the same for everyone?
18. Would you describe yourself as a feminist? Why (not)?
 - a. What do you think it means to be a feminist?