

“Caution! Falling May Occur”: Sociocultural Traditions,
Nonverbal Communication, and Social Interaction
at the Wichita Ice Arena

Valencia L. Scott*

Faculty: Deborah Ballard-Reisch

Elliott School of Communication, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

September 2, 2016 was a busy day for the Wichita Ice Center; the afternoon open-skate was filled with children and adults of varying ages. As both children and adults attempted to skate around the oval ice rink, many either fell or lost their balance. This paper reported on the nonverbal reactions of people to others falling or losing their balance while skating on the ice. To address this issue, unobtrusive fieldwork observation was conducted and field notes thematically analyzed. Three themes emerged from analysis: support is not limited to physical help, females receive more help than males, and children receive more help than adults. These themes echoed research that emphasizes the impact of sociocultural tradition, the significance of non-verbal communication, and the impact of social interaction in shaping perceptions.