Skater Girls, Posers, Betties?:
How Women-Identifying Skaters Experience Skate Culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of women-identifying skateboarders within the community of skateboarding. To examine this, the main research question asked, *How do women-identifying skateboarders experience skateboarding culture?* To further understand these experiences, two subquestions included, *How do women identifying skateboarders negotiate and resist traditional skateboarding culture*? and *How do skateboarding media reflect community for women-identifying skateboarders?* The research was conducted using two qualitative methods: in-depth interviews of five women-identifying participants, and the analysis of 75 social media posts of five different skateboarding community pages. Data analysis were analysed using through a critical-feminist content analysis and thematic analysis.

Findings from the study revealed that gender diversity in skateboarding was not experienced in the early years of the participants, particularly in the physical skate (park) spaces. However, gender participation shifted with the creation of online spaces and virtual communities. Online communities act as sites of resistance to traditional, men-dominant skateboarding images and spaces. Ultimately, those virtual spaces extended their audiences to be more inclusive of women and other minoritized (e.g., LGBTQ+) skaters.

Keywords:
Skateboarding, sociology, qualitative methods, critical feminist theory, critical space theory

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1. Introduction

1.1 Skateboarding culture

Skateboarding holds a unique position as a subcultural phenomenon that has infiltrated mainstream culture. Beginning in southern California in the 1960's, skateboarding has origins in surfboarding culture and quickly became a leisure sport among youth (Liyanage, 2019). As skateboarding gained popularity, the media positioned skateboarding as subcultural and subversive (Lombard, 2010), the narrative suggesting that skateboarders were criminals who trespassed private property, failed to follow rules, and strayed from traditional social values. The sport quickly became a phenomenon among youth, allowing them to exist free from the confines of organised sport, representing transgression against authority figures (Doyle, 2017).

As skateboarding became more popular, the core group of skaters invoked an air of authenticity to ensure that group membership resisted commodification (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Dinces, 2011). Authenticity is represented by a 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) mindset, such as searching for ideal skate spots where skaters manipulate the 'built', i.e., existing and constructed, environment to create their own obstacles (O' Connor, 2020). Although ideologically skateboarding resists commodification, skateboarding has become influential in the cultural industries of fashion, music, and film (Pérez, 2020), where traditional skate brands are adapted into the mainstream for public consumption (Dinces, 2011). The notoriously-rebellious attitude of skateboarders acted as a selling point for mainstream culture, granting a cult-level desirability of creative misfits (Chiu & Giamarino, 2019; Lombard, 2010). As a response, skateboarders became protective of their sport, often at the exclusion of people deemed a 'poser' (Beal & Weidman, 2003), while simultaneously capitalising on the desirability of the sport (Chiu & Giamarino, 2019; Dinces, 2011).

Although 'poser' was intended to keep out the vultures of capitalism and demarcate the authentic, it had the effect of defining a singular definition of precisely who was a skater. A stereotypical skater, then, became defined as a boy or a man, able-bodied, straight, and most likely White (Brayton, 2005; Yochim, 2010). These traits established subsequent criteria to which all other people who want to skate must subscribe. Thus, variation from those traits excludes other identities, including race, gender, class, or sexualities. As non-male, non-able-bodied, non-straight or non-White participants are excluded from the implicit

definition, their authenticity remains continually questioned (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Yochim, 2010).

The stereotype upholds masculine hegemony (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Yochim, 2010), meaning that skateboarding culture emphasises acts of masculinity as superior, and aggressive masculinity is held in high regard, specifically to the detriment of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) people (Yochim, 2010). This conservative definition of a skater is reflected in media and popular culture, creating a vicious cycle of limited representation and access. This is to say that as skaters of marginalised identities are not extended the same coverage in participation, they are excluded from the larger narrative. Moreover, as skateboarders are protective of their community and who is a 'real' skateboarder, the participation of alternative skaters becomes a source of scepticism because they could, potentially, be posers trying to co-opt the aesthetic. The result has been limited diversity within skateboarding media (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018).

The prevalence of skateboarding media in popular culture can be seen in recent projects such as the films *Lords of Dogtown* (Hardwicke, 2005) and *Mid-90s* (Hill, 2018). The former film examined the origins of skateboarding in southern California during the 1970s and the rise of influential skate crew known as the Z-Boys. Although a member of this group was Peggy E. Oki, an influential woman skateboarder, the film primarily focused on three of the men skateboarders who achieved high levels of success in creating their own brands (Balmont, 2021). The latter film tells a story of a young protagonist who develops an interest in skateboarding and is adopted into a tight-knit skate community accepting of those who live on the fringe of mainstream society. In both of these films, the main protagonists are boys and men, and are surrounded by other similar skateboarders. The women are primarily portrayed as love interests or observers, and in only one case, *The Lords of Dogtown*, is a woman acknowledged as a skateboarder. These two examples underscore the belief that skateboarding is a predominately male sport and that women are the exception.

In addition, most well-known skateboarders are men and receive regular coverage from sports media from major corporations (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). This trend is not unique to skateboarding, with men's sports dominating mainstream sports media and women's sports receiving limited coverage (Bruce, 2008). The implications of this disparity is that men's sports are considered the norm, and women's sports are extra or non-essential (Cooky, 2018; Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). For example, Tony Hawk is one of the most recognised names within skateboard and pop culture and has developed an empire of video games and skateboard gear; he was ultimately inducted into the California Hall of Fame in

2019 (Strauss, 2021). Additionally, two other successful skateboarders, Rob Dyrdek and Ryan Sheckler, both had reality television shows on the MTV network, highlighting their careers as professional skateboarders giving them extensive coverage among mainstream audiences and where they could monetise their platform (Newby, 2020; Spence, 2021).

As observed in the leading media coverage, the mainstream narrative reifies gender-based stereotypes of men being skaters and women being accessories. This is a common occurrence in sport media, with women not receiving coverage and having to fulfil standards of womanhood and femininity (Kelly et al, 2005; Thorpe, 2009). At the same time, women must also provide an astounding degree of competence and skill in sport (Wachs, 2005) in order to be considered a serious athlete.

In recent years there has been an increase in women's media coverage, with an independent film called *The Skate Kitchen* (Moselle, 2018) and the spinoff television show *Betty* (Moselle, 2020) exclusively following the experiences of women skateboarders. 'Betty,' the title of the show, is reclaimed term that originates in the 1970's and was used to describe women who hung out with surfers and was later adapted to skateboarding (Baila, 2020). Additionally, the proliferation of social media has allowed different skateboarders to share their skills and find people who represent them. Social media has increased the visibility of diverse skaters and created change in skate media overall, one example being an increase in use of images of non-traditional skateboarders in advertisements (Borden, 2018). Independent media outlets have also become places of purposeful representation. For example, both *Girl is Not a 4-Letter Word* and *Skateism* have developed strong online presences with the explicit goal of representing diversity in skateboarding by centring women, LGBTQ+, and skaters of colour in their reporting (Skateism, 2021; Whitehead, 2013).

1.2 Relevance and Research Questions

This history provides the inspiration behind this thesis, which aims to examine the experiences of women skaters in the sport. My personal history with the sport also contributes to my interest in the topic. I was fascinated by skateboarding since a young age, when my older brother began to skate at the age of 10 (I was 8). I repeatedly noticed gendered participation at skateparks, where boys would skate but girls would watch. The COVID crisis of 2020 relegated people to isolation, and people found hobbies to practices alone. I began to observe an increase on my social media feed of women and girl skaters who began to skateboard and share their progress online. Both Instagram and TikTok became

regular places to see people who were beginners share their gradual progress in skating (Miller, 2021), and as the world slowly began to open up skating venues, these women and girls began posting their practice in formal skating spaces. My prior experience at skateparks was mainly as an observer, so to observe women and girls taking up space led me to inquire further about the history of skateboarding culture and modern trends within the sport.

These experiences lead me to the research questions. The central research question seeks to examine, *How do women-identifying skateboarders experience skateboarding culture?* The research question is supported by two subquestions: *How do women identifying skateboarders negotiate and resist traditional skateboarding culture?* and *How do skateboarding media reflect community for women-identifying skateboarders?*

This study seeks to examine the different ways in which women-identifying skateboarders (say they) experience skateboarding either by reifying or resisting traditional skateboarding culture, and by interrogating how space—both physical and virtual—impacts skateboarding community.

The goal of this research is to discover the narratives of women-identifying skateboarders and explore the potential acts of transgression and resistance against the male-dominant standards. Although there is previous research on marginalised identities in skateboarding and the growth of online communities (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012), this study aims to contribute to the field of sociology and empirical research on the experiences of women-identifying skateboarders. The social relevance of this research is to determine what the contemporary experiences of women-identifying skateboarders are and shed light on how they navigate skateboarding community culture. Awareness of women in skateboarding creates an important space for reflecting upon how traditional skate culture has excluded these skaters and how they are transforming the sport.

In this paper, I will next review previous research specific to women and skateboarding and outline the theoretical framework that guide the analysis. Then I discuss the methodology and use of qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis. I will subsequently present results of the study and integrate the theory to provide a thorough representation of the findings. Finally, I summarise the thesis and reflect on the efficacy of the theory and methodology, and make suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research encompasses two main areas: critical theory, particularly critical feminist theory, and critical space; and gender representation and sport. This section begins with a brief background on critical theory and an overview of the theory. It then leads to critical feminist theory and gendered experience. Space, both physical and virtual, is examined as places where power is negotiated. It then moves into gender representation and sport.

2.1 Overview of Critical Theory

One of the main lines of theory that lays the foundation of this study is critical theory. Critical theories involve reflection and necessitates an intimate examination of the self. Critical theory illuminates how the autonomous (assumed) individual self is shaped by larger social structures. Critical theory is relevant to this research as it provides a perspective on how macro-structures shape the contexts in which individuals experience life.

Critical theory was developed by sociologists and philosophers associated with the Frankfurt School in the 1920s (Langman, 2021). The Frankfurt School was the pioneering institution of critical theory, which derived from Marxist thought surrounding capitalism and its negative by-products, such as subordination of the workers and its detrimental effects on society (Berberoglu, 2017). Within the Frankfurt School, sociologists and philosophers described various micro- and macro- level perspectives of society and how society functioned as stratified and inequitable for those with less social, political, and economic power. For instance, theorists Horkheimer and Adorno describe "culture industry" (e.g., media cultural production and consumerism) where a "pseudo-individuality" leads to a void of critical thought (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947, p. 19). Their work on consumerism and resistance to consumerism describes how social groups and communities reinforce social power dynamics as they consume and participate in media and become passive about what they consume. As a counter position against the culture industry, skateboarding's original development as a counterculture conveyed resistance to capitalist culture's hegemony. Additionally, the values of resistance have manifested in skateboarding through the DIY (do it yourself) culture, where the individual or group actively creates their own media (O' Connor, 2020) and use skateboarding as a tool for youth empowerment (Thorpe & Chawansky, 2015).

For example, Dinces (2011) examined how skateboarding was, historically, oppositional to authority and valued independent creation. The author notes that although

commodification has infiltrated the sport, the presence of new organisations critiquing larger social structures and calling out inequality are recent ways skateboarding remains oppositional. Another modern example in which skateboarding is used to challenge political oppression is seen through skateboarding film (Hearne, 2014). The documentary, *4wheelwarpony*, examines the connection between the freedom in movement of skateboarding to the historic motion of native communities. The film also comments on the genocide of the Apache community and uses skateboarding as a means for cultural revival.

2.2 Critical Feminist Theory

As critical theory reveals the power dynamics in and across social structures in which individuals exist, critical feminist theory specifically examines the negotiation of power between the experiences of women and men within capitalist society (Gimenez, 2018). Critical feminist theory interrogates social structures and practices that subjugate and oppress women and, by association, promote and essentialize men's experiences as the 'norm'. Modern examples of women's oppression include the phenomenon of catcalling as casual objectification (Gervais et al., 2020), the culture of workplace harassment, the under representation of women in high-level management positions (Castilla, 2016), and gender pay disparity existing in both corporate office environments and in professional sports (Abulhawa, 2020; Hebl et al., 2004; Zerunyan, 2018)

Critical feminist theory initially grew from observations into explicit gendered power distinctions between women and men, and how men's domination over women established patriarchal structures, thus limiting women's ability to claim individual agency (Gimenez, 2018). The operating definition of patriarchy used here is "gendering of privilege and inequality" (Lazar, 2014, p. 181). Whilst this definition simplifies the origins of feminist theory, it does reflect the (out)dated observation of gender binaries. More recently, feminist thought has become more inclusive and seeks liberation of all people from oppression, regardless of binary categorisation (Butler, 1999; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 2015; Sharp, 2004).

Feminist theory has been observed across three clearly identified movements, known as first-, second-, and third-waves, which occurred throughout the 20th century (Sharp, 2004). These phases represent an increasing critique of societal expectations of women and their supposed subservient place within society. An early inquiry into critical feminist theory examined how the expected behaviour of women manifested as obligatory femininity. That is to say that it was necessary for women to fulfil feminine expectations within patriarchal

society. Femininity here is defined as encompassing the traits of being delicate, gentle, and nurturing through actions and disposition, whilst physically expressing these traits. This is considered the result of male dominance (Allen, 2018; Sharp, 2004).

As critical feminist discourse developed, it further demarcated gendered lines and enforced a hard distinction of men as oppressors and women as oppressed. The second wave of critical feminist theory established further delineation between the experiences of women and men predominately identified by sex organs (Earles, 2019; Stoltzfus-Brown, 2018). It adopted an ideology known as radical feminism that pursued political motives. Although the achievements of this phase positively impacted legislation about women's workplace equality and protections, it also acted in an exclusionary manner due to the rigid parameters of sex-gender correspondence (Butler, 1999). The attempt to overcome categorisations of womanhood essentialised how the experience of women is shaped by socialisation and being perceived as women, excluding the experiences of trans women from the movement (Stoltzfus-Brown, 2018).

By the early 20th century, Alexandra Kollontai (1909) examined the role of class and economics as a specific reason for the social relegation of women under capitalism. Although the Kollontai's work paralleled theorists in the Frankfurt School who critiqued capitalism, overall the feminist perspective remained a subordinate perspective among classical sociologists (Allen, 2018). Kollontai's theory examining class differences and the exploitation of working-class women's labour is an early example of intersectional theory (Berberoglu, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989), which examines the intersections of race, gender, class, and ability.

Intersectional critical theory had a clearly-identified start in late 20th century by lawyer and philosopher Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Intersectionality serves to reconcile limitations in both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory by examining how power relations manifest in concurrence with multiple forms of inequalities and overlapping modes of subjugation, particularly at the intersection of race and gender (Hill Collins, 2019). Intersectionality has been integrated into critical feminist theory through the examination of how marginalised identities are subordinated within larger social structures such as the patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy. As identities are subordinated, there becomes an important opportunity to examine resistance and transformation of oppressive social structures, including in areas such as sport.

2.2.1 Critical feminist theory for sport

Several scholars narrow feminist theory to sport as gendered practice. This line of critical feminist theory examines what is broadly defined as disparities between men and women in sport. Scraton and Flintoff (2013) trace the development of critical feminist theories over time as it relates to gender in sport. They note how radical feminist theory, Marxist and socialist feminism, Black feminism, and post-structural theory have influenced gender in sport and are lenses through which gender in sport can be examined for domination and oppression. The authors argue that many of the feminist concerns that took hold in the 1970s and 1980s remain unchanged today in the 21st century, including limited media coverage of women's sport, dominance of men coaches, and the financial struggles of women in sport. Birrell (2000) notes that feminist theory is grounded in personal experience where "all feminists share an assumption that women are oppressed within patriarchy and a commitment to change those conditions" (p. 63). However, she suggests that not all feminists share the same vision and agenda for ways to challenge these inequities and to create social change. She argues,

> [a]s long as a culture is characterized by gender privilege and as long as sport remains a preferred site for the reproduction of that privilege—and there is no prospect of those fundamental relationships changing in the foreseeable future—feminist theories will continue to make a fundamental contribution to our understandings of the meanings of sport in culture. (p.77)

Other scholars describe the contradictions that women in sport face. Utilising Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Thorpe (2009) examined the intersection of gender and habitus within the extreme sport of snowboarding through interviews with women snowboarders, and found that femininity can serve as an economic asset, especially with media coverage and sponsorships, but becomes a limitation when women athletes are expected to present themselves as feminine and are viewed as less serious than men. Bruce (2008) conducted extensive content analysis into New Zealand's and international sports media and found that media contributed to the understanding that there were more men in sports due to the limited exposure given to women. Media language used the term 'girl' when referring to adult women but 'man' when referencing men (p. 60). The language difference contributes to the infantilisation of women, further playing into the objectification of women as accessory athletes and secondary to men. Finally, Bruce and Hardin (2012) describe how media influences the perception of sportswomen's abilities and creates narratives around how these women are expected to present themselves. They show how the contemporary use of

social media can subvert the mainstream media narrative by promoting internal successes and excluding sexualisation from their posts. As demonstrated above, gender impacts the experiences of individuals and creates different expectations in society at large.

2.3 (Critical) Space Theory and Skateboarding

A final area of critical theory is that of space. Physical spaces can reflect social stratification and power. For example, terminology such as 'trailer park', which in modern terms indicates low-income or public housing schemes, negatively stereotypes people with difference in race, ethnicity, language, and economic status. Increasingly, virtual spaces also convey associations to groups of people and are an increasingly prominent aspect of society and the social experience. Online spaces such as virtual platforms like Facebook and Instagram groups, and YouTube channels are reflective of power and can be sites of acceptance or resistance (Hands, 2011). In this study, critical space theory is used for both physical and virtual spaces.

2.3.1 Physical Space

Physical space acts as the medium in which 3-dimensional beings and objects interact and engage (Nowinski, 1981). Spaces and locations, public or private, create the landscape in which societies develop, influencing the experiences of individuals, whilst places are simultaneously being shaped themselves through the experiences of people.

Physical spaces become places when they are examined in context of occupation, and through collective and individual experiences, place is ascribed meaning (Ong, 2016). Critical space theory examines the importance of place as a facilitator of power exchange and as a site of transformation. As Gruenewald (2003) observed, "places themselves have something to say" (p. 624). Place is more than a physical location; place shapes how people experience and participate in the world and relate to others. Additionally, place acts as an important mechanism for facilitating the development of a sense of community (Francis et al., 2012). Acting as a site of community, place can be contested sites where people gather to express discontent with power and solidarity with one another (Featherstone, 2012).

Lefebvre (1968) conceptualised the idea of the right to the city, examining how workers' access to urban centres was constantly threatened due to the pursuit of economic expansion, effectively segregating the city for capitalist purposes. This idea has a clear thread to critical theory examining power dynamics as manifested in space and the role of capitalism in occupied spaces. Biagi (2020) expands on Lefebvre (1968) and provides insight into the

philosophic-political connection of ‘agency’ within the city, highlighting the power imbalance of who is to be seen and heard and who remains invisible (Biagi, 2020).

Together, critical space and critical feminism aptly frame this work, because the process of gendering, the role to which the physical body is ascribed and the designated gender to which it must fulfil (Butler, 1999), occurs in spaces. This framework, in conjunction with the research of space, provides a deeper examination of how power in space is organised. As these theorists show, place and space is anything but a neutral ground, constantly facilitating social experiences and being used as negotiation of power and agency.

2.3.2 Skateboarding Spaces

Public or private spaces not designated for skateboarding are known as skate spots and serve the purpose of street skating. These spaces may be city streets, car parks, city parks, and abandoned areas that provide smooth ground and possible obstacles that skateboarders can construct. Skaters who go to these places run the risk of interacting with law enforcement, private owners’ security, and members of the public who do not support to use of these for skating (Snyder, 2011). Thus, space for skateboarding is a negotiated and somewhat contested experience.

Designated skate parks, often developed and managed by public works for the local town or city, provide an admission cost-free environment that explicitly promotes skateboarding and designs structures for skateboarding tricks and practice (Vivoni, 2009). The physical construction is conducive to multiple sports, like quad roller skating, BMX bicycling, and more recently scooters, but the dominant usage is for skateboarding (Beal & Weidman, 2003). Within these parks, a diverse range of ages and ability are often found existing among one another as they allow open accessibility. Additionally, these spaces also provide an opportunity for wheels of all varieties, inclusive of wheelchairs and other assisted technologies, to participate in the utilisation of space and engagement in sport (Kafer, 2013).

Physical spaces provide an additional lens into the use of gendered power dynamics and spatial negotiation; skateparks are one area where space is highly negotiated (Yochim, 2010). With skateboarding, there is the power negotiation of who gets to claim the physical space and it comes to represent a hierarchy of power and acceptance (Atencio et al., 2009; Rinehart, 2005). One’s power or acceptance in this space depends on several factors. such as experience, skill, and gender, where masculine hegemony of behaviour is reified. Ultimately, who gets to claim the physical space establishes hierarchy of power and acceptance (Carr, 2017).

As power and acceptance within physical space is determined by an expression of masculinity, the hegemony further manifests in who is considered 'authentic'. To be authentic as a skateboarder is to align oneself with the expected presentation and behaviour of the dominant. Beal and Weidman (2003) examined authenticity in the context of skateboarding through ethnographic research and qualitative analysis of skateboarding media advertisements. They note that authenticity is a pervasive concept throughout the skateboarding community and is seen as being the *truest* version of a skateboarder. The authors' inquiry examines how marginalised identities in the sport are often discredited in the pursuit of authenticity.

2.3.3 Online Spaces

Online spaces, such as social media like Instagram, media blogs such as *Skateism* and *Girl is Not a 4 Letter Word*, can also be negotiated sites (spaces) of group experience, expression interaction, and belonging.

Two studies by MacKay and Dallaire (2012, 2013) examine the online presence of women skateboarders through the utilisation of internet spaces and virtual communities. Their first study uses the lens of media discourse and establishes media representation as a means for individuals to shape their perception of self. The authors focus on the skateboarding blog, *Skirtboarders*, a Montreal-based women-identifying skateboarders who actively choose how they want to be seen in media. They use the term *(re)presentation* to denote how the women established their own narratives within standard skateboarding practices. Through their posts, they challenged expectations of women skaters and used the virtual space to share more about their respective personalities. They note that "[t]he Skirtboarders also rarely emphasize female stereotypes, compare themselves with men's performances or post-ambivalent materials, all techniques found in mainstream media (re)presentations of sportswomen" (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012, p. 183). The authors highlight that the Skirtboarders represent themselves on a spectrum of femininity, and their individual expressions are explicitly deliberate acts, thoughtfully creating an alternative representation to counter mainstream media. The second study conducted by MacKay and Dallaire (2013) examined the virtual space and women's experience of skateboarding through an analysis of identity-building online, again focusing on the Skirtboarders. They found how collective group identity within sport builds a group identity and sense of belonging. In their discussion, they identify how women skateboarders are often subjected to the male gaze for being legitimised within the sport.

News media documents online spaces as places of community building. Stearns' (2014) interview with a self-identifying 'internet feminist' skateboarder community in Philadelphia and Thomas' (2016) article on three different skateboarding collectives in NYC detail how women-identifying individuals establish themselves individually within skateboarding and create peer-support networks by forming skateboarding crews both in person and online.

Online spaces have become a new medium for developing community, a shift from the traditional physical spaces (Francis et al., 2012). With this, the development of community is freed from physical space, and women are able to connect with others globally, an experience that had otherwise been limited to physical presence while also allowing these skateboarders to create different narrative (McKay & Dallaire, 2013). In the context of skateboarding, physical place in the form of skate parks and spots act as places of practice and sites of community, in line with the traditional functions of skating. The expansion into online space now allows for a shared knowledge of these locations within the community, and are diffused through virtual media such as online magazines, skate videos on YouTube, and Instagram.

2.4 Gender Representation in Sport

As skateboarding subculture operates independently from mainstream sports, there is a resistance to the culture industry, noted above, at large. As the cis male body is considered the norm, it establishes who is considered an authentic skater, creating a standard to which all other sports participants are compared. As noted earlier, the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) of race, class, and, sexual orientation, and ability are additional traits that can also be used as a means of oppression.

This type of research into sport sociology has most often operated from a lens of binary gender observation, segregating gender designations into man and woman. This gender separation in research has been ascribed as being an extension of the normalisation of the cisgender, a term meaning individual's personal identity/gender aligns with gender assigned at birth (Worthen, 2020), with men's bodies designated as the standard of who participates in sport (Bäckström, 2013; Wachs, 2005).

The performance of sport operates, then, within the segregation of binary genders and results in different requirements of performance. Men are considered superior and the standard, and women, inherently deviating from those standards, must be seen to surpass men to be considered equal (Wachs, 2005). This can be seen in the recent lawsuit organised by the

U.S. Women's National Soccer Team for equal pay (Zerunyan, 2018). Although operating in a different realm than skateboarding, the theme of women athletes continually having to prove their worth, even when their performance surpasses their men counterparts (Wachs, 2005).

2.4.1 Gender and Skateboarding

Examining the experience of marginalised skateboarders and building on my inquiry on how women-identifying individuals overcome barriers in sport, Scott and Derry (2005) analysed specifically how embodying activities transformed women's perceptions of self and redefine how they show up in physical performance. Their research provides a foundational explanation for how women are taught to act within sports and how that shapes their identities and choices. Specifically, the authors state that women's bodies are most often evaluated for form, as opposed to being valued for function. This becomes apparent in skateboarding when analysing the formal media's portrayal of women-identifying skateboarders and when women skateboarders describe the feeling of being observed in skate spaces. O'Connor (2020) examines the future-oriented goals of women-identifying skateboarders and the use of digital mediums for self-promotion and community building. The act of forming a subgroup within a subgroup, that is, women-identified skateboarders within the subgroup of skateboarders, is described as being particularly subversive.

Several recent studies examined how women-identifying communities, which are historically marginalised identities, challenge existing stereotypes about skateboarders by providing a counter-narrative to male-dominated images and identities related to the sport (Abulhawa, 2020; Bäckström, 2013; Fok & O'Connor, 2020). Bäckström (2013) presented an ethnographic study on the concept of gender manoeuvring in Swedish skateboarding. She observed women and girl skateboarders manipulate gender performance as a subversive tactic to disrupt the boundaries of masculine and feminine. She found that this manoeuvring challenged skateboarding's masculine hegemony whilst concurrently playing into adopting traditionally masculine traits, such as loudness and assertiveness, to establish their presence which she defined as "tomboy femininity" (Bäckström, 2013, p. 48).

Within this established hierarchy, bodies that are perceived as women are held to both the standard of sports performance established by men and are simultaneously required to subscribe to the standards of femininity. Thus, an expected gender performance exists in conflict with performing as well as a man but not seeming like a man (Bruce, 2012; Carr, 2017).

The authors note that women's bodies deviate from the norm of sport in general, which is often represented as the default being a man and able-bodied, and that the physical aspect of skateboarding questions predetermined expectations in society that typically do not promote injuries or pain (Rinehart, 2005). Scott and Derry (2005) further explain how the physical demands of skateboarding are in direct opposition to the endorsed physical activity that is often limited to gentleness, as well as perceived ability of girls to succeed in an intense sport. To participate and advance skills as a skateboarder, the skater must have the mental perseverance and knowledge that they will fall and the desire to keep trying. The "audacity" that this requires is not associated with the characteristic of being a girl (Pomerantz et al., 2004, p. 554).

Gender segregation is less formalised between specific men's and women's teams in regular practice, as the sport of skateboarding often operates as an informal activity, but it still upholds gender distinction in those settings (Abulhawa, 2020). Importantly, formal competitions of skateboarding do regularly designate gendered categories of participation and achievement. Although informal gender domains may serve as an unique opportunity to collectively rebuff gender expectations, the opposite seems to happen, meaning masculinity becomes hegemonic and establishes the definition of what is authentic in the skateboarding community.

Challenging the male-dominated sport of skateboarding and how women negotiate their identities in those spaces, Kelly, Pomerantz, and Currie (2005), challenge the forces that influence women or feminine skateboarders. In their article, *Skater girlhood and emphasized femininity: 'you can't land an ollie properly in heels'*, the authors found that masculinity was elevated among male skaters to prove their authenticity as a skateboarder, often at the exclusion or judgement of women skaters and with denigration against anything deemed "feminine" (Kelly et al., 2005, p. 239). They note that feminine-presenting individuals shape their appearance within the skateboarding community. Their findings conclude with the statement "[t]o the extent that skater girlhood is in opposition to emphasized femininity, we find within it at least an implicit critique of the form of femininity oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men." (p. 246) As expressed in the quote, women's embodiment of what are deemed masculine traits in skateboarding challenge expected behaviour, presenting a counter narrative of girl- or woman-hood directly challenging the patriarchy.

In addition, inquiry into determining power relations between skateboarders and within skateboarding space, the qualitative research of Beal and Weidman (2003) examined how authenticity serves as a gatekeeper of acceptance within the context of skateboarding.

They note that authenticity is a pervasive concept throughout the skateboarding community and is seen as being the *truest* version of a skateboarder, going on to say that deviation from being authentic results in exclusion. The authors' inquiry illuminates how identities that are marginalised in the sport are often discounted from the pursuit of authenticity.

Language is also an important signifier in indicating authenticity and group membership. As observed in research conducted by Pomerantz, Currie, and Kelly (2004) begin their research by focussing on language use and analyse the terminology surrounding the term "skater girl," and contextualise the label within skateboarding performance. They write that the initial negative connotation of "girl" was redefined within the women's skateboarding community and became a positive identity title to claim within the skatepark (Pomerantz et al., 2004). Through this, the authors underscore how the terminology of identifying as a skater was redefined by an all-girl skate crew and became a term of empowerment.

This research continues to examine that, as a physical activity, skateboarding is unique in that it challenges girls physically, due to the intense nature of the sport, and the challenge against social structures of the normative expectations of how girls should behave. Pomerantz et al. (2004) also explore how the girls often felt watched and evaluated when learning to skateboard, putting them off of practicing at skateparks traditionally dominated by men. Through embodiment of skating, these girls were able to define themselves amid the hegemonic masculinity of traditional, authentic skateboard culture. In this case, the girls they analysed directly challenged the expected behaviour of being a girl.

2.5 Conclusion

This section of the thesis established the framework of the study as a way to examine social structures, skateboarding, space, and gender. This study uses critical feminist and critical space (physical and virtual) theories to examine how women-identifying individuals participate and experience the sport of skateboarding. This section further discussed gender representation in skateboarding, arguing that women must negotiate physical and virtual spaces in the skateboarding community, and that the normative, authentic participant in skateboarding remains male and able-bodied. As a result, women must identify ways to repeatedly challenge expectations and norms surrounding who they are within the skateboarding community and gain acceptance by men for participation. The next section of the thesis describes the methods I used to investigate how women-identifying skateboarders experience skateboarding culture.

3. Research Methodology

In this study, I used qualitative research methods, namely interviews and media analysis, to answer the research questions. The COVID pandemic affected the original design of interviews only, due to the difficulty of recruiting woman-identifying skateboarders on site at skateparks and other physical locations. Thus, the design changed to two phases: In phase 1, I identified, recruited, and interviewed 5 woman-identifying skateboarders; in phase 2, I identified 75 Instagram sites (five pages and 15 posts from each) and analysed those media sites.

The primary advantages of using qualitative data (interviews and media analysis) are the depth of the data that derive from participants' stories, backgrounds, and experiences; and the meanings conveyed through images and captions from online sources. There were several additional advantages to working with social media. First, media data are static, meaning that I was able to examine them online and import them as situated in a particular time and space. Second, the images were helpful to paint richer stories surrounding what women-identifying online communities "look like". I was able to align text to those to my interpretation and import the images and text into a qualitative software program, NVIVO R.1, and code the text. The disadvantages from the data sources include the limited number of participant interviewees (five) and the constraint of time in holding synchronous interview. A disadvantage of the media was the number of various social media pages I could access overall. For example, although my participants described several social media pages, I had to narrow to key sites and used the Instagram posts and images for the analysis, because I found it easy to keep accessing new and related sites by clicking on tagged pages.

3.1 Participant Sampling and Media Site Selection

3.1.1 Participant sampling

This study examined the experience of skateboarding for women-identifying skateboarders. The target population for my research was skateboarding participants who identify as women. The criteria included (a) being woman-identifying and (b) having experience as a skateboarder. I did not limit the sampling criteria to age, years of skateboarding, or any specific geographic location, because I wanted a broad range of experiences. I initially reached out (via Instagram message) to skateboarders that I followed on Instagram and invited them to participant. I had been following these skaters for about six months already, so I was familiar with their online presences. Two responded to the project

but never returned my subsequent messages. Next, I looked up skateboarding organizations that I was aware of and that were common brands. I then began emailing those people directly and filled out about five contact pages from those websites. As an additional a way to recruit participants, I contacted 25 skateboarding companies and non-profit organisations through my university email. I disclosed my affiliations as a Master's student at Erasmus Universiteit and my identity. After this contact was made, I introduced my research inquiry of skateboarding, gender, and cultural experience.

I received one 'no' response and one 'yes' from two organizations. The 'no' organisation sent me the name of an organisation, who I then reached out to and recruited one participant. The 'yes' organisation person participated. I then moved to snowball sampling techniques by reaching out to friends and colleagues, and identified and recruited the final three participants. I intended to recruit thirteen (13) participants with the goal of having ten (10) final participants, but the final result was five. The five participants were located internationally, with two of the participants in the Netherlands, two of the participants in the United States, and one participant in Brazil. All spoke English during the interviews except for one, who had an interpreter who was a former colleague and Portuguese-English bilingual. I then added a second data collection method with advice from my advisor (see below).

The five individuals agreed to participate in an audio-recorded, in-depth interview of approximately 60 minutes. This was Phase I of the data collection process. I had participants sign consent forms online and prepared an opening interview guide to ensure that the main categories of questions (see Appendix A [interview guide], C-G [five interview transcriptions]. The interview questions were developed using the theoretical framework and my reflections and insights from the online media/Instagram I had been following, were answered. I aimed for participants to feel comfortable and to describe in detail their skateboarding stories and experiences. Table 3.1 shows the interview participants and their backgrounds. All names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

Table 3.1 Participants (pseudonyms) and background

Name	**Location**	**Age**	**Experience skating**	**Current profession**	**How recruited**
Payton	USA	20s	Skating since 7. Resumed in 2020.	Skating coach	Connection through email

Yeva	Netherlands	30s	Skating since 15. Recently resumed after 10-year break	Writer	Third party connection through Twitter
Jane	USA	30s	Five years WCMX; World champion-gold	Writer	Third party connection through email
Carina	Brazil	40s	Skating since 13, stopped at 15. Resumed in 40s	Artist,	Third party connection through email
Kate	Netherlands	20s	Five years skating	Skating manager	Connection through email

3.1.2 Media site selection

Phase 2 of the data collection was the selection of various media sites for analysis. To identify the sites, I used information from the participants in Phase 1 and located the online sites that they stated they visited frequently online. Each participant was asked to about their online media presence. From there, I examined the five online posts that included both visual images and text such as captions. The sites visited by the participants in Phase 1 are in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Initial media sites identified by participants

Participant	**Community site(s) identified**
Payton	Instagram and TikTok
Yeva	none
Jane	Twitter and Instagram
Carina	Instagram
Kate	Instagram

Seventy-five skateboarding social media posts were selected following the interviews of the five women-identifying participants (Phase 1) and their reflections on online

communities. Through initial email recruitment process, two social media sites were identified as Skate Like A Girl and Women Skate The World.

In addition, I looked for three similar organisations that advocate for diversity in skateboarding communities through Instagram's algorithm that connects related accounts from the information drop bar when an account is followed. The three subsequent organisations identified from this process were Unity Skateboarding, a skateboarding collective focusing on LGBTQ+ and women skaters; GRLSWIRL_nyc, an NYC-based organisation hosting events and lessons for women and LGBTQ+ skateboarders; and Sibling_ldn, which self-labels as being a co-operatively run skate collective operating in London.

3.2 Procedure

3.2.1 Interviews

I began each audio recorded interview with a casual and friendly tone to set my participants at ease. I was also nervous conducting the first two interviews but felt more comfortable with the last three interviews. I used a prepared script to obtain verbal permission to audio record and stated that the participants could refuse to answer any question that they felt uncomfortable with. I then asked participants if they had a preferred pseudonym for the study, but none of the participants had a preferred name. Therefore, the names used in the study were generated by using the first initial of the participants' first names for ease of identification. These statements allowed the participant to be more comfortable answering the questions and build rapport. Thus, the primary advantage of online interviewing was building relationship with the participants under fairly low-stress conditions under which they could end the interview when they wanted. The other advantage to online interviewing was that I was able to interview participants from various countries (i.e., Brazil, the United States, and the Netherlands). This added an important international component and richness to the stories. Finally, as an English monolingual, the interviews were conducted in English in four cases. For the fourth participant, I used a colleague who acted as an English-Portuguese interpreter. At the beginning of each interview, I obtained verbal consent for recording.

After following the pre-determined script, I began the questions. There were 27 questions in the interview protocol (Appendix A), which were designed to answer both research questions (research question 1: experiences as women-identifying skateboarders;

and 2: the role of space in skateboarding). I asked each participant about their respective origins of skateboarding, how they came to the community, and how they developed their skills within different skateboarding environments (spaces). I prompted participants to elaborate on stories surrounding their gender as women and experiences related to skateboarding. The question was further probed by asking the participants how the decoration of their skateboard illustrates their identity as a skateboarder. However, only two of the participants noted that the physical board (deck) itself was reflective of their identities. Thus, subsequent to the data analysis, that subquestion was rephrased from the original design.

Upon reflection, I found that the participants felt comfortable with me answering the questions and elaborating. One, a native Dutch speaker, elaborated less and that appeared to be due to translation difficulties. An interpreter might have been useful for that interview. Ultimately, the questions acted as an ideal framework, but the participants largely answered them by describing their experiences and observations. I believe that this indicates that the participants were comfortable and felt like the environment was safe to express these opinions. The participants also commented that going through this process provided a lot of self-reflection and that it unlocked some memories and experiences that hadn't been thought about. The audio recordings were recorded to the cloud and transcribed. Each interview lasted between 55 and 90 minutes long. The total number of transcribed interviews for analysis was 234 1.5-spaced pages (Appendices C-G).

3.2.2 Media collection

Data to answer my first and second questions were obtained first by utilising the respondent's interviews, which were subsequently used to identify social media that they visited. The second research question specifically asks how online skateboarding media contributes to community. Through the social network of Instagram, I was able to examine online spaces that these communities exist. The social media posts consisted of 75 posts in total, distributed as 15 posts among five organisations. Instagram is a visual medium and thus visual media were collected through (a) the image or graphic, (b) the subsequent text (caption) and hashtags.

The media data were collected and organised by a letter-number, each of the five organisations were identified as A, B, C, D, or E and the posts were assigned numerical digits. This provided an organisation for each post to be examined and group together similar themes with a recognisable shorthand to assist the findings.

Table 3.3 Media data

Instagram site	**Reference site (for analysis)**	**Reference code (for analysis)**
Skate Like A Girl	A	1-15
Women Skate the World	B	1-15
Unity	C	1-15
GRLSWIRL_nyc	D	1-15
Sibling	E	1-15

3.3 Position statement

Positionality is important in qualitative research, as it relies on interpretation, and my background and experiences inform ways that I understand and make sense of the data (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). As a researcher in this study, my informed background is one of long-time observer of skateboarding, having been exposed to the sport at a young age through an older sibling and casually participating in the sport. As of 2020, I began to actively participate more in skating. As these experiences inform my background, they have also informed my own social communities and social media pages, as many of the sites I follow were ones I reached out to for potential recruitment. As my background knowledge of skateboarding culture was informed passively, I am more of an 'outsider' to skateboarding than an 'insider'. I also readily shared my experiences with participants when they probed about my knowledge of the skateboarding (online) community.

The basis of this study using the terminology of women-identifying is due to a necessity of simplified language for a complex topic when addressing gender identity. Initially, I attempted to recruit women and femme-identifying people, to be as inclusive as possible and not focus on binary gender identity membership or exclusively she/her pronouns. As the recruitment process progressed, I realised that the initial terminology was not an accurate representation of who was participating, and ultimately the participants self-identified as women and all stated that they use she/her pronouns.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Interview analysis

All interviews were recorded electronically online and transcribed to facilitate data analysis. To analyse interview data, I began by conducting interviews as data and subsequent transcription of the audio. Then, I read through for accuracy whilst listening to the audio recording. I imported the corrected transcriptions into NVIVO R.1 and read through each of the transcriptions a minimum of three times each, first to get a sense of the story, and then begin the analysis. The data from in-depth interviews were initially analysed through open-coding procedures. Open coding refers to the process of assigning codes to meaningful portions of data (Glesne, 2011; Koro-Ljunberg, 2016; Merriam, 1998). The first reading conducted produced initial codes and was followed by two additional close readings for coding, resulting in 37 total codes (Appendix R). This was the open coding process that I used to begin to identify answers to my research question (Xu & Zammit, 2020). Initially, the literature review indicated the importance of community in skateboarding. Thus, the literature review guided initial data analysis by identifying common themes and experiences.

Next, I axial coded the data (Boejie, 2010) in order to combine codes and to make sense of the relationships between the open codes, refining the codes to 20. NVIVO R.1 was used during coding analysis to evaluate the frequency of the codes and to visualize the data. In the final process, I identified common themes across all of the data sources to conduct thematic analysis (Xu & Zammit, 2020). Thematic analysis was used to ensure rigor, meaning truthfulness and competence, within the study and identify the overarching themes that encompass the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). To further ensure that the themes identified were accurate representations of the data, I reviewed the data a fourth time and confirmed the themes (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in regards to qualitative interviews ensures that participants are operating with informed consent, meaning the respondents are accurately informed of the dimensions of the project and what their participation entails. Additionally, their identities are kept confidential and anonymised after the process of data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings. The findings reflect accurate information provided by the respondents and show the connection to data. These are all instances that ensure practical administrative ethics are handled with respect to the participants.

In addition to these factors, engagement with participants and acting as a responsible researcher contribute to the overall ethics of the study. Engaging with participants before, during, and after, the research process and clarifying the purpose of the study provide a foundation of trust for the participants to feel comfortable contributing to the project (Salmons, 2016).

3.4.3 Media analysis

The analysis of media sites began with identifying the specific pages was followed by the selection of 15 posts that were graphics, containing text and/or illustration, or photographic posts of more than three people, or a mix of text and image. It took six days to conduct the first content analysis of social media posts. The first two days were designated for selecting the posts from each individual organisation and ensuring they fit the criteria. During this, initial note taking occurred. After this phase of organisation and initial thoughts, the subsequent four days were designated for in-depth analysis and interrogation of the posts and captions.

As there was a limited amount of still image posts available, there was no explicit time frame assigned. Additionally, as COVID moved many events online, going back to early 2020 and 2019 or 2018 allowed me to examine how these communities exist in regular times without in-person restrictions. As I continued to analyse data from social media, I allowed for the inclusion of additional themes that arose. The selection of posts from these selected Instagram pages included the examination of 15 total posts from each page, half of which were still photographs and accompanying captions, and half were graphic design images with text. The information from these posts were organised, and I subsequently used the information in the table and imported that into NVIVO R.1. The process of content analysis was guided by Leavy's (2007) *Feminist Practice of Content Analysis*, as well as thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Xu & Zammit, 2020).

During the content analysis process, I began by identifying the image or text graphic and explicitly identifying the characteristics of the image. As Instagram is primarily an image-oriented medium, this became the first point of examination. Following the image was analysing the caption and tags for text-based content analysis. To analyse the caption and tag, I followed the process of open coding (Xu & Zammit, 2020). The previous analysis of interviews in Phase I informed the open coding of content analysis but was kept dynamic to allow for flexibility and differentiation of the data to emerge (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In the second phase of analysis, I used the codes identified from interviews in Phase 1

and the codes of Phase II to identify similarities and differences between the data. The process consisted of reading and rereading the data and recognising patterns that emerge within the data. The main themes that emerged were described with descriptive data. I organised the posts into a table using the three themes to provide a visual graphic representative of how the data were distributed **(see Table 3.4.3).**

Table 3.4.3 Media Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
A	SP	CD	CD SP	CD	CD SP v	CD	CD SP v	CD GR	GR CD	CD sp	SP CD	P	CD SP v	CD	CD SP v
B	CD SP	GR SP CD	CD SP	GR	SP	CD	GR	GR CD	CD SP	CD	CD	CD SP	CD	CD	SP
C	SP CD	CD	CD GR	CD	CD SP	CD	GR SP	CD	CD SP	SP	CD SP	CD SP	CD	SP	CD
D	GR CD SP	CD SP	CD	CD	CD	SP CD	CD	GR	CD SP	CD SP	CD	SP	SP	GR	CD
E	CD	CD GR	CD	SP CD	SP	SP CD	SP CD	SP CD	GR	SP CD	CD	CD	SP CD	CD	CD GR

In addition, as I interpreted and analysed the data, I was able to make connections with my own background and previous experience of skateboarding. In addition, as an advocate for non-binary and LGBTQ+ communities, I was sensitive to the ways in which the sites conveyed stories using images such as ‘skaters in skirts’, or gender fluid messages through the images. As critical theory was used to inform this study, the data were analysed through that lens. Hence, my interpretation and background guided the analysis of the media, and I am aware of how my background as a non-objective researcher influenced the findings.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity act as a way to ensure the data collection and the findings are scientifically accurate. Reliability relates to the generalizability of data in qualitative research, and validity refers to trustworthiness of data in qualitative research (Glesne, 2014). They work together to ensure that the data are robust and accurate (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

An important aspect of qualitative research involves researcher interpretation, meaning that reliability and validity are contextualised by human participation. The various

data sources (interviews, media analysis, researcher reflections) ensured that there was a saturation of data and that the data were triangulated. Triangulation of data builds trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, media data were triangulated by analysing the images, the captions, and text within and around the images. I also memo-ed and reflected on the data critically by 'writing' in the margins of the data and asking questions such as 'what story is this data telling me?' 'whose story is represented?' and 'whose voice is missing?'

4. Results

Introduction

This study investigated women-identifying skateboarders and how they experienced skateboarding culture. To answer the main research question, two sub-questions were posed surrounding their negotiation of and resistance toward traditional skateboarding culture, and how media reflect community for women skateboarders. This section of the paper reports findings from the data collected via interviews and online media analysis. The findings include three main, overarching themes and 7 subthemes: gender as representation; community as relational; and space as site(s) of resistance. Each theme is described below, using data from both primary data sources. Subthemes are used to capture details within the themes and present specific relationship with the theoretical framework.

4.1 Gender as representation

In this study, one of the primary themes to emerge from the data surrounded the concept of gender, specifically how gender is represented in the experiences of women-identifying skateboards, and how gender is positioned, negotiated, and at times resisted by the participants and in social media (Bruce & Hardin, 2012). Gender was a found to be present in the experiences of the participants when they participated in skateboarding, as well as in the social media sites and in the posts analysed. For the participants, gender was an ever-present feature, an essential attribute of their skateboarding experiences and even shaped the process of how the women came to practice skateboarding.

4.1.1 Gender and resistance

For participants in the study, learning to skate was a pivotal experience in their lives. During this experience, all five of the participants noted that they were a minority within the skatepark and had limited exposure to other women and girls who skated, with the other skateboarders being overwhelmingly men. This observation emphasises how masculinity in skateboarding is understood to be the norm, and all other skateboarders, such as women or queer, are minoritised (Abulhawa, 2020; Bäckström, 2013). Three of the participants observed explicit gender-based discrimination through catcalling or exclusion either against themselves or other women in the space.

Payton, the first interview participant, works as a skateboarding coach and is a long-term skateboarder. She recalled her experience as an eight-year-old learning skateboarding and having limited exposure to other girls or women who skated, stating “I pretty much only

saw male skaters and hung out with my brother and his friends. That's who I saw and that's who I kind of emulated." (Payton, Interview, 2021). As the interview progressed, Payton acknowledged that there was also a lack of gender representation in the sports media that was available to her. The example below is from her experiences with online skate games and the frustration from the limited women's representation in the games. Payton stated,

> I specifically remember as a kid playing Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, and there was only one female skater that I could choose from as my playable character. I chose her every single time and I would have to scroll through like 12 male skaters just to get to her and she was literally, at the last, like, the bottom of the list and so I had to like visually see like all these boys…

This quote demonstrates how media played, and plays, a role in shaping narratives about gender, and how representation is tokenised when there is a sole individual responsible for the representation of an entire gender (Bruce, 2008).

Carina noted a similar experience surrounding gender subversion and being the sole girl skater in a group, identifying the tension that existed: "it was really weird for everyone to all of a sudden see a girl in a dress with the skateboard. And so little by little there was a group that started forming in [her hometown], and it was only men." (Carina, Interview, 2021). Here, Carina noted that skating in clothes that are traditionally assigned to women and girls was subversive against the normalised presentation of skateboarders, i.e., traditional boys' clothing, where she was already the only girl participant. This experience acts as an interesting counter to the research conducted by Kelly, Pomerantz, and Curry (2006), who found that girl skaters would often rebuff emphasised femininity in order to gain acceptance among boy skaters.

Interestingly, this contrast was observed within social media posts. For example, some posts take on a traditionally feminine appearance, such as using skirts or long hair as an expression of skaters being able to look how they want, and others focus less on the appearance of the individuals and more on the message of gender inclusivity. An example of this is below from Unity Skate (coded image C7). This post shows a direct resistance to the rejection of an emphasised femininity that is common in skateboarding spaces (Kelly et al., 2006). In the post below, clothing, specifically a skirt, conveys imagery juxtaposed with a traditional-looking skateboard.

Figure 1 Unity Skate, Instagram, 2020

C7

Yeva, a veteran skater of over fifteen years, had previously competed professionally. She faced similar frustrations as Payton, noting how the male gender was seen as the default in the sport and how women experienced gender-based marginalisation attributed to physical difference. This underscores the narrative that women's bodies are not built for sport performance and men's bodies are inherently athletic, establishing men as the norm in sport performance (Wachs, 2005). She described this via a story: "[o]ne day some guy said, 'girls don't skateboard.' And it was like, so condescending. I was like OK, I will prove that girls could skateboard…" (Yeva, Interview, 2021). Later in the interview when asked about her experiences of representation in the sport, particularly when she started skating, Yeva noted, "It still was a boys' sport at that time. There were a few women." She recognized that the sport had changed over the course of her skating career and noted the increase in women's representation over time in skateboarding. Yeva stated,

> Yeah, I met a few [girls] in the beginning but I had the feeling I was one of the first girls in the group of girls. So, I do think because girls saw me skating or younger girls that that motivated [them] to keep on skating. So the group, yeah, larged [grew larger].

Yeva's experiences demonstrate the marginalisation she faced as a woman participating in skateboarding as well as how her role as a recognized, professional skateboarder provided representation to inspire other women and girls to participate. Importantly, Yeva made an interesting comment where she was told that her attendance at skateparks was purely for attention, saying, "[m]y father also said, 'yeah, you only go there because boys are around there', and I was like, huh? That's totally not true here. It was, it was about the skateboarding" (Yeva, Interview, 2021). As she said this, Yeva connected to an important topic within the research of how women in sports are treated as if their

participation is inauthentic (Beal & Weidman, 2003), and is only for attention from men, not for interest in the sport itself.

The fourth participant, Jane, a WCMX world-champion athlete, noted how gender for her has been a unique experience in the context of both skateparks and in daily life. Jane explained WCMX as a sport that adapts certain skateboarding practices for wheelchair users and is typically practiced in a skatepark setting (Jane, Interview, 2021). Jane's experiences are especially insightful in the intersection of gender and ableism (Crenshaw, 1989; Kafer, 2013). She noted an important observation about gender within extreme sports and paralleled comments made by Yeva, Carina, and Payton's experiences stating, "There's a lot of dudes. There's more dudes who do WCMX. And you know that's just that's just an issue in extreme sports in general." Jane went on to elaborate about the imbalance of power and how that can create repercussions for continued participation in sports, commenting "[l]ike, did women feel uncomfortable in skate parks so they don't get into skateboarding? Or did they, you know, get into skateboarding but then they weren't welcome at skate parks?" (Jane, Interview, 2021).

Interestingly, Jane describes her experience of how girls who "present very cis", that is, a person whose gender matches their gender assigned at birth (Worthen, 2020), are not taken seriously. In her case, the fact that she's in a wheelchair makes her appear "genderless". Jane also notes how she has observed that emphasised femininity is often rejected by the boy skaters at the park and that they tend to see girls as being there for attention, a parallel to another participant's personal experience,

> [g]irls who present very feminine tend to get pushed back a little bit at skate parks, because, uhm, which is not to say the guys won't hit on them, but that they see them as sort of frivolous and like 'Oh, the girls just here for the boys.' Whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, when you show up in a wheelchair you're sort of genderless.

She continues to elaborate on this statement saying, "I do see skaters, you know, roll their eyes at girls at skate parks." Emphasising expected gender performance and skating, especially for girls or women, Jane further elaborates by noting how "almost the worst you can be at a skate park is like… a beautiful girl with like long, flowy blonde hair who's also, like, not that great at skateboarding". (Jane, Interview, 2021)

When asked about how skill can impact how one is perceived within the social setting, Jane brings up how being skilled at the sport will override gender and influence acceptance, noting "[b]eing good at it will get you a lot of points. I think, and I think you

know, it's a shame, because like, it's why women don't get good at it." This insight illuminates how women and girls are socially excluded within the skatepark, how ability wields power for gaining acceptance (Wachs, 2005), and how gender dynamics manifest in social interactions and shape experiences of women-identifying skaters.

Kate, a skateboarder of five years, had a similar experience to the other women skaters, particularly how her initial experience of skating transformed over time, first with limited exposure to other women skaters and later with more women. She began, "I guess when I started five years ago I was the only woman together with two other women… that came to the park regularly..." She expresses the unequal representations of gender in the sport, noting that she was in the minority of women skateboarders at the park.

Kate further explained that she could face regular be harassment due to her gender identity, exemplifying the influence of misogyny on the exertion of power examined through feminist theory (Gervais et al., 2020). She says, for example, "I can give you examples of occasions where I've been like catcalled or like people have been kind of disgusting towards me because I'm a woman at the skate park." (Kate, Interview, 2021). Kate goes on to give a clarifying example of how an experience at the skatepark was impacted by being objectified by another skater at the park and resulted in her feeling uncomfortable,

> [o]ne time I was trying a trick and then one guy was like from the side telling me like, 'oh you look super-hot in when you're trying this'. And just… it's disgusting…just make someone uncomfortable right away. Yeah, so I kind of didn't want to do this trick anymore afterwards.

Kate's response to not "want to do this trick anymore" was an act of defiance, of removing herself from being sexualised whilst skateboarding, an experience in line with Bruce's (2008) analysis of how sportswomen face objectification and how that limits their opportunities for progression. She continued that the spaces felt restrictive for her, noting "[m]ost of the time, I'd prefer just to sit down because I was just too uncomfortable or, like, not really trying." (Kate, Interview, 2021). An additional act of resistance that grew from her previous experience was Kate's motivation to participate in activism and creating skateboarding groups where gender discrimination would be eliminated, which she describes as "the reason that I organized girl and queer only sessions is also because I kind of wished these were there when I started out" (Kate, Interview, 2021).

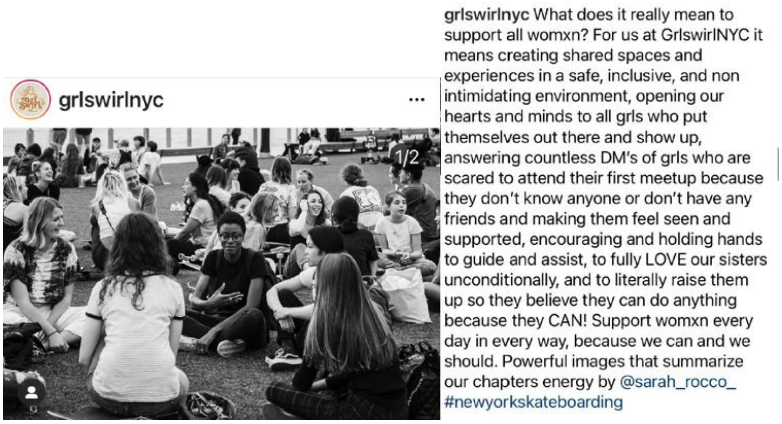
Kate noted both overt objectification from a man skater in addition to more subtle discomfort within the space, which resulted in her reduced participation; this revealed how she was oppressed in both personhood and space by a gendered hierarchy and not having

gender privilege (Carr, 2017; Lazar, 2014). Kate's act of creating "girl and queer" friendly spaces reflects multiple online posts that announced events for girl and queer skateboarders, showing a trend among contemporary skaters to establish their presence within the sport and involve more diverse participants. Whilst gender is individual, it is clear that physical spaces were 'locations of gendering' for the participants, therefore online spaces create a way to talk back to or challenge the dominant idea of skateboarding as a boy/male sport and culture.

An example of the "girl and queer" skateboarding sessions is seen in the Women Skate the World's (WSTW) Instagram page, which shared community-social events, education initiatives, and advocacy. One of the community events, B6, announced New Wave Skate sessions for girls and queer skaters, with the context of having pre-claimed access to a skatepark space with others members of the "girl and queer" skateboarding community that us uncontested (Francis et al., 2012; Lefebvre, 1968). This expresses a similar value across the social media posts of events for women and LGBTQ+ members, effectively connecting with individuals who have been disenfranchised in skateboarding.

B6

The examination of the social media data revealed that the authors created posts that acted in opposition to traditional skate culture's concepts of gender, and were often inclusive of sexuality by identifying the programs as inclusive of 'girl and queer' skateboarders. For example, the language used by social media sites challenged existing stereotypes and gender oppression of women, and one organisation used the word "womxn" in the caption of their post, D14.



D14

The use of the letter 'x' in words like 'women' has been used in queer spaces to be inclusive of all gender identities that are exempt from the term "man." It has faced criticism for meaning women-adjacent, which excludes individuals who identify as exclusively women or who do not identify at all with women (Smith, 2020). The goals of the organisation are stated as: creating inclusive, shared spaces for experiences in an environment that is non-intimidating. The caption reflects how the organisation frames itself and how it aims to support "womxn" because they "can and should".

This post reflects both community and gender as being hurdles for skateboarders who experience marginalisation due to gender and sexuality. Additionally, the terminology used is important, because it denotes both group membership and is a reclaimed term (e.g., 'skater girl') that confers power to users of the term (Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelly, 2004).

4.1.2 Acts of gender resistance expressed online

In online social media materials there were similar notions of gender representation, highlighting an alternative to boys' skate culture, with expressive posts about girls' participation in skateboarding. The social media posts utilised visual images to express gender diversity in skateboarding, and the graphics offer a counter position to the gendered assumptions of traditional skate culture. These graphics utilise different methods, such as imagery, colour, and text, to appeal to the audience.

The organisation Women Skate the World posted a graphic titled *Roll Models*, image B7, which served as a call for applications. The caption is bilingual, with Dutch in the first section followed by English, expressing the international nature of the organisation. The caption calls for 18-30 year-old women (inclusive of trans women and gender fluid people) to solicit more gender-diverse participants into skating throughout Europe. The graphic uses homophones ('roll' versus 'role' model) to convey the message that women can be

skateboarding role models. This post reflects how social media is a medium used to advocate for gender equality and promotion in the online space, noting how historically gender has acted as a barrier within sport, inclusive of skateboarding (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Birrell, 2000; Bruce, 2008; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013).

B7

As a counter to the inclusive nature of the posts above, one social media page (E9) explicitly called out genderisation and beliefs of traditional skateboarding culture, and presented a critique of gender as a social construct, directly relating to the work of Butler (1990). This was posted by the skate collective Sibling, a London-based group. Their social media post announced a film premiere, stating that the group was at an event at House of Vans in London for a "girls skate night" and film screening of "Skate Kitchen" (about girl skaters). The group was critical of the film for expressing some uninformed views on gender and participated in order to advance the idea of "queering it up."

The statement continues that with the platform of film, it is their duty to be accurate and informative rather than perpetuating traditional concepts of gender. The social media site also mentions acts of learning and unlearning in order to be overall more understanding and compassionate. The hashtags, #skate #sibling #siblingskate #skrrrt #houseofvans #poc #lgbtq #queer #womxn #nonbinary, are indicative of queerness, gender identity, skating, and diversity. As the organisation commented on the event's ignorance toward gender, this post reflects how they have used social media to subvert mainstream media (Birrell, 2000; Bruce & Hardin, 2012).

4.1.3 Authenticity and posers

An important finding that developed from gender and serves as a bridge to community within skateboarding is the concept of authenticity (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Yochim, 2010). Authenticity reflects the idea surrounding those who are committed to the sport, who represent skateboarding culture the best, and who are part of the community of skateboarders. The term is also often used as a way to exclude people who are women-identifying skaters or queer skaters (Beal & Weidman, 2003). As a way to determine the in-group, the term poser represents those who are inauthentic skaters and/or who act the part of a skater but do not participate.

The study participants and social media pages both note the influence of the term on creating a sense of exclusion, where posers are rejected from the community. When asked about what a poser means, three of the participants, Payton, Carina, and Kate, shared the universal idea that it acts as a way to exclude people. The participants indicated an understanding about how skateboarding is protective of their community, resisting the powerful influences of mainstream industry. As a means to protect the community from these markets, the concept of poser has come to determine who can actually claim the identity of skater. Importantly, the participants noted that the term poser can act in an exclusionary manner, ultimately casting people out who are otherwise interested in genuinely participating in the sport. As poser does this, it becomes a bridge between gender, community, and space and the expression of power. As noted by Kate,

> it also gets used for people that don't try at the skate park like women or, or maybe also queer people that are just getting there with the skateboard and don't actually try to skate. I've heard a lot of people say that they are posers, but then you can't really consider the fact that maybe some people are scared.

With Kate's reflection, she noted how poser can be used to segregate non-traditional skaters from the main group and identified how it has been regularly used. She clarifies that she talks back to the assertion that these skaters are posers by presenting a different perspective that they may be scared to participate.

Payton similarly notes that "It's more of like you know, you know who's a poser like people who, don't even wanna try something new or don't want to challenge ourselves… There is no room for that word when we're learning to skateboard." (Payton, Interview, 2021). Here, she challenges the standard definition of a poser. In this sentiment, Payton discussed how the word poser is approached when she interacts with younger skateboarding students, reflecting her personal meaning of the term. She importantly highlights that there is no room for the word, because skateboarding is a challenge and it is important to continue learning and falling, neither of which means one is a poser. Finally, Carina described a poser as being "an expression that could be applied to any sport or even in the arts." She continued to say that the term could be applied to anything, because people tried to gain attention or status. As Carina was informed by her background as an artist, she saw the term as being applicable in multiple contexts.

One social media post, by the organization Skate Like a Girl, A12, used their caption to put a humorous take on posers stating "Calling all posers!" The post is advertising a community yoga event with proceeds donated to the organization itself. The post plays off of the way that the term poser is used to exclude people by instead calling them in to participate in an event. The organisation talks back to how poser is traditionally used to gatekeep access to skateboarding and transforms the term into a literal meaning that is then used for community benefit.

A12

4.2 Community as relational

Community as a theme captured the relational experience of skateboarding, how socialising occurs, and how it often negotiates gender, skill, and space. In this study, the

theme of community as relational encompasses how relationships develop among the participants and via online media, as well as the meaning of group membership within skateboarding culture.

4.2.1 Developing community

As skateboarding is an individual sport, it holds an interesting place for community development as each person does the act of skating by themselves but they also do it together with other skaters, making it social (Yochim, 2010). Social media sites offer a newer means for establishing community and connecting with skateboarders who may have similar identities or experiences of skateboarding culture. The pages analysed in this research often featured their communities in physical spaces, but the virtual experience of space became a means for these organisations to expressly claim. The social aspect of someone introducing them into the sport is a shared experience among all interview participants, supporting the notion of community as essential to skating (Yochim, 2010).

Although the traditional spaces of skateboarding, such as shops, parks, and found spots, remain central to in-person practice, they uphold traditionally masculine values (Atencio et al., 2009; Yochim, 2010). At the same time, here is an increasing utilisation of online community development that reimagines how skateboarding culture can exist for skaters who deviate from the assumed masculine norm (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013). Skate Like a Girl's post, A1, below, reflected the community element of skate shops as an important cultural space, offering online events to imitate being in skate shops during COVID. This is consistent with the research conducted by Yochim (2010), who describes skate shops as central to the development of community.

A1

The interview participants also underscored how community was a central experience to their experiences in skateboarding culture, recalling instances where they were either included or excluded, and how gender was integrated into whether or not they could join the community.

One interview example that illuminates the difficulty of finding a skate community was noted by Kate, who upon discussing social dynamics at skateparks said, “it was kind of hard to get into the, I don't know, to get into an accepted into the accepted group of skaters that are there” (Kate, Interview, 2021). The experience with social groups at the skate park indicates that the group of skaters are exclusive and restrict the inclusion of outsiders. Kate identifies that there were two different traits that determined her access to the group, going on to say “[i]t has like partly to do with the fact that I was beginning and also with the fact that I was a woman...” (Kate, Interview, 2021). This shows how the skaters with power at the park recognised experience and gender (Wachs, 2005) as markers of potential group membership and impacted the ability to develop relationships or be accepted into the community.

Kate’s skateboarding community has, she says, grown from being localised in her city to inclusive of individuals worldwide. Kate notes that she developed stronger connections through her engagement with skateboarding non-profits and participation in global events, explaining

> I know people throughout the whole world, like skateboarders that are in favour of an inclusive skateboard scene and they all work with like NGO's and, like, I volunteered at Pushing Boarders, an academic skateboarding conference. And, like, most of my friends internationally, they are working at an NGO or they are a researcher in at a university and they are concerned about skateboarding and equality and or they use skateboarding in a way like to push for progress, I would say, so.

The international community that Kate is part of is subversive and shares a similar value of transforming the skateboarding community from being traditionally male-dominated to celebrating diversity and accessibility. Kate’s experience with community is also interesting because she identifies two distinct groups, one of which is the local guys she skates with regularly in-person, and the other is predominately an international, virtual community who resist traditional skateboarding values by envisioning a different future for skateboarding.

One example of a transformative virtual skate community is the Unity Skateboarding page. What began as a community of skateboarders in northern California has grown into an independent skate brand, collaborating with larger companies on skateboarding materials as well as hosting skateboarding social events. Their posts, such as C4, often contain images of

people gathered together outside caption with the hashtag "#queerskateboarding." This hashtag is representative of how Unity skateboarding focuses on queer skating, broadly, and is indicative of how they are creating spaces for queer skateboarding community.

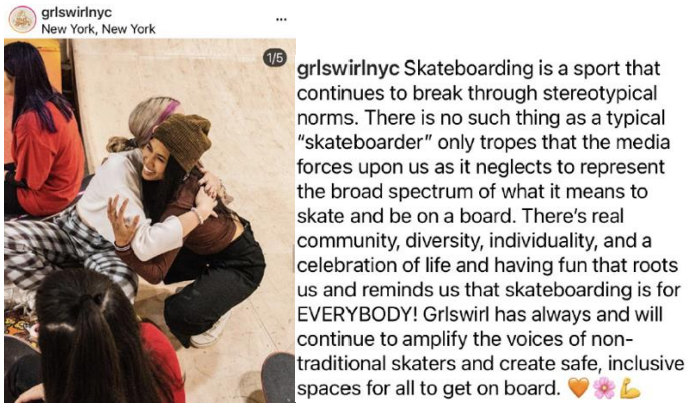
C4

To further look at how community traverses the physical and virtual places, Payton notes that since she started to work as a skateboarding coach, her community transferred from the physical into the virtual.: "[y]ou know, I'm now in this [community] I feel like even though like my participants and pretty much every other coach I work with, they're not based [where I live], I still have that skate community." (Payton, Interview, 2021). Although this community is online, she noted how the mutual support impacted her practice as an individual, noting "so just even talking to them virtually like I feel more motivated to go out and skate just by myself" (Payton, Interview, 2021). The confidence that developed from the virtual community transferred into her in-person practice, improving her relationship to the act of skateboarding.

Payton additionally mentioned how within her community they shared videos of themselves skating, and falling, to reassure beginner skaters that they belong to the community regardless of skill, saying "[i]f I fall in a in a video and it's funny, I post it to our [community] page" (Payton, Interview, 2021). The social camaraderie that develops over sharing experiences virtually is beneficial and is notable as it supports the movement into virtual spaces as sites of community building (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012; Yochim, 2010).

An example of deliberate community building through media is seen in image D15 is a post from GRLSWIRL_nyc. It features a photograph of two people in an embrace and a background of two other people. No one is skating in the photo, but they are instead engaged socially. The caption is important, and states that there is no typical "skateboarder," only media stereotypes that do not accurately reflect the community. This aligns with the theory presented by Scraton and Flintoff (2013) and Bruce (2008) who noted the disparities of women's media coverage in sport. Terms such as "community, diversity, individuality, and

celebration of life and fun" are used in the caption to describe the purpose of skateboarding. This post expressly calls out the media stating that the media forces tropes upon them, an act that the group vehemently resists. They add that it [skateboarding] is for EVERYBODY (emphasis retained).



D15

One example of in-person community that reflects the values mentioned in the online posts was identified by a participant, Carina, and how she experienced two different in-person communities as a skateboarder. The first group was a collection of locals in her hometown in Brazil. She initially identified gender in her experience as being the only girl among a group of boys, but went on to say that the skateboarders in her town were accepting of her as a girl skater, saying how after she got her first skateboard, "[my brother and I] went to find the skateboarders. Everybody was like, you know, gave [me] attention and they were enthusiastic. Skateboarding was more communal…" (Carina, Interview, 2021).

The community of Carina's early skating additionally reflects how mutual support was a defining experience for her as a skater, going on to elaborate that the community of skateboarders was tight-knit with one another but embraced outsiders as well. She expands on the specific ways that the skateboarding community operated as a collective and did not impose hierarchical roles on members (Carr, 2017), "[we] would protect each other more, protecting from theft, or protecting just from like physically hurting yourself, or like if [we] were in a spot that was kind of sketchy or dangerous." (Carina, Interview, 2021). She elaborates on how community became an important part of her skateboarding and progression by noting, "[we] had to make [our] own setups and, like, ramps, little ramps," (Carina, Interview, 2021)

The second community of her later years was when Carina started skating in a different city in southern Brazil, following a 20-year break from the sport. The new

community of skateboarders engaged in creative activities and had a similar communal mentality as her earlier community but was more diverse in how they implemented their skateboarding knowledge, saying, "[they] would do workshops and stuff like that with communities like low-income communities you know… It wasn't just about their, like, inflated egos and about competition." (Carina, Interview, 2021). Carina's work professionally as an artist and musician exposed her to a group of people who had similar perspectives on skateboarding, allowing her to fully share similar interests with one another. She makes an interesting commentary about the values of the community and how they were focused on solidarity and support instead of exerting power.

Jane's experience with community was different than the other participants as she explained she regularly interacted with skateboarders, quad skaters, and other WCMX athletes. As she previously stated that being in a wheelchair transcends categorisation it has allowed her to develop relationships with various guests of the skatepark. Jane's experiences when starting WCMX importantly reflect the connection between forming a virtual community, describing how she first learned about the sport, and who introduced her to it. Jane explains,

> [a] girl who had posted some videos and the name of the video was Rail Bails and it was her, like, hitting this rail over and over and wiping out over and over again, except she's not on the skateboard, she was in a wheelchair and I was like 'What? Oh what? Did you do that?'…So she quickly was like, 'Hey, you wanna hang out? Let's go to the skate park.'

In this comment, Jane identified how she developed her community, first in the virtual, social space by seeing someone who represented her gender as well as was a wheelchair user, two different intersecting traits that do not often receive representation (Crenshaw, 1989). Since she started participating in the sport, she identified the WCMX community as being both a great experience as both an internal group and among other groups at the skate park.

Specifically, in regards to interacting with skateboarders in-person, she notes how they interact with her on a personal level and how her experience is largely positive, explaining "[t]hey're like, are those bones clears on your front casters? It's about the gear. Yeah, people never ask 'why are you in a wheelchair' or 'what happened to you?'" (Jane, Interview, 2021). Jane further explained that this contrasts her experiences with people outside of the skatepark saying "[s]ometimes people, you can feel people avoiding something but you don't feel like that with them" (Jane, Interview, 2021). This reflection demonstrates

skateboarders saw her as a skater and member of their community rather than her identity associated with using a wheelchair, an experience she has had outside of the skate park. Given the narrow intersection of women's WCMX community, this study did not identify online media related to this theme, and only one post, D12 from GRLSWIRL_nyc, indicated a message of all types of wheels being included. This is reflective of a lack of diversity within sports media (Bruce, 2008) and further shows that inequity in skateboarding is not exclusive to gender, but is indeed intersectional with able-bodied privilege (Crenshaw, 1989; Kafer, 2013).

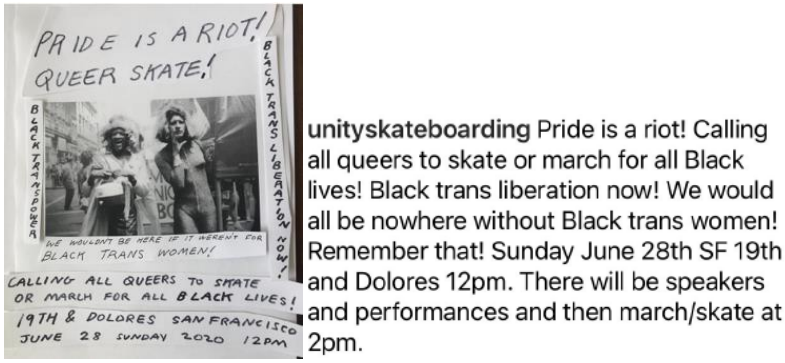
4.2.2 Community solidarity within skateboarding

Data from the participants and the social media both overwhelmingly demonstrated the concept of community development. A majority of the participants noted the contributions of social media on their personal development. Each social media page examined appears to act as communities of their own, facilitating events and casual meetups for people to socialise. As COVID affected the past year, the pages were adapted to include virtual-format events and emphasised that it is possible to find skateboarders of similar identities and values exclusively online. Importantly, all the pages examined showed politically-aligned statements, such as support of Black Lives Matter and queer rights. With these statements, the groups act as advocates for equality and skateboarding is the medium through which people can unite. This further demonstrates how skateboarding is a diverse community united in challenging oppression (Hearne, 2014; Thorpe & Chawansky, 2016).

Women Skate the World's (WSTW) Instagram page shared community-social events, education initiatives, and advocacy. One post, B11, below, was used to facilitate free programs in Palestine for girls and women. This post underscores the role of advocacy for the organisation to affect the skateboarding community to become more inclusive, a link to Birrell (2000), who describes different methods to challenge privilege and oppression and Thorpe and Chawansky (2016) who documented the use of skateboarding for development.

B11

Two illustrative text-posts shared by Unity, C3 and C15, present a clear political statement of their collective values. C3 is a graphic in support of LGBTQ+ rights and Black Lives Matter, noting “Pride is a riot!”, “Queer Skate!”, “Black trans power”, and “Black trans liberation now!” These statements are combined with an event announcement for queers to skate or march for Black lives. This post is connected to advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community that is a central value of the organisation, and expressly notes intersectional community allegiance (Crenshaw, 1989).



C3

One of the most political posts was C15, a visual image of an American flag being burned. The image itself is statement-making, but the caption connects the relationship of skateboarding and protest and showing alliance to Black Lives Matter. The political message provides a direct example of acts of resistance against oppression and the utilisation of space for community solidarity (Featherstone, 2012; Hands, 2011). As Unity shares community events for opportunities to socialise and learn, the expression of what may be considered radical political views act as a way to attract skaters who hold similar values into the Unity skate community, as well as advocate for marginalised identities within the skateboarding community.

C15

4.3 Space as sites of resistance

Data from this study show how spaces hold varied meaning and conflicting experiences for skateboarders. For instance, they can be spaces that hold fond memories or feelings of exclusion as was expressed by the interview participants. Further, spaces act as sites of solidarity, as social media pages express an inclusive right to the skate park, using their pages to rewrite the narrative of skateboarding (Biagi, 2020; Bruce & Hardin, 2012; Carr, 2017; Lefebvre, 1968).

4.3.1 Transformations of space

The locations of learning to skateboard were memorable for all participants, and four of the interview participants specifically identified skateparks for their first experiences. As the participants practiced over longer periods, they noted that physical spaces came to represent different phases of their skateboarding experience and developed different connections.

Payton identified skate parks as being her first exposure to the sport and a location of bonding with her brother, joining him and his friends at the park. She reflects on the experience, remembering "[a]s a as a child when I would go to skate parks, I went with my brother every single time…" (Payton, Interview, 2021). Her first experiences at the skatepark were defined by being an important site for her to hang out with her brother and how that influenced her emotional experience of the space. She continued this reflection by echoing that she did not feel self-conscious, "[m]y main thought was like I'm here with my brother. I love hanging out with him. I'm here to skate…I don't think that I felt any, like, fear or shame or embarrassment, or really any negative feelings" (Payton, Interview, 2021). This statement described Payton's initial experience of skate parks, and includes a thoughtful exploration of being aware of how negative feelings can impact access to space (Carr, 2017; Francis et al., 2012).

As she narrates the evolution of her skateboarding practice, Payton describes how the space has changed for her as well. Evolving from being a site of positivity, it has now become a place of discomfort as she became more aware of gender disparities, saying “I tend to avoid those spaces now as a as a skater, especially because I'm kind of getting back into it… I don't feel comfortable at skate parks for sure, so” (Payton, Interview, 2021). In this statement, Payton touches on her personal observations of the skate park and how the demographic imbalance is intimidating. This is a drastic change from her memories as a child where she noted that she did not feel embarrassed to be at the skate park, but now she is more nervous to practice.

Payton followed with an insightful reflection about re-negotiating the dynamics of the space, noting “I've never had anyone tell me ‘you don't belong here,’ I definitely feel that like I don't belong here, I'm not good enough. I'm just taking up space, there's people who could shred this bowl that totally deserve it” (Payton, Interview, 2021). She expresses an understanding about how her perception of the space, based on observations of the space and anticipated interactions with the dominant group, as a woman in the minority, has impacted her behaviour and comfortability to use the space.

As Payton describes above her feeling intimidated by the traditionally masculine environment, GRLSWIRL reflects the virtual movement to make safe inclusive spaces for Grls, non-binary, and LGBTQ+ skaters. For example, in D13 the organisation noted that the gathering was a “revolution” and thanks all the participants who showed up. The language used here is distinct in that it is transformative in efforts to reclaim space and exert their collective right to the space (Biagi, 2020). Additionally, they explain that nearly 200 attendees were women and queers together who took up the space, further noted as being space they have a right to, in addition to shared skating & community.

The right to the skate park links to critical space theory and understanding how power dynamics influence space (Biagi, 2020; Lefebvre, 1968). The organisation comments that they, presumably women and LGBTQ+ identities, are growing away from being a minority within the skating community, and, specifically, that they are a force to watch and be remembered. In this statement, GRLSWIRL_nyc is actively creating their own story within skateboarding (Bruce, 2008).

D13

Yeva's experience with space was discussed in two parts, similar to the period of time between Carina's phases of skating. The first experience was that the space was welcoming to her and that she was included, which she related to being the general experience with skateboarders as a community, stating "I know that when you go skateboarding somewhere everybody always very open." (Yeva, Interview, 2021). This is a similar observation to Jane's experience with the skateboarding community being responsive to other skateboarders, but contrasts other participants experiences of being excluded.

Yeva describes her most recent phase of skateboarding, after a ten-year break. At the skate park with her son, she was told to move out of the way, explaining "[b]oth guys there were like just go away, 'cause I was in the way. And so, I said, 'Oh my God. Um, have a bit of respect'" (Yeva, Interview, 2021). This is a drastically different experience of the space than her time as a competition skater where she claimed the space without expressed push back. She challenged this negative experience by saying how she "went back the next day with my skateboard and I was like, I will skate you all again" (Yeva, Interview, 2021). The response to the oppression she experienced inspired her to revisit the space and demonstrate her knowledge and ability. This calls back to her initial motivations for participating in skating: to prove that girls can do it. She was able to show off her skills, prove her skateboarding aptitude, and reclaim the space from the hierarchy (Atencio et al., 2009; Wachs, 2005).

Kate's experience of space has changed since she started skateboarding regularly. Her first experiences were identified as being passive places, where she and other local girls would hangout but not participate. However, when Kate began to practice skateboarding after moving to a larger city, she recalled that the central skate park was a difficult place to learn to skate, "[l]ike I didn't feel very comfortable in the skate park. So, I also, and, like… for learning it wasn't comfortable for learning or, yeah, yeah, I felt like very kind of exposed" (Kate, Interview, 2021). She uses the term of feeling "exposed" to describe her

connection to the skate park, indicating that it was not a place that offered much privacy or safety.

Although Kate has now had multiple years of experience skateboarding, she presented an interesting observation of how the dynamics of the space are negotiated between skate boarders and how space becomes claimed (Atencio et al., 2009; Carr, 2017). Kate stated,

> I guess within skateboarding it takes first if you, like women or queer people too, learn the language of the skateboarding scene and then they claim the space according to the skateboarders' rules. So, by being a bit loud and being a bit rude and then you get accepted. And then after that you kind of hope that they after they claim the space will change the rules and show more [of] a friendly environment for everybody, I think.

This statement reflects the intersection in the data between gender, community, and space, where Kate describes how the community heavily influences the dynamics of space, and how women and queer skaters adapt to those dynamics and then transform the space.

Jane's experience of space exemplifies how for each site an individual will have their own, personal experience and understanding of the place. As a wheelchair user, Jane describes how her experience of navigating space was improved through practicing WCMX at skate parks,

> [w]hen you end up in a wheelchair, everything for the first little while, everything the world looks like peaks and valleys--like just the sidewalk. You like look at it with new eyes… [S]o doing [WCMX] taught me a huge range of chair skills that I now use all the time just in my daily life.

This perspective is an important finding as it brings intersectionality to the examination of space (Crenshaw, 1989; Gruenwald, 2003; Kafer, 2013). Jane indicates how the skate park was a place of positive development in which she could learn adaptable physical skills to interact with a variety of environments. Her experience is informative on two accounts: first, how regularly-occupied space, such as public foot paths or work environments, are often inaccessible to wheelchairs; and, second, that as she had recently become a wheelchair user, it was beneficial to go to the skate park, as it was deliberately built for wheels, and learn useful skills. Jane explains,

> [s]kate parks feel, have felt always, like a really safe place for me because… what they're most interested in is not 'Is it a girl in the chair or a boy in there?' They're interested in the chair. And not even the chair as a wheelchair; they're interested in the chair as a set of wheels strapped to your *** 'cause they're like, 'sweet ride'…

Jane reflected on her experience at the park and how skaters interact with her, notably that they were more interested in the gear she used. As this thought developed, she commented on the perception of wheelchairs and how WCMX is an act of resistance against the dominant idea of wheelchairs as well as a total transformation of the narrative, expressing "[w]hat I love about WCMX is that it really, like, is the best medicine for the taboo of a wheelchair... No one will ever think you're sad, or sick, or weak after you've just like shredded up a Skate Park" (Jane, Interview, 2021).

In this statement she underscores a reclamation of narrative for wheelchairs, a profound understanding of space and how to navigate physical environments, and how others interact with her at the skatepark (Bruce & Hardin, 2012; Kafer, 2013). When asked about the future of WCMX and if creating a space designed specifically for the sport would result in an accessible park, Jane stated, "…well what would be lovely is if we could get, like, one skate park that was like built for WCMX. Because if you build it for WCMX, skateboarders can use it" (Jane, Interview, 2021). The deliberate creation of an inclusive, physical space that takes into consideration disability or use of assistive technology touched on an interesting concept about intersectionality and access to space and right to space (Crenshaw, 1989; Lefebvre, 1968).

An example of street skating and alternative skate spaces was explained by Carina noted that she began street skating and practicing in found or created places in her local city. Her perspective is informed by the surroundings of an old city without a designated public skate park, saying "there wasn't really that much space for skateboarding or like places to skateboard... It's not really conducive to skateboarding, 'cause all the streets are, you know, they're like cobblestone" (Carina, Interview, 2021). As she discussed in her development of community, many of the obstacles she skated were created with other skateboarders in her social circle.

Additionally, Carina noted how skateboarding allowed her to experience the city with a different perspective, that skating brought "[a] connection to [my] surroundings that was created. By society that [I] could kind of like, not make fun of, but you know kind of joke around. Kind of like it was, everything was kind of like an obstacle" (Carina, Interview, 2021). This comment illuminated how space had a different intended use, but as a skateboarder she was able to express discontent with that intended use and adapt the use of space through skateboarding.

The second phase of Carina's skateboarding experience illuminated the difference between her initial access to space and the availability of space when she moved to a larger

city that has more modern streets. She states, “it was just super easy and, like, to actually use it as you know, go from one point to another” (Carina, Interview, 2021). Interestingly, she noted that also connected her emotionally with skateboarding and family in her hometown. She commented, “[My] kids were back in the northeast and mom and everybody so [I] would use a skateboard for all those things. Like a nostalgia feeling like a, yeah, so there's a word in Portuguese called *saudade* [longing]” (Carina, Interview, 2021). Here Carina illustrated how skateboarding in one space goes beyond a strict location and results in a construction of strong emotional connections (O’Connor, 2020; Ong, 2016).

As Carina described the access to space as being a factor in her experience, one post, B5, from Women Skate The World, advocated urban spaces as being adapted to promote more access to skateboarding. The post describes how a square in Kraaiennest (Amsterdam) was repurposed for skating. They further explain that the organisation encourages more skateparks in Amsterdam southeast as a safe space for community use. Further in alignment with spatial advocacy, post B15 explains the use of an arts project with their youth participants to challenging participants to reimagine skateboarding and skateparks culture. They note that the project is by- and for- the kids who participate in the WSTW program. Moreover, the organisation uses future thought on how they plan to advocate for more skateparks in the southeast to the city council.

131 likes

womenskatetheworld In September we started with 1104Skate, an event taking place monthly at Kraaiennest in Amsterdam Southeast. Wanna join? Next edition is Okt 17th! —— #funfact: Up until this summer the square wasn't used much and covered in very rough asphalt. Thanks to the city of Amsterdam and Skatemates, the floor was renewed and permission was granted to slowly turn this square into a local skatespot with chances on an Urban Sportzone in the future. Locals of the K-buurt will be working on this plan in granted to slowly turn this square into a local skatespot with chances on an Urban Sportzone in the future. Locals of the K-buurt will be working on this plan in 2020-2021. Meanwhile, we'll keep pushing for more accessible skateparks in Southeast, providing a safe and fun place to stay happy and healthy in times of crisis. —— Pics by @randydacosta & special thanks to @vinger.nl

B5

womenskatetheworld Skateboarding is more than just a sport and therefore we use it as a tool to do a little extra, help the kids find a way to express themselves, or help them to make impact where they want to. — This summer we focussed on imagination, creation and impact making, by challenging the participants to come up with their own ideas on skateboarding, skateparks and what this should include. We bundled it together, resulting in a zine for the kids, by the kids 💪 — Next up? A recommendation plan for the city council, because we need skateboarding to be more accessible in Amsterdam Southeast! 📝 Swipe for some snaps of the zine ➡️➡️

B15

4.3.2 Virtual spaces as sites of community

As this study shows, community and space are integrated. Examining the use of social media illuminated the role that virtual space plays and how it reflects community-building and transformative attitudes towards diverse cultures.

Unity skateboarding uses virtual space as a place for community on their page. The community event posts are tagged with locations that range from international to US-based (see post C10). As the motivations of the organisation are to show up and claim space for queer skaters, they use their page as a means to create safe virtual spaces that reimagine the physical skate spaces.

C10

The final social media page, Sibling, features their members in different locations and various skateboarding sites. Some images depict groups of people in nondescript areas, whereas others are photographs of people gathered at an indoor skating venue, apparently in a bowl area (E5). In these images, the people are close to one another and intertwined, reflecting the community values of the collective. Space is less explicitly noted by Sibling, similar to how Unity used photographs of their community within physical space, but did not describe the space itself. By claiming these spaces, Sibling expresses that there is no hierarchy of skateboarder where one is more deserving of space than another (Atencio et al., 2009; Beal & Weidman, 2003).

E5

Ultimately, the social media posts and interviews underscored the physical and virtual spaces, how those spaces were negotiated and transformed over time for women-identifying skaters. In the case of social media, the sites acted as spaces of inclusion for other socially marginalised groups and sites of resistance and even hope. The virtual space served as sites of political action, where resistance to oppressive acts is organised and where knowledge is shared (Hands, 2011). This shows that the organisations hope to reimagine skateboarding spaces for a diverse community.

4.4 Findings Conclusion

Data from this study consisted of both individual in-depth interviews with five women and 75 social media posts, identified by the participants. Findings from this study demonstrated three main, complex themes of gender, community, and space. The themes were not, however, in isolation, and the data demonstrate how these three themes intersected in the lives of the participants and in social media. In addition, the data demonstrate how these three areas were dynamic across time and among the participants. The subthemes of resistance, community development, solidarity, and transformation further underscore the complexity in the participants' experiences and in social media. Social media offered women-identifying skaters creative and novel approaches and venues to resist traditional male-dominated physical skateboarding spaces.

5. Conclusion

This research investigated how women-identifying skateboarders experience skateboarding culture. The data consisted of semi-structured, in depth interviews from five women skateboarders and content analysis of 75 total social media posts, organised as fifteen posts from five different social media pages. In the midst of traditionally masculine skate culture, women-identifying skateboarders navigated overt and subtle manifestations of the patriarchy. Overt examples included being called-out as women, cat-called, or made to feel unwelcome or inferior in ability. Subtle manifestations included assimilating through traditionally masculine dress or attire or avoiding populated skate spaces out of anticipated discomfort. Findings from the study revealed how the participants experienced and navigated male-dominated practices and spaces, and how they resisted and/or created new and inclusive spaces, which extended beyond women to other minoritized groups.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The central research question examined how women-identifying skateboarders experience skateboarding. This study found both positive experiences that impacted the lives of women skateboarders, as well as the negative inequities within traditional skate culture that limited their experience or reinforced oppressive social structures. The three main themes of gender, community and space are reviewed briefly below.

Gender revealed tension within skateboarding across all of the data collected and analysed. Gender was recognised as men and boys being the power-holders of skate spaces and women having to prove their right and ability to skateboard. Being perceived as a woman influenced how women-identifying skateboarders were treated. The effects of this gendering process forced women-identifying skaters to respond to the context, where they either asserted themselves or removed themselves from uncomfortable situations. These decisions can be seen as acts of resistance against oppressive male dominating sport culture. The awareness of gender was ever-present in social media posts, with the organisations advocating their position of being inclusive of all genders with the goal of transforming skateboarding culture as a whole. Gendered experiences came across in the forms of being treated differently at the skatepark through instances of direct or indirect misogyny and noticing that they make up a considerably smaller percentage of skaters.

Bridging together gender and community was the inquiry into the idea of ‘poser’, a word that has been used as a way to gatekeep who is accepted to skateboard. The data

illuminated an awareness of this term as well as the ways in which women speak back and defy its use. For example, a social media post used humour to 'call all posers' whilst three of the participants identified explicitly that they did not agree with how it was used and excluded the term itself from their personal vocabularies.

Community was identified as the second theme and is central to skateboarding culture (Yochim, 2010). That remained true to the experiences of women identifying skaters. Although historically community was contingent on access to physical locations, virtual community was identified in the data collected as being an effective means of connecting with other skaters, especially skateboarders of marginalized identities, and rewriting the definition of a skater (Bruce & Hardin, 2012). Solidarity within community developed through social media and translated into physical practice, as interview participants noted a positive correlation and social media posts announcing group events in the online space. Additionally, these online spaces resist hypersexualisation that is typical of mainstream media by promoting and controlling the narrative of how diverse skateboarders actually are (Bruce & Hardin, 2012).

Space, as both physical and virtual, was the third theme identified and was found to be inclusive of both gender and community. Virtual spaces were found to be sites dedicated to transformation as solidarity was developed within online communities. The social media analysis and interviews reflected how virtual spaces contributed to the complete reimagining of physical spaces and who has the right to claim them. Additionally, social media pages address the discomfort of physical spaces, noting that traditional physical skate spaces were exclusionary and that they aim to transform physical spaces to be inclusive. The virtual space was purposeful in its message to build an inclusive space where challenges to hetero- and gender- normative views could be examined and resisted. The virtual spaces used language as power to resist, and, even more powerfully, images that demonstrated counter stories to those surrounding White male skateboarders as the norm.

Space played different roles in the experiences of the participants. Physical space was clearly a place where women-identifying skaters generally felt evaluated for their gender identity, oppressed, uncomfortable around large groups of men, and had even experienced harassment. The physical space also transformed for them over time, from initially places of comfort and learning to negotiating the space with other people. Ultimately, women-identifying skateboarders needed to resist those social messages and have "audacity" to enter- and re-enter the space (Pomerantz et al., 2004, p. 554).

5.2 Theoretical and Methodological implications

This study used critical feminist theory and critical space theory as a lens to analyse the data. To further examine the presence of power within the subculture skateboarding, previous research into skateboarding culture showed that skateboarding culture reifies subordination and oppression by othering divergent members of the community and those deemed substandard. As critical theory underscores power dynamics between groups, the theory illuminated how this took place for the woman participants and for other minoritized groups online, such as in the LBTQ+ community.

Critical theory was effective to analyse these power structures and to examine how women-identifying skateboarders negotiate their roles within space and community. Intersectional critical theory (Crenshaw, 1989) provided a framework for understanding intersections between different traits of the individual, such as race, class, gender, and ability, and how those shape experiences, which were much more nuanced and negotiated in the lives of the participants. Mainstream perceptions of skateboarding culture reinforce the skateboarder as being white, male, cis gender, heterosexual, and able bodied (Brayton, 2005). However, the data revealed how skateboarding culture is much more complex.

Feminist critical theory provided a lens to examine how men are the default version of a skateboarder, designing the standards unto which all others who skate must fit (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The normalisation of men as the standard athlete creates a rigid parameter of what defines an athlete, with women athletes seen as a-typical (Bruce, 2008; Thorpe, 2009; Wachs, 2005). This was further expressed in the language and terminology that separates skaters from ‘other’ skaters, using terms such as poser.

Feminist critical theory was further applied to examine how being a woman in athletic spaces affected the experience of women-identifying skaters in accessing space and being accepted into the dominant group (Bäckström, 2013; Pomerantz et al., 2004; Thorpe, 2009). Both critical feminist and critical space theories contributed to the understanding of community. More specifically, feminist theory illuminated women’s restricted access to communities in which men remain the majority members, and, in resistance and contrast to that, how virtual communities are and can be sites that redefine community (Bruce & Hardin, 2012; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013). Finally, women’s limited access to representation in the media resulted in a greater awareness of gender, particularly how their limited representation perpetuates the social narrative of men as the norm (Bruce, 2008).

Critical space theory and critical feminist theory were effective frameworks to use together for this research because they provided a lens for how power and social structures

impact the gender and experiences of skateboarders. Critical space theory served to examine how power dynamics influence the assumed right to use physical space, and how contemporary media has created online spaces for these marginalised skateboarders (Biagi, 2020; Bruce & Hardin, 2012). Through this, critical space theory allowed me to see how those individual interactions identified based on gender manifested in physical spaces. Additionally, it showed how these physical spaces were reported as being sites of contested personal experiences, whereas the examination of virtual spaces showed how they are subversive and counter feelings of discomfort (Francis et al., 2012). Finally, critical space theory was utilised to examine how to subvert imbalanced power and cultivate solidarity, which was especially visible in virtual spaces.

The methods used were qualitative interviews and qualitative content analysis. These methods were appropriate as they generated rich and insightful data, and created a thorough study that included personal, individual experiences coupled with broader contemporary social structures and spaces (social media). Qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and content social media analysis provided a deep understanding of skateboarding culture. The interviews added nuance to understanding skateboarding culture and revealed how each individual participant had a different experience of skateboard culture (through gender, community, and space) but all experienced subtle or overt gender discrimination and acts of resistance. The content analysis was very much conducted with these interviews completed in mind and guided me on what to look for in the content. Social media analysis was a useful tool to examine how specific organisations view traditional skate culture and how their values and motivations to transform culture and make it more inclusive, diverse, and equitable.

Finally, the interviews enabled me to determine the emotional component that was not readily apparent in content analysis. The ways in which the interview participants answered questions with excitement or hesitation provided insight into how the data and the questions were researched. Also the interview participants were able to make commentary not restricted by a single post; rather, they were able to connect their stories to the questions or elaborate and inform me of different phenomena and experiences.

5.3 Reflection for Future Research

Future research into this topic would be desirable, particularly examining a larger and more diverse population of women-identifying skaters, or examining the experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Future studies might also focus on the material items for skateboarding, such as the deck, and identify women who express their identities through the material

artifacts used in skateboarding. The use of art, then, could be an exciting and novel way to collect data in future studies.

Additionally, this investigation faced several limitations. For instance, there was limited access to skateparks and shops to conduct a more in-depth study with observations, especially due to COVID. Further, the recruitment of participants was difficult, particularly during the pandemic, and resulted in a smaller final number of participants, deviating from the original study design to then include social media. Another limitation was the finding that the five participants did not create or decorate their skateboard decks as a means of expression (of gender, for example). As this was limited in scope and access recruiting participants who had different gender identities and diversity in abilities and ethnicities would allow future research to truly be more intersectional in its comprehension of skateboarding culture.

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Appendix A

Introduction Script for Skateboard Study

Hi! Thank you for meeting with me today. How are you?
Thank you for taking time to be here and to tell me about you and your experiences as a skateboarder. Before we begin, for the record, do you agree to be (video/audio) recorded?

Thank you. I am Rachel Coady, and I am a graduate student at Erasmus University and this recording is approved for my thesis. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with the questions or want to stop the recording, please let me know, or if you would like to move on from a questions let me know.

I will be taking notes, so if you see me looking down that is what I am doing.

Please tell me how you would like for me to refer to you (pronouns).
Do you have a preferred pseudonym that you'd like for me to use in my work?

Part I: Personal history in skateboarding

- I'd like to begin by asking about your "story" and how you got into skateboarding/WCMX?
    - Can you tell me about that?
- Specifically:
    - Was there an "aha" or special moment when you knew you wanted to be in the sport?
    - Was there anyone special in your life that introduced you to the sport?
    - Did you have role models who you felt reflected your experience or aspirations?

1. Community
    a. What was your general perception of skate parks?
    b. Did other people at the park help you if you had questions?
    c. How many formal parks did you go to when you were learning?

d. Were there informal spots you learned of? How soon did you go to spots?
    i. Was this information shared openly by other skaters?
e. Has following other skaters/WCMX athletes online inspired you or helped you build a network?

2. Gender
    a. Did you find yourself thinking you had to look or perform a certain way when you first started learning?
    b. Did you feel watched or uncomfortable in skateparks?
        i. Did you find yourself being tokenised within these spaces?
3. Identity
    a. Please state three terms or adjectives that describe you as an athlete. How do these reflect your identity outside of skating/WCMX?
    b. Did you look for inspiration on how to express yourselves?

    c. Establishing themselves as an athlete- was it when they achieved a new trick or were accepted into a crew or a contest?
4. What does the term poser mean to you?

Part II: Skateboard deck & aesthetic Reflection

- What was your first equipment/gear?
    - Did you decorate it or did it come pre-designed?
    - If self-decorated, what do you look to for inspiration?
    - Tell me about the decorations you chose.
    - Why did you choose it?
    - What areas represent your identity (gender identity)?
    - What areas of the deck represent your community?

Part IV: Future

- Do you think there is a shift of women and LGBTQ+ skaters/WCMX getting recognition from mainstream companies?
- Do you foresee an increase of independent brands participating in the culture?
- What do you hope for the future of skating/WCMX?

All interviews and information will be kept confidential. Would you like a copy of the transcript? I can additionally send you the findings of this study or the thesis in total if you are interested.
If you have any other questions feel free to email me. And if you know anyone else who might be interested in sharing their story feel free to pass on my info. I am collecting data for the rest of this week.

Appendix B

In order to understand the participants' experiences as woman-independent skateboarders, a short overview and background for each is helpful. Each participant is described below. All names are pseudonyms, and the order in which the participants are presented is the order in which the interviews were conducted. All participants were asked in the opening script (see Appendix A) which pronouns they used, and all stated "she/her." Thus, those are used purposefully throughout the data findings.

The first interview was conducted with Payton, a woman skateboarder in her 20s whose casual dress and hoodie conveyed an ease of approach and lack of pretence. She was accommodating as my first interviewee, which facilitated the conversation tremendously, because she easily shared her views and built off the main interview questions to provide a thoughtful and lengthy answer to each question. Payton indicated that she worked for a skateboarding oriented organization that facilitated skateboarding lessons and activities for youth and adults. Payton lived in the United States at the time of the interview. She had been a skateboarder since her early childhood, about 7 or 8 years old and expressed a few evolutions in her experiences as a skateboarder, from skating to longboarding and back to skating.

The second interview was conducted with Yeva, who was in her 30s. She, too, was casually dressed in a shirt, but the setting was more office-like and formal. The interview with Yeva, like that of Payton, was conducted in English, even though Yeva was Dutch and lived in the Netherlands at the time of the interview. The language difference was evident in how abstract questions, such as concepts related to skateboarding, were understood and translated. Nevertheless, Yeva seemed happy to comment on her experiences and assert her thoughts of skateboarding culture and community. She shared photos of her experiences as a competitive skateboarder. Although she had been skating since her youth, she had taken a 10-year break from skateboarding and, upon her return, noticed how she felt more comfortable on the board. Yeva attended art school and worked in the creative field at the time of the interview.

Jane was the third participant in the study. Jane was unique in that she was the only interviewee who used a wheelchair as a result of Guillain-Barre syndrome. She was open to discuss her disability and how it impacted her life and experiences, eventually leading her to discover Wheelchair-Motocross (WCMX), adapted for skateboarding. This was a non-motorized wheelchair sport. Jane participated in WCMX since her 30s and was open to

discussing issues of accessibility in skateparks and in general spaces, as well as public perceptions of skateboarding. She worked as a writer in the field of entertainment.

Carina was a native-Portuguese speaker from Brazil whose interview was conducted with the assistance of an English-Portuguese interpreter. Carina stated that she understood English but preferred to respond in Portuguese. Another participant in her 30s, she worked in an art studio and was a professional artist and musician. Carina was connected to skateboarding communities as both an artist and activist. She started skating in her youth and was reintroduced to the sport when she moved to the south of the country. She stated that the project was helpful for her to reminisce about her life as a skater and how it evolved for her.

The fifth and final interview was conducted with Kate. Kate was the youngest participant in the study at 24 years old. Like the other participants, she dressed casually and appeared to be in her personal space, bedroom, during the interview. She was also initially the most hesitant interviewee, but eventually our conversation came into a flow with her response to the question. Kate shared helpful anecdotes about her experiences and opinions. Although the interview was conducted in English, Kate was from the Netherlands. At the time of the study, Kate lived in a city in the Netherlands and was attending university. She stated that she first learned to skate by hanging out at a skatepark and longboarded outside of town. She provided an interesting perspective about skateboarding culture and media, and hers was one of the longest interviews conducted at about 80 minutes.