

# A Track for Change: Roller derby's impact on primary role identity

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## Introduction

- Roller derby can be classified as a serious leisure occupation<sup>1</sup>
- Current research on roller derby surrounds feminist topics and identity formation<sup>2,3</sup>
- However, there is a gap in the research around how these changes in identity impact the skaters' roles outside of derby

## Study Aim

To explore how participation in competitive roller derby affects identity formation in women's primary occupational roles

## Methods

### Research Design:

- Qualitative Study, Phenomenological Approach
- Purposeful Sampling

**Participants:** Three “derby chicks,” an ecologist, a mother, and a project specialist/friend, all current skaters on the Carolina Roller Girls WFTDA team

**Data Collection:** One semi-structured interview per participant

**Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis

## Results

Theme 1:  
Confidence

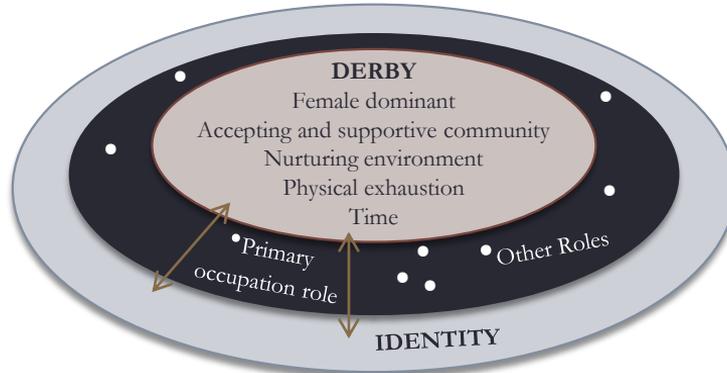
*“It has made me feel more open about just owning the label.”*

Theme 2:  
Motivation

*“If you're falling, you're trying.”*

Theme 3:  
Leadership

*“Getting that supervision and becoming that person for other people...it definitely bleeds over.”*



## Discussion

- Participation in derby does cause identity shifts to occur in a number of areas<sup>3</sup>
- Identity shifts within roles are not as linear as originally anticipated, but are still present
- Derby opens up a venue to learn transferable soft skills that can be fostered & failed at under a supportive community

## Conclusion and Implications

- Roller derby is very complex
- Injury often forces skaters away from derby. Take away this occupation, & you remove a major identity component that will impact performance in outside roles
- Further research to include additional interviews/focus groups and removal of “primary” to include all major roles



### References:

- <sup>1</sup>Taylor, J., & Kay, S. (2015). The construction of identities in narratives about serious leisure occupations. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 22(3), 260-276.
- <sup>2</sup>Carlson, J. (2010). The female significant in all-women's amateur roller derby. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27, 428-440.
- <sup>3</sup>Abrahams, T. (2008). Occupation, identity and choice: A dynamic interaction. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 15(2), 186-189.