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How Media Frame Roller Derby Around the World in 20 Different Countries

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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by

Julie Chartrou

May 2012

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John King, Chair

Carrie Oliveira

Mauro Palmero

Keywords: public relations, framing theory, content analysis, media, roller derby

## ABSTRACT

How Media Frame Roller Derby Around the World in 20 Different Countries

by

Julie Chartrou

A content analysis was conducted to analyze how media frame roller derby. The research included an analysis of newspaper articles published all around the world in 20 different nations from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2011, and different languages were considered.

The research did not support previous studies concerning women athletes and the sport. Overall tone toward roller derby was mainly neutral, and the description of roller derby was not defined as sexist or using violent terms. Women journalists who wrote articles were slightly more sexist and used violent terms than men.

Exploratory research showed that the previous findings did not change no matter the date of publication of the article or when roller derby was implemented in the nation. Results were not statistically significant. Also, the movie *Whip It* did not change people's point of view on roller derby even after the movie came out.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Media have a big influence on people's point of view of the world because media are the main source of information. People believe what they see and hear, and media are using that to feature what they want, making people think that this is what happens in the real life. "News can influence audiences through the choice of what stories to feature and how much prominence to give particular elements within these reports" (Shah, McLeod, Gotlieb, & Lee, 2009, p. 83). Framing theory is the construction of a message by the media related to the implication of how the audience understands it. This process is the effect of the construction of a message on the interpretation of the receiver. Many studies have shown that media shape messages knowing that the audience will interpret it the way the media wants it to be, and this method is efficient especially concerning politics. People are convinced that reality is told through media. We can also observe these consequences with cultivation theory, showing that media shape people's ways of thinking and their sense of reality. However cultivation theory is mainly related to the spread of fear and framing theory is related to politics. "Fear of crime continues to be a major focus of cultivation theory" (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p.341) "Framing in the field of mass communication generally refers to the process by which meaning is given to an account of a political issue or event" (Shah et al., 2009, p. 86). In most of the cases, it is easy for media to shape people's interpretations of an event or an issue. They can do it while just framing the message in a certain way, which will influence people's choices. Messages shared through framing give an immediate response; people express their opinions right after the exposure to a specific message.

This study examined the way media framed roller derby. A content analysis of worldwide newspapers mentioning roller derby has been done. Three hundred twenty three newspapers articles published in 20 nations in 106 different newspapers have been studied to know how roller derby is framed. Articles in English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish were used.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Presentation of Roller Derby*

The modern version of roller derby appeared in the United States in January 2001. Flat track roller derby is the more frequent type. It is a contact team sport that requires speed, strategy, and athleticism. Contemporary roller derby skaters have “a vision of this sport as an alternative site for women’s athleticism and empowerment” (Kearney, 2011, p. 285). Women playing roller derby have a *derby name* and dress up during games to really get into their roller derby character. Nowadays, more than 1,000 amateur leagues exist all around the world, and also junior and men’s teams are appearing everywhere. The biggest growth of the sport appeared thanks to the Drew Barrymore movie *Whip it* based on a Shauna Cross novel *Derby Girl*, which came out in theatres at the beginning of October 2009. This movie is the story of Bliss Cavendar, a teenager girl who wants to escape from her mother’s world, which is all about beauty pageant contests, by joining a local roller derby league. “Cavendar found herself in a world of fast-paced skating, hard hits, tatoos, short skirts, and bad attitudes that sharply contrast with the beauty-pageant ideals of femininity” (Carlson, 2010, p. 428).

After the United States, roller derby appeared in 2006 in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In 2008 it started in Belgium and in Sweden, then in 2009 before the movie came out in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. After the movie came out, roller derby appeared in 24 different countries.

## *Framing Theory*

Framing theory has been examined in many studies, trying to show the effect of media framing on people. Because media are the main source of information, it is also one of the main sources of communication theories effects. This framing theory has been studied in many different subjects such as political, feminism, sports, and much more but also in a general way.

Studies examined the effect of media framing on people concerning politics. Politics is a complex subject in which people can be easily influenced depending on their initial knowledge of the subject.

Lecheler and De Vreese (2011) tried to show what was happening to the framing effect after the first exposure and what was the duration of the effect. They support the fact the news frames are influencing people's opinions. If they are exposed to a negative frame, they will be less supportive of an issue; and if the framing is positive, they will be more supportive of that issue. Concerning politics, they did not find any support related to "immediate moderating effect of political knowledge" (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2011, p. 975). However, framing effects will be observable with time on people with moderate levels of political knowledge. These findings confirm the fact that the framing effect can persist through time after the initial exposure.

Women are well-covered subjects when talking about framing theory. There are still a lot of gender differences in media, and even if nowadays those differences are decreasing, equity is still not present everywhere. This can also be a reflection of the society today. Media may be responsible for a lot of disparities because they are framing women differently than men.

In a study conducted on print media coverage concerning the women's movement, Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) developed two different studies, a content analysis of media frames and a study on framing and political attitudes. The first study showed that "the economic and feminism frames swamped coverage of women's rights" (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 887). Gender equity was not considered, which was the first message that women wanted to share. This study helped to see if these frames influenced at any point the opinion of the public. Then, with the second study, Terkildsen and Schnell found that those predominant subjects, which were economics and feminism, have a bad effect on people. Descriptions were more negative concerning men toward economic, feminism and anti-feminism subjects, and there were not any changes concerning women. With that study, Terkildsen and Schnell showed that print media were making people change their minds on subjects that were previously framed in a certain way and related to women. It was even more obvious when those frames were published a lot. These reactions were mainly negative and done by men.

News Framing is also observable when talking about sports. Zaharopoulos (2007) examined that effect during the 2004 Olympics in Greece in online news coverage. This study found that "news coverage tended to follow traditional news practices while covering a nontraditional news event" (Zaharopoulos, 2007, p. 245). Zaharopoulos found that news announcers were covering what they wanted to, not what organizers wanted to share. The most common frames were security and readiness where organizers were hoping to get more frames as "the world coming together," "the Olympics returning to their birthplace," or "a small nation taking on such a monumental undertaking" (Zaharopoulos, 2007, p. 246). Even if some articles were focusing on one of those

subjects, a mention concerning security was seen, which was altering the entire sense of the article, and it was becoming the main frame that people would focus on. Framing changed during and after the event since people were less worried about security and more interested about the excitement of the event, so framing was more positive. However, framing was mainly negative because people usually are more interested to read about drama or conflicts.

### *Media and Gender Differences in Sports*

Media also shapes people's minds concerning sports, and a lot of differences are observable concerning ethnicity, nationality, and gender. When talking about gender differences, media say that they broadcast what people are waiting for. "Corporate executives tell us that they supply what the public wants" (Cohen, 1993, p. 171) However, framing is playing a big role, and media are most of the time shaping the themes to make people believe that what is on is what they are looking for.

The event where gender differences can be the most obvious is the Olympic Games, because the coverage is international and consequent, and that most of the nations have as much female as male competition. Billings and Eastman (2003) showed that there were a lot of differences during the coverage of the Olympics concerning gender, ethnicity, and nationality. According to previous studies, they declared that "framing theory supports the claim that portrayals of gender, ethnicity, and nationality are altered through a network-controlled shaping function in which discourse and images are manipulated to appeal to the desired or anticipated Olympic viewing audiences" (Billings & Eastman, 2003, p. 571). The authors showed that "women athletes were more likely than men athletes to be viewed by announcers as succeeding because of athletic skills" (Billings &

Eastman, 2003, p. 577). However, they were more often characterized than men as failing because of a lack of experience. Billings and Eastman showed, while studying the media coverage of the 2002 Winter Olympics, that there was favoritism towards male athletes, and there was a significant difference in perception of women and men athletes. Also, women had less coverage than men during the event. When talking about American and non-American athletes, according to descriptors, Americans were succeeding because they kept their composure and they had superior courage. Non-American athletes were succeeding just because of their experience. However, there were no significant differences concerning personality and physical findings. Concerning the mentions made by sources of NBC coverage, it shows that most of the mentions were about males and Whites, but not about American athletes. Billings and Eastman finally declared, “as long as athletes are treated differently on Olympic telecasts, it should be no surprise that these same perceived differences are perpetuated in other realms of American life” (Billings & Eastman, 2003, p. 584).

These differences of framing are not only frequent in the US; and some studies helped to show some differences specific to the region. However, most of the time, no matter when the study has been completed or where, the findings are very close and we can find differences between men and women coverage.

In an early study made between 1979 and 1987, German newspapers were analyzed to indicate the marginal position of women in sports. Most of the time there were not any coverage about women, and when there were some, women athletes were not described the same way as men. “Extraordinary sport achievements by women are often complemented with an emphasis of ‘typical’ female characteristics, thereby relegating a

champion to the mediocrity of a ‘normal woman’” (Klein, 1988, p. 149). Klein pointed that the description of female athletes was the opposite of how men are described because they were more described as traditional women and not as athletes, which involved inferiority.

In research conducted in Sweden, Koivula (1999) studied gender differences examining televised sports programs and looking at the quantity and the type of coverage. The study “revealed distinct contrast between how men and women athletes were covered” (Koivula, 1999, p. 599). Women athletes were less covered than men, and the coverage even decreased between 1995/96 and 1998 concerning team sports. Female athletes were also described differently. Koivula observed a lot of gender markers told by journalists or on graphics showed during the coverage. Women were most of the time infantilized or marginalized, they were also described as mothers and not as athletes.

In Spain, Crolley and Teso (2007) also showed that male athletes were getting more coverage than female athletes. This coverage is not equal either quantitatively or qualitatively. Framing of female athletes is very specific and most of the time the same. They are gender-marked, infantilized, and even female athletes are treated differently depending on their nation.

Goslin (2008) studied gender differences in print media in South Africa. Findings “revealed considerable underrepresentation and under-reporting” (Goslin, 2008, p. 299) of women’s sports. His content analysis considered six variables that are the extent of coverage, the type of sport reported in the article, the length of the article, the number and the type of photography published, and the gender of the photographer.

In some countries, such as Israel, where sports are not a very popular topic and where “media care little whether the athlete is female or male” (Bernstein & Galily, 2008, p. 184), it is even harder for women to get coverage. In these countries, women do not have the same place as men in the society, and you can also see it when studying framing of women athletes concerning sports coverage. “Marginalization and trivialization of female athletes only serves to perpetuate male domination of women” (Bernstein & Galily, 2008, p. 175). According to Bernstein and Galily, the way media are covering female athletes, or even failing to cover them, affects how people perceive them and shows the status of women in society.

In a very extensive study, Duncan (2006) showed the quantity and the quality of women’s sports coverage in all kinds of media compared to men’s. His results showed that female athletes’ media coverage improved substantially lately. The author found that producers do not cover a lot of women’s sports because they believe viewers are not interested. However, the problem may be coming from the framing of these sports, which do not make people want to watch it. Despite of these challenges, framing on women sports is changing and today “they are becoming less likely to attribute failures to women’s lack of talent and more to attribute successes to women’s skill and strength” (Duncan, 2006, p. 248).

Furthermore, Kian, Mondello, and Vincent (2009) showed that there were also quantitative differences concerning the online coverage. However, compared to studies related to television coverage, gender-related descriptors were used a lot less in online media.

Framing of sports coverage is also very commonly used in sports such as basketball where gender differences are often frequent. This type of sport is very popular in the United States, and both of the men and women tournaments are covered. Mostly, the amount of time of coverage is the same but the type of coverage is not the same between men and women.

In a first study, Messner, Duncan, and Jensen (1993) compared and analyzed commentary made on television during men's and women's basketball National Collegiate Athletic Association tournaments. They found gender differences that can be classified into two categories: gender marking and "hierarchy of naming" by gender. According to them, televised sports are mediated through framing made by the media employees, and it will influence the viewer framing of the event. In their study, Messner et al. found that framing of women was most of the time the same concerning infantilization no matter the gender of the commentator. "The media – and sports media in particular – tend to reflect the social conventions of gender-biased language. In so doing, they reinforce the biased meanings built into language, thus, contribute to the reconstruction of social inequities" (Messner et al., 1993, p. 133). Media claim to cover only what the audience wants to see and hear. However, because they are framing all the subjects that they are covering, this influences people's minds, and it results in covering only what the media want to share. Nowadays, commentators sexualize and trivialize few women athletes; however, other kinds of framing are appearing, such as infantilization, or describing accomplishments negatively.

Some laws have been enacted to eliminate as much gender inequality as possible. Title IX is a US federal law that allows girls to have as much scholastic sporting

opportunities as boys. Many studies have been made to show the way media are framing Title IX. Most of the stories tried to avoid giving any negative framing because they did not want to influence the readers concerning this law. However, negative framing was most of the time a lack of knowledge concerning law and the impact of that law on athletics departments in high schools and colleges. Hardin, Simpson, Whiteside, and Garris (2007) found that “in stories about specific events in relation to Title IX, reporters generally do not use negative frames” (Hardin et al., 2007, p. 231). They also showed that negative framing did not give a good image of Title IX, which made some improvement not only for feminine sports but also for male athletes. When talking about males in sports, media frame Title IX as a way to eliminate men teams, without telling why. Consequently, people may have a negative point of view concerning this new law, which is why more information about it would be necessary to explain all the effects of that law. However, framing was different depending on when it was a man writing about it rather than a woman. Men were framing it a lot more negatively and were seeing only the negative points without trying to get more knowledge about Title IX and law.

In another study Rosenthal (2008) explored “recent public policy debated over Title IX to illustrate how gender undergirds the discursive framing choices made by interest groups and presented in the media coverage” (Rosenthal, 2008, p. 65). Media coverage described men athletes as victims of Title IX, which does not help to avoid gender differences. Rosenthal realized that even if Pro-Title IX were trying to support this law, its effect on people due to the media framing was already too strong. This framing is also helping to get more coverage concerning male sports such as football because more

people are watching that sport than others. Consequently, framing reinforces the fact that sports are considered mainly as masculine.

This issue does not happen only concerning Title IX. Differences of the coverage related to the gender of the writer are frequent and concerns a lot of different subjects.

Kian and Hardin (2009) wanted to show the framing of sports coverage depending on the gender of the writer. They showed that men were the ones writing the most articles concerning sports, and those articles were most of the time focusing on male athletes, which explains why there is more focus on men athletes. Women writers were not all the time looking to write about women athletes, but they had to because they were assigned to do it by their editors so it may not have been their own will. However, female writers were framing female athletes differently than male writers. They “framed female athletes as athletically competitive more than they did male athletes” (Kian & Hardin, 2009, p. 197). To frame women athletes, female writers also used a lot of masculine framing descriptors that male writers used to describe male athletes.

#### *Media and Women Athletes Portrayals*

Women have always been framed differently than men. Media are covering more subjects concerning men than women, especially in sports. Even if women are nowadays as athletic as men, they still are framed differently.

Previous studies showed that today women are more frequently represented in the media than a few years ago, but it is not as realistic as it should be. Female athletes are more often covered concerning their appearance and attractiveness (Bernstein, 2002). Framing of female athletes has also changed through the years, “reporters tend to attribute successes and failures to the same characteristics when covering female and

male athletes” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 425). Media also describe more of the sporting performances concerning female athletes than before.

Daddario (1994) found that women athletes are often described as adolescents. He showed that during the 1992 Winter Olympics, “different descriptors are used for female athletes engaged in more masculine sports and those engaged in feminine sports” (Daddario, 1994, p. 279). According to Daddario, women athletes are also portrayed as “other oriented, competing for someone else or something else rather than for themselves” (Daddario, 1994, p. 279).

Duncan (2006) described 10 categories of discourse concerning women athletes and sports: sexual humor, sexuality, sexual orientation, infantilization, emotions and attitudes, beauty and grace, gender-specific sports, noncompetitive roles, attributions/agency, and gender marking. These discourses allow better understanding of the notion of sexism through media coverage and how women athletes are framed. The quantity of women’s sports coverage is slowly increasing. However, quality is not improving except concerning the attribution of success to skill and strength instead of attributing failure to lack of talent.

In a study made on coverage of women’s tennis players in Australia, Stevenson (2002) showed how this sport was framed when talking about women. Nation, gender, and power were the most common themes used to frame the subject. Stevenson showed some contradictory findings concerning the portrayal of female athletes. Media were framing athletes of their nation as more successful; however, sexuality framing would contradict that fact. When a female athlete was described as more masculine, and that her sexuality was specified, she was automatically framed as stronger than any other women.

Wensing and Bruce (2003) also showed that gender lost its place as the primary media-framing device when a woman athlete was important as a symbol of national reconciliation. During the Olympics, gender may be less marked as during regular events. Media makes gender differences disappear also when the female athlete succeeds and is the symbol of a nation. Female athletes would still be marked as female, but it would not be the main framing objective. Nation and pride will contradict with all the previous framing that media would have usually used, and gender differences will be less obvious.

Learning about all these different studies, it allowed seeing that the framing effect is present in our everyday lives and can concern every aspect of them. These examples were just a few, and many more exist since framing theory is used in most of the media coverage. With the development of social media, this theory will touch new areas, and will keep growing. That is why there are still many subjects to cover concerning framing theory and some of them have not been covered yet, such as framing theory related to an all-woman sport, roller derby.

## CHAPTER 3

### HYPOTHESES AND EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS

Because roller derby is a sport for female athletes, the previous literature review helped to see how this sport might also be perceived in media. The main framing would be to describe it with a sexist point of view. Most of the research also showed that description of sports played by women was most of the time negative, or out of context. Writers would give a wrong description of the sport, making it more attractive for people to read about it, since they are looking for dramas and issues most of the time. Past studies also examined the fact that male journalists were describing female sports differently and in a more negative way than female journalists. However, our literature review does not tell how people would describe the sport depending on how long it exists in the country.

#### *Hypotheses*

H1: The tone toward roller derby will more frequently be negative when the journalist is male, rather than female.

H2: Male journalists will more frequently than female journalists describe roller derby with sexist terms.

H3: Male journalists will more frequently describe roller derby as violent than female journalists.

#### *Exploratory Research*

EQ1: Will the overall tone toward roller derby be most frequently negative rather than positive or neutral?

EQ2: Will journalists most frequently describe roller derby with sexist terms?

EQ3: Will the articles most frequently describe roller derby as violent?

Because there were not any previous studies directly related to roller derby, hypotheses related to the date of creation of the sport or related to the effect of the movie *Whip It* was impossible to use. Because the movie *Whip It* was not reflecting the real game of roller derby, being more violent and pointing to the fact that roller derby girls were wearing a lot of sexy clothes, it was important to see if this movie had any impact on how journalists framed roller derby.

EQ4: Will the description of roller derby be different depending on how long roller derby has been created in the country? Will countries, where roller derby is implemented for a long time as in the US, describe it more positively than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago as in France?

EQ5: Will countries where roller derby is implemented for a long time describe it as less violent than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago?

EQ6: Will countries where roller derby is implemented for a long time describe it with less sexist descriptors than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago?

EQ7: Will articles published before the movie *Whip It* describe it as less violent than articles published after?

EQ8: Will articles published before the movie *Whip It* describe it with less sexist descriptors than articles published after?

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis was 323 newspapers articles analyzed and found on the Lexis-Nexis database, citing “roller derby” between January 1, 2001 and December 31, 2011.

Articles used for this research were found in the Lexis-Nexis database. The search term was “roller derby” and it was searched in the two types of sources “Major World Publications” and “Foreign Language News” to be able to get as many articles in foreign countries as we could. All those articles were published after the creation of modern roller derby, January 1, 2001. Newspaper articles published in English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish were examined. In the source “Major World Publications”, 1,805 articles were found and 323 in “Foreign Language News,” so a total population of 2,128 articles citing roller derby were extracted from Lexis-Nexis.

Three coders, including the author, coded articles found. A simple random sample of 500 articles was generated using an online randomizer tool on randomizer.org (Urbaniak & Plous, 1997). After removing duplicate articles, articles not related to modern roller derby and extraneous articles that were not useable such as articles using roller derby as a reference but not actually talking about it, or articles illustrated with a pictures having roller derby in its title but not talking about that sport, 323 were coded, from 20 nations. The time frame was used because modern roller derby has existed since the beginning of 2001. Until that date, articles would not be related to our subject.

Identification variables included the **ID** number of the article, the **coder ID**, and the **name** of the newspaper that published the article.

Independent variables included the **nation** in which the story was published, the **date** when the article has been published, the **gender** of the journalist who wrote the article (male, female, unknown), and the **time** of roller derby creation in that nation (no derby, 0 to 2 years ago/2011- 2009, October, 2 to 4 years ago/2009, September -2007, more than 5 years ago/ 2006 and before). To code the variable time, date of creation of roller derby in the country has been recorded, and countries were grouped into four different time frames. Those time frames have been created related to events such as the release of the movie *Whip It* in theatre. Also, no country started to play roller derby in 2007 so it was important to make a distinction between countries where this sport was created before and after that year because the new era of creation in 2008 may have been due to some events in particular such as players moving to other countries.

Dependent variables included the **tone** of the story, which was coded as negative, positive, or neutral:

- Negative tone: “Documentary Hell on Wheels tracks scantily-clad Texan women through the bizarre sport of roller derby” (Dominion Post, 2008, p.3)
- Positive tone: "It's a fantastic combination of sisterhood and athleticism . . . a really good sport for girls." (Fonseca, 2009, p. 11)
- Neutral tone: “The American sport of roller derby has hit UK shores” (McCrum, 2011, p. 5)

On which **page** the article was published (front page, section front page, or inside page), if the mention is related to **violence** (yes or no):

- Association with violence: “they have elbows and they're not afraid to use them” (Prior, 2009, p. 3). Mentions should not be related to the real sport of

roller derby

- Nonassociation with violence: “a game based on rules set by the U.S.-based Womens' Flat Track Derby Association” (Kuitenbrouwer, 2011, p. A21)

And if the story is **sexist** (yes or no).

- Sexist description: “Fishnet stockings, tiny shorts, knee pads and heavy eyeliner - this is the battle armour of roller-derby girls” (Bowden, 2011, p. 23)

Duncan (2006) defined the term sexist categorizing descriptors in one of those categories:

- Sexual humor,
- Sexuality (anything relating to sexual practices, sexual behaviors, sex roles, gender stereotypes, and other gender concerns),
- Sexual orientation (heterosexuality as a norm),
- Infantilization (childlike terms, first naming),
- Emotions and attitudes (team or community minded, emotions toward the team and not individual, emotion that made them seem weak, desire for harmony),
- Beauty and grace (related to their looks, clothing, graceful movement, appearance),
- Gender-specific sports (sports described as women’s sports, women should not participate in sports labelled as men’s sports),
- Noncompetitive roles (spectators presentation, female athletes’ dating habits, their family roles as daughters or mothers, and their interest in domestic tasks)
- Attributions/Agency (weakness descriptors such as frustrated, jittery, panicked, vulnerable, shaky, and dejected)

- Gender marking (labeling women’s sports or female athletes)

The three coders trained achieved at least 90% agreement on all variables after three rounds of trials. As recommended by Neuendorf (2002, p. 133), between 30 and 40 articles were used for trial samples. To measure inter-coder reliability, researcher used the Holsti formula (Neuendorf, 2002, p.149), which is:  $3A/(Na+Nb+Nc)$ , where A is the number of agreements between coders and Na, Nb and Nc the number of units coded by each coder. In Table 1 are showed the results of the final trial round.

Table 1.

*Holsti Formula*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Holsti formula</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
Name	3 (34) / 34 + 34 + 34	100%
Nation	3 (34) / 34 + 34 + 34	100%
Date	3 (34) / 34 + 34 + 34	100%
Gender	3 (34) / 34 + 34 + 34	100%
Tone	3 (31) / 34 + 34 + 34	91.18%
Page	3 (34) / 34 + 34 + 34	100%
Sexism	3 (33) / 34 + 34 + 34	97,06%
Violence	3 (31) / 34 + 34 + 34	91,18%

Lexis Nexis does not inventory every single article published around the world. However, it is the biggest database of publications around the world and includes more than 4,000 sources. Even if we did not get every single documents published, Lexis Nexis is the best tool that we can use. “This is perharps the largest message archive in existence, with more than 9.5 millions documents added daily to over one billion documents already online.” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 76)

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

Chi-square analyses were used to test the hypotheses.

H1: The tone toward roller derby will more frequently be negative when the journalist is male, rather than female.

Authors of the articles were given most of the time, and when the gender of the journalist was not obvious, researchers checked on Google images to find a picture of this journalist or on Google to locate his/her personal website or Facebook page.

This hypothesis was not supported. As seen in Table 2, journalists were not negative in general, and men were as negative as women.

Table 2.

*Gender by Tone*

	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral and Positive</b>
<b>Male</b>	8 7.7%	96 92.3%
<b>Female</b>	7 7.3%	89 92.7%

Note:  $n=200$ ;  $\chi^2 = 9.89$ ;  $p < 0.01$

H2: Male journalists will more frequently than female journalists describe roller derby with sexist terms.

This hypothesis was not supported. Even if journalists were not describing roller derby girls with sexist terms most of the time, women were using sexist terms more than men, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

*Gender by Sexism*

	No	Yes
<b>Male</b>	74 71.2%	30 28.8%
<b>Female</b>	53 55.2%	43 44.8%

Note: n=200;  $\chi^2 = 5.47$ ;  $p < 0.05$

H3: Male journalists will more frequently describe roller derby as violent than female journalists.

Table 4 shows that this hypothesis was not supported. Even if a lot of violent terms were used, women were using them more than men.

Table 4.

*Gender by Violence*

	No	Yes
<b>Male</b>	67 64.4%	37 35.6%
<b>Female</b>	57 59.4%	39 40.6%

Note: n=200;  $\chi^2 = 0.54$ ; *n.s.*

EQ1: Will the overall tone toward roller derby be most frequently negative rather than positive or neutral?

Researchers coded Tone of the article as being negative, neutral, or positive. Articles should show obvious adjectives or descriptions telling that journalists were very positive or negative toward roller derby. If it was just a description, the tone of the article was defined as neutral. Because the aim of our research question was to see if journalists were negative toward roller derby, it was interesting to collapse the two categories neutral

and positive. Table 5 shows that only 7.1% of the articles were negative toward roller derby.

Table 5.

*Frequency of Articles by Tone of the Article*

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Negative	23	7.1
Neutral and Positive	300	92.9

Note: n = 323

EQ2: Will journalists most frequently describe roller derby with sexist terms?

Sexism was coded based on Duncan’s (2006) categories that he defined in his study. If descriptors of roller derby girls were following one of these categories, the article was considered as sexist. Journalists described roller derby girls with sexist terms 30.3% of the time as seen in Table 6. It represents 1/3 of the sample, which is sizeable, and journalists can be perceived as sexist.

Table 6.

*Frequency of Articles by Use of Sexist terms*

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	225	69.7
Yes	98	30.3

Note: n = 323

EQ3: Will the articles most frequently describe roller derby as violent?

Articles were considered as violent if mentions were not related to the real sport of roller derby and were specifying that there was blood during games that every hit was allowed, among others. Table 7 shows that roller derby was described as extremely violent 32.2% of the time, which represent 1/3 of the sample.

Table 7.

*Frequency of Articles by Description of Violence*

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	219	67.8
Yes	104	32.2

Note: n = 323

EQ4: Will the description of roller derby be different depending on how long roller derby has been created in the country? Will countries, where roller derby is implemented for a long time as in the US, describe it more positively than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago as in France?

Time was coded using the date of creation of roller derby in the Nation as shown in Appendix B and grouped depending first on the release date of the movie *Whip It* in theatres, at the beginning of October 2009. Because some countries were talking about roller derby without having any teams playing in this nation, there is one more category concerning those countries without roller derby.

Explanatory research showed that nations where roller derby started two years ago or later are a little bit more negative than countries where roller derby started more than two years ago, so before the movie *Whip It*. However, according to the Table 8, the difference was statistically not significant.

Table 8.

*Time by Tone*

	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral and Positive</b>
<b>More than 2 years / Before September 30, 2009</b>	17 6.2%	259 93.8%
<b>0 to 2years / After October 1, 2009</b>	6 14.0%	37 86.0%
<b>No derby</b>	0 0.0%	4 100.0%

Note: n = 323;  $\chi^2= 3.73$ ; *n.s*

EQ5: Will countries, where roller derby is implemented for a long time, describe it as less violent than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago?

Exploratory research indicated that there were no differences concerning the mention of violence in the game of roller derby, no matter when this sport started in the nation. As seen in Table 9, the difference was statistically not significant.

Table 9.

*Time by Violence*

	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>More than 2 years / Before September 30, 2009</b>	187 67.8%	89 32.2%
<b>0 to 2years / After October 1, 2009</b>	29 67.4%	14 32.6%
<b>No derby</b>	3 75.0%	1 25.0%

Note: n = 323;  $\chi^2= 0.09$ ; *n.s*

EQ6: Will countries, where roller derby is implemented for a long time, describe it with less sexist descriptors than countries where roller derby started just a couple of years ago?

Results of the explanatory research showed that nations where roller derby started before September 30, 2009 were describing roller derby girls with sexist terms almost as

much as nations where roller derby started after. According to Table 10, the difference was statistically not significant.

Table 10.

*Time by Sexism*

	No	Yes
<b>More than 2 years / Before September 30, 2009</b>	194 70.3%	82 29.7%
<b>0 to 2years / After October 1, 2009</b>	29 67.4%	14 32.6%
<b>No derby</b>	2 50.0%	2 50.0%

Note: n = 323;  $\chi^2 = 0.88$ ; *n.s*

Three groups were created concerning the date of publication of the article, before December 31, 2006, between September 30, 2009 and January 1, 2007 and after October 1, 2009. Those dates were picked, as for the variable Time, depending first on the release date of the movie *Whip It* in theatres, at the beginning of October 2009. Roller derby was not started in any country in 2007 so it was important to make a distinction between countries where this sport was created before and after that year. To show the impact of the movie *Whit It*, only two groups were used.

The movie *Whip It* had a big impact on the publication of newspaper articles concerning roller derby. As seen in Table 11, the number of articles has increased by 398%.

Table 11.

*Frequency of Articles by Date of Publication*

<b>Date 3</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Before Whip it / Before September 30, 2009	54	16.7
After Whip it / After October 1, 2009	269	83.3

Note: n = 323

EQ7: Will articles published before the movie *Whip It* describe it as less violent than articles published after?

Explanatory research revealed that articles published before the movie *Whip It* described roller derby as a little more violent than the ones published after. However, the difference was statistically not significant, as seen in Table 12.

Table 12.

*Date by Violence*

	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Before Whip it / Before September 30, 2009</b>	32 59.3%	22 40.7%
<b>After Whip it / After October 1, 2009</b>	187 69.5%	82 30.5%

Note: n=323;  $\chi^2= 2.17$ ; *n.s.*

EQ8: Will articles published before the movie *Whip It* describe it with less sexist descriptors than articles published after?

No matter if the article was published before or after the movie *Whip It*, descriptions of roller derby girls were not sexist and there were no differences before or after the movie came out in theatres. According to Table 13, the difference was statistically not significant.

Table 13.

*Date by Sexism*

	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Before Whip it / Before September 30, 2009</b>	38 70.4%	16 29.6%
<b>After Whip it / After October 1, 2009</b>	187 69.5%	82 30.4%

Note: n = 323;  $\chi^2 = 0.016$ ; *n.s.*

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This content analysis showed that articles concerning roller derby did not support previous findings concerning framing of women sports and female athletes by media.

Most of the articles found were published after the movie *Whip It* came out in theatres in October 2009 with 83.3%. This can be explained by the fact that most of the articles found are about the movie and not only about the sport of roller derby.

According to previous studies, tone of the articles concerning a women's sport should be most of the time negative. In the case of roller derby, only 7.1% of the articles published were negative. However, 70.9% of the articles were neutral and were mainly game announcements. In some articles, journalists were just describing the sport without getting any position so the tone was neutral. Some of the articles were also descriptions of leagues or interviews of players; it was aimed to promote them; that is why in that case the tone was mainly positive. Concerning the relation of the tone with the gender of the journalist, previous studies have shown that men would be more negative than women toward women athletes. In this case, no matter what the gender of the author was, tone was mainly neutral or positive, and men were negative only 7.7% of the time, a little bit more than women with 7.3%. In some countries, roller derby is a very recent sport, and journalists do not know much about it, except what they saw on the movie *Whip It*, which showed roller derby as very violent. The research showed that in countries where roller derby started 2 years ago or after, tone was negative in 14% of the articles and only 6.2% for the other countries. This increase of negative articles can be due to the movie but also

by the ignorance of some journalists who write on this sport without really looking deeper into how is it really played.

Previous research found that most of articles concerning feminine sports were using sexist terms, especially when journalist were males. Duncan (2006) defined categories to define in the best way if a mention could be defined as sexist. Using the definition of these categories, the content analysis found that journalists did not use many sexist terms to define roller derby girls. Thirty point three percent articles used sexist terms in it, which is still an important number even if the majority of articles were not using sexist terms. The study also showed that female journalists were more often using sexist terms than males. However both genders were using a lot of sexist terms even if the results were not significant concerning our hypothesis; 1/3 of men described roller derby as violent, and 2/5 of women used violent terms. It may be explained by the fact that female journalists wanted to attract other women to play roller derby, showing that it may be a tough game but they are still staying women and can stay as feminine as they want, talking about the way they dress up. In countries where roller derby started more than 2 years ago, description of roller derby girls should be less sexist because journalists are supposed to know more about the game and have fewer biases about roller derby girls. However in this content analysis, there were not many differences depending on how long roller derby has existed in the nation, even in countries were roller derby was new, sexism were use 3% less then in other countries. Also, there were no differences depending on the date of the article's publication. Journalists did not use more sexist terms after the movie *Whip It* than before.

Concerning violence, a lot of it in the description of roller derby was expected since the movie *Whip It* described this sport as very violent with no rules and where all hits were allowed. However, most of the articles did not relate roller derby to violence with 32.2% articles with violent terms. This result, which represents 1/3 of the articles, is still a high result and should be taken into consideration. This research also showed that men were not describing roller derby as more violent than women did. Even if our results were not significant, results concerning the use of sexist terms were important. Around 1/3 of men and 2/5 of women described roller derby with sexist terms. No matter when roller derby started in the nation, roller derby was most of the time not described with violent terms, so even if journalists are used to that sport because it exists because a lot of year in their country, those journalists were describing roller derby the same way than nations where roller derby just started concerning violence. Surprisingly, concerning the date of publication, articles were less associating roller derby with violence after the movie *Whip It* (30.5%) than before (40.7%). Most of the people can refer to the movie when talking about this sport. Because it is a movie production made to get people's attention, a lot of violence has been added to the game to make the film more interesting. There is also a difference between the movie and most of the articles published, the movie is about banked track roller derby which have few rules about violence, and most of the time those rules are less respected. Articles were talking about flat track roller derby, which is very strict and a lot of violent actions are prohibited. That is why it can explain that articles get less negative and describe the sport as less violent. Because people become interested about this sport after the movie, and that they realized that there

were differences between the two sports, they may look for information concerning the rules and the way to play it.

### *Limitations*

This content analysis may have shown that the movie *Whip It* somewhat changed people's minds about roller derby especially concerning violence in this sport, even if those changes were not really obvious. However, roller derby is simply new and unknown in some countries, so some differences may appear in a few years when the sport will be more known worldwide.

Most of the articles found were about the movie *Whip It*, so giving a wrong description of roller derby, or they were just game announcements, so there were not any description of the sport, that is why nothing could have been recorded about it, and tone would have been neutral, nonsexist and without violence. This study has also been done right after the first roller derby world cup in Toronto. This event helped to make the sport of roller derby more known and gave it another image, so in this study we could not see the impact of it yet.

A lot of articles did not give the author's name on the article so we could not tell the gender of the journalist. Knowing about the gender of the author of every single article could have slightly altered the results even if differences would have not been that consequent.

### *Future Studies*

It would be interesting in future studies to code the type of the article to see if the tone, the degree of violence or sexism differs depending on the type of article. Those type

of articles will be recorded such as: about the movie, interview, game announcements, among others.

Roller derby is too new in some countries, so not well known enough by journalists, which is why there are not a lot of articles published in nations where roller derby just started. Also, a lot of documentaries about roller derby are going to come out this year, which will enable people to learn more about this sport, and change their mind concerning violence for example. The first roller derby world cup also happened last December, so it helped to make roller derby more known in a lot of countries. In a few years, a study concerning the impact of this roller derby world cup organization on people's point of view about roller derby could be interesting to do. Also, it would be interesting to compare the view of roller derby before and after the Blood and Thunder Roller Derby World Cup.

### *Conclusion*

Results of this content analysis were not significant concerning the perception of feminine sports and especially concerning roller derby. Tone was mostly neutral and positive, and violent and sexist terms were most of the time not used, whatever the gender of the journalist, the time of roller derby creation in the country and the date of the article's publication. However, most of the time, 1/3 of the results were supporting previous studies, which is still a significant result. As previous studies showed, negative perception of feminine sports is decreasing through the time and it can be visible in this study. However, the fact that women writers were more sexist or describing the sport as more violent was because they promoted the sport toward other women, telling them that even if it is a tough game they still can stay feminine and sexy, and that tough sports were

not anymore only for men. Special events, such as the movie *Whip It*, may have made journalists interested in the sport of roller derby so we can suppose that the Blood and Thunder Roller Derby World Cup and the release of several roller derby documentaries will change the results in future studies. With time, a lot more articles will be published about roller derby, but journalists may know more about the game and get interested in it, so definition may be more accurate than before, and results of future studies may be different. Leagues will also have to be very efficient concerning public relations. It will be their job to promote the sport well and help journalists to give the best and most accurate description of roller derby. Organizing events, press conferences, and sending press releases will help journalists to understand the sport better and not only guess what is really happening during a game but give a real description of it and allow people to have a positive view of the sport.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A: Frequency of Nation*

<b>Nation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Australia	95	29.4
USA	56	17.3
United Kingdom	48	14.9
Canada	32	9.9
France	29	9.0
Germany	23	7.1
New Zealand	12	3.7
Netherlands	6	1.9
Switzerland	3	.9
China	3	.9
Ireland	3	.9
South Africa	2	.6
Spain	2	.6
Mexico	2	.6
Singapore	2	.6
Belgium	1	.3
Austria	1	.3
Denmark	1	.3
Poland	1	.3
Japan	1	.3

Note: n = 323

*Appendix B: Publications in Newspapers*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Number of publication</b>
Washington Post	16
Canberra Times (Australia)	13
Gazette (Montreal)	11
Evening Gazette	10
New York Times	10
Globe and Mail (Canada)	9
Toronto Star	9
Advertiser (Australia)	8
Age (Melbourne, Australia)	8
South Wales Echo	8
St. Petersburg Times (Florida)	8
West Australian (Perth)	8
Herald Sun (Australia)	7
Sunday Age (Melbourne, Australia)	7
Courier Mail (Australia)	6
Kalgoorlie Miner (Western Australia)	6
Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand)	5
Guardian (London)	5
International Herald Tribune	5
L'Est Républicain	5
Sunday Mail (South Australia)	5
Sunday Telegraph (Australia)	5
Berliner Morgenpost	4
Daily News (New York)	4
Daily Telegraph (Australia)	4
Hobart Mercury (Australia)	4
National Post (Canada)	4
Sud Ouest	4
Sunday Time (London)	4
USA Today	4
Irish Times	3
La Republique du Centre	3
La Voix du Nord	3
Le Télégramme	3
New Zealand Herald	3
Newsday (New York)	3
Northern Territory News (Australia)	3
Philadelphia Inquirer	3
South China Morning Post	3
Stuttgarter Nachrichten	3

Sun (England)	3
AD/Groene Hart	2
Berliner Zeitung	2
Birmingham Evening Mail	2
Birmingham Post	2
Bürstädter Zeitung (Germany)	2
Christian Science Monitor	2
Hamburger Abendblatt	2
Lampertheimer Zeitung (Germany)	2
NRC Handelsblad	2
Observer (England)	2
Ouest France	2
Sunday Herald Sun (Australia)	2
Sunday Times (South Africa)	2
Taz	2
Washington Times	2
Aar-Bote (Germany)	1
Australian	1
B.Z.	1
Brisbane News (Australia)	1
Business Times Singapore	1
Charente Libre	1
Daily Post (Liverpool)	1
Daily Record	1
Daily Variety	1
De Krant van West-Vlaanderen	1
Der Standard	1
Diario Vasco	1
Eindhoven's Dagblad	1
El Norte (Mexico)	1
El Nuevo Dia (Puerto Rico)	1
Evening Times (Glasgow)	1
Express	1
Frankfurter Rundschau	1
Gazeta Wyborcza	1
Hoy	1
Independent (London)	1
Le Berry Républicain	1
Le Matin	1
Le Temps	1
Liverpool Daily Echo	1
Midi Libre	1
Mural (Mexico)	1

Nikkei Weekly (Japan)	1
Northern Echo	1
NRC.NEXT	1
Paris-Normandie	1
Politiken & politiken Weekly	1
Press (Christchurch, New Zealand)	1
Scotland on Sunday	1
Straits Times (Singapore)	1
Stuttgarter Zeitung	1
Sunday Herald	1
Sunday Mail (Queensland, Australia)	1
Sunday Mercury	1
Sunday Tasmanian (Australia)	1
Sunday Tasmanian E Guide (Australia)	1
Sunday Telegraph Magazine (Australia)	1
Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)	1
Tages-Anzeiger	1
Times (London)	1
Washington Post	1
Wales on Sunday	1
Weekend Australian	1
Weekly Times (Australia)	1
Welt kompakt	1
Wiesbadener Tagblatt (Germany)	1

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*Appendix C: Time of Creation*

<b>Nation</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date of creation</b>	<b>Time</b>
0	Canada	2006	1
1	USA	2001	1
27	South Africa	2011	3
31	Netherlands	sept-09	2
32	Belgium	2008	2
33	France	déc-09	3
34	Spain	2010	3
36	Hungary	2011	3
39	Italy	2011	3
41	Switzerland	juil-09	2
43	Austria	2011	3
44	UK	2006	1
45	Denmark	sept-09	2
46	Sweden	2008	2
47	Norway	2010	3
49	Germany	2006	1
51	Peru	2010	3
52	Mexico	2010	3
54	Argentina	2010	3
55	Brazil	2010	3
56	Chile	2010	3
57	Colombia	nov-09	3
60	Malaysia	2011	3
61	Australia	déc-06	1
64	New Zealand	2006	1
65	Singapore	2010	3
81	Japan	2010	3
82	South Korea	2011	3
351	Portugal	2011	3
353	Ireland	oct-09	3
358	Finland	mars-09	2
420	Czech Republic	2011	3
506	Costa Rica	2010	3
972	Israel	2011	3
1671	Guam	2011	3

*Appendix D: Nation by Tone*

<b>Nation</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>
Austria	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ireland	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
New Zealand	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%
Canada	15.6%	68.8%	15.6%
France	13.8%	75.9%	10.3%
USA	8.9%	73.2%	17.8%
Australia	4.2%	71.6%	24.2%
United Kingdom	2.1%	66.7%	31.3%
South Africa	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Netherlands	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Belgium	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Spain	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Switzerland	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
Denmark	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Poland	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Germany	0.0%	69.6%	30.4%
Mexico	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Singapore	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Japan	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
China	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%

*Appendix E: Nation by Violence*

<b>Nation</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Spain	0.0%	100.0%
Switzerland	0.0%	100.0%
Austria	0.0%	100.0%
Denmark	0.0%	100.0%
Poland	0.0%	100.0%
Japan	0.0%	100.0%
Germany	47.8%	52.2%
Singapore	50.0%	50.0%
Canada	59.4%	40.6%
Ireland	66.7%	33.3%
USA	67.9%	32.1%
Australia	68.4%	31.6%
France	72.4%	27.6%
United Kingdom	81.3%	18.8%
Netherlands	83.3%	16.7%
New Zealand	83.3%	16.7%
South Africa	100.0%	0.0%
Belgium	100.0%	0.0%
Mexico	100.0%	0.0%
China	100.0%	0.0%

*Appendix F: Nation by Sexism*

<b>Nation</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Austria	0.0%	100.0%
Denmark	0.0%	100.0%
Poland	0.0%	100.0%
Netherlands	16.7%	83.3%
Switzerland	33.3%	66.7%
Germany	43.5%	56.5%
South Africa	50.0%	50.0%
Mexico	50.0%	50.0%
Singapore	50.0%	50.0%
Australia	64.2%	35.8%
France	65.5%	34.5%
China	66.7%	33.3%
United Kingdom	77.1%	22.9%
USA	82.1%	17.9%
Canada	84.4%	15.6%
New Zealand	91.7%	8.3%
Belgium	100.0%	0.0%
Spain	100.0%	0.0%
Japan	100.0%	0.0%
Ireland	100.0%	0.0%

## VITA

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