
Medical Texts on Gender, Sexuality and Sport in Norway 1890-1950: Changing Metaphors on Feminites and Masculinities

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This article focuses on authoritative and representative texts by doctors on female bodies in sport and physical education from 1890 until 1950. These sources do not tell us directly about the actual practice of these professionals, but they do illuminate dominant gendered ideas and ideologies. These works focused on females' bodies' lack of ability—a deficit in relation to the “original” male bodies.¹ *Medical texts that focus on men from a gender perspective are, on the other hand, scarce in Scandinavian works. In this sense males may be interpreted as the “natural” participants in sport—a point of departure for all physical bodies.*

The period from 1890 until 1950 was one of transition in work and leisure in Norway. This change had started near the middle of the nineteenth century, when the family was no longer a blend of a unit of productive work and leisure. Norway changed from a society of *Standsamfunn* [estates of the realm] to a class-based society.² Even before this change, Norway went through an economic boom from the 1830s onwards.³ There was no longer any new land to be cultivated for the new generation of farmers. Norwegian people in the south of the country moved to towns and to the north to get work. The consumer culture started to sprout. Simultaneously, the American and German industrial economies advanced with giant steps. Britain was the largest exporter of capital of financial, commercial, and transport services until the end of World War I. Products such as soap, beer, candles, textiles, margarine, and tinned (canned) foods were available in Norwegian shops from the middle of the nineteenth century. Between 1890 and 1950, the average number of children in a

Norwegian family declined from 5 to 2.4.⁴ This is an important fact, because the time spent for childcare correspondingly declined rather drastically. This drop is labelled a sharp decline in fertility in the developed countries by historians like Eric Hobsbawm.⁵ Not all Norwegian women got married, because there remained a significant majority of females in the population, mainly as an effect of the emigration of young men to the United States from the 1880s until 1910.⁶ In 1900, there were 1,064 women per 1,000 men; this dropped to 1,017 per 1,000 in 1950.⁷ In 1900 only 60% of women in towns between the age of 30 and 45 were married, in contrast to 90% of men.⁸ Very few people immigrated to Norway, and these were mainly Swedes. In 1900, less than 4,000 children of US origin were born in Norway.⁹ In addition, reduced need for hard work among middle-class wives and their household servants in towns changed the daily life of many families. In this way, western ideas of female emancipation took hold in more Norwegian bourgeois women—and some men. Discussion on women's right to vote, abortion, and contraception created a lot of tension at first among the middle class factions in towns. The rise of the labour and socialist movements for the suffrage of the underprivileged seemed to encourage women seeking their own freedom. Females discussing women's emancipation in public in the 1870s were often associated with whores. Beginning in 1884, Norwegian women were permitted to attend universities. According to Hobsbawm, middle-class fathers backed women's emancipation, because lower-middle-class families were not sufficiently well-off to keep their daughters in comfort if they did not marry or work.¹⁰ Women had fought to achieve the right to vote for elected representatives to the *Stortinget* [National Assembly] in 1913, whereas the men had been accorded this right as early as 1898.

Norway's population was 2 million in 1890 and 3.5 million in 1950.¹¹ In 1890, 77.6% of the people lived in places with a population of 2,000 or fewer, falling to 68.4% in 1950. In this respect Norway belonged to the "non-developed" zone, because the percentage of Europeans of the "developed" zone and North Americans who lived with a population of 2,000 or fewer fell from 81% in 1850 to 59% in 1910.¹² Norway was thinly populated during the whole period, with most inhabitants in the countryside. Norway might be labelled "non-developed" in a further sense—as an independent nation state; the country had been in a political union with its neighbour, Sweden, from 1814 to 1905.

The turn of the twentieth century has been described as a "crisis of masculinity" in the USA by some historians.¹³ The main reasons for this involved forces of modernization, urbanization, and an active women's movement. Similar tendencies can be detected in Norway, as well. Christian Døderlein, a well known Norwegian doctor at the end of the nineteenth century, described the crisis of modernization in terms of "physical degeneration" and "claims and burdens of culture."¹⁴ Some of the reasons for this were believed to be the sedentary life of children, men, and some females at school and work in towns, although these orthodox explanations do not appear gender-related. Although Norwegians did not have the cowboy-on-the-frontier culture of the US, most Norwegian farmers were also hunters. Thus, they needed to shoot wild animals to get enough food and income. The fear of losing manhood by working in an office in town seemed to worry some American men.¹⁵ This might also have been the

the case in Norway, although the industrialization processes occurred later than in the other Scandinavian countries. In contrast to the US, Norway was a homogeneous country, with about 99% white inhabitants of the Protestant descent up to the 1970s. The dominating ideas of the western world came from the US, Germany, and England to Norway, not the other way round.

From 1850 on, a struggle for authority between nonprofessional females and professional doctors took place over how to lower the death-rate of newly born babies, make healthy food, and raise children. Before this period, this was a traditional women's area with female-dominated knowledge. The authoritative male doctors, backed by the state, won this struggle first and foremost in towns. These doctors were white, mostly middle-class men of Protestant descent. This national and international network was also the ideologies of the "cult of domesticity" to secure a healthy nation with the husbands at work and the housewives at home from 1900 onwards. A similar network of authoritative doctors backed by male sport leaders and school leaders created the texts of this article. The tension on the "women's question" on work and leisure lasted the whole period from 1890 to 1950. Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play *Et Dukkehjem* [*A Doll's House*] was understood as a radical break with conservative orthodoxy, although the author was forced to write a new version in which Nora did not leave her husband and children. The ambivalence on the gender question included all areas of the society.

Whose Texts?

This article discusses and interprets dominating metaphors on femininities and masculinities as featured in authoritative medical texts of the time (1890-1950) in Norway.¹⁶ Doctors of the bourgeois became the great advisors and experts, both in work and sport. Except for two, these authors were male doctors. One of the females, Gisela Lyng, could be considered as liberal in question of women's sport. The gender ideology of white, conservative middle-aged men seemed to dominate the texts.

The authors of the texts, eight doctors and one national coach in track and field, represent different periods from 1890 until 1950. The male doctors were particularly well-known persons of their time. All the doctors except one practiced in Christiania (now Oslo), the capital of Norway.¹⁷ Christian Doderlein is representative of the 1890s. He was both a doctor and a teacher of anatomy and physiology at the Central School of Gymnastics in Oslo. Peter Torgersen serves as the spokesman from the first two decades of the twentieth century. He was the first doctor to start testing sportsmen in Christiania.¹⁸ He developed a card index recording each athlete's weight, height, chest measurement, and pulse before and during training. Kristiane Skjerve, a female doctor, represents the second decade of the twentieth century. With her book *Sunnhetslære for unge kvinner* [*Health for Young Women*], she won the prize given by *Norske Kvinders Nationalråd* [The National Committee for Norwegian Women] for the best book in the field in 1912. Carl Schøitz both was a physician and held a doctoral degree in hygienics. As the leader of the school doctors in the capital of Norway, and later a professor of hygiene, he initiated a lot of research on school boys and girls in the town. He was also served as the editor of the *Tidsskrift for den norske Lægeforening* [*The*

Review for the Norwegian Doctors' Association] from 1929 until 1938. His texts, together with that of the national track and field coach, Helge Løvland, represent the 1920s. Løvland had won the gold medal in the decathlon during the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, amassing much sporting capital. Schøitz's influence continues into the 1930s with his 1938 book *Lærebok i hygiene* [*How to teach hygiene*]. The other female doctor, Gisela Lyng, worked in Trondheim. She tested female competitors after they had competed in walking. Lyng represents the liberal ideas of the 1930s which challenged the dominating ones. Schøitz started the book on hygiene that Harald Goksøyr and Axel Strøm finished and published in 1945. Strøm was a professor of medicine at the University of Oslo, and Goksøyr was one of his colleagues. Otto Johansen, a former doctor in the worker sport movement in the 1930s practiced in Oslo after the war. These three doctors represent the 1940s and in particular the years after World War II.

The sources for this investigation of gender and the body are published articles from 1890 throughout 1950 in *Tidsskrift for den norske legeforening, Aarsberetninger for Centralforeningen for udbredelse af idrett* [*Yearbooks of Centralforeningen*, the only national sport organization at the time], the women's magazine *Urd*, basic books for parents and teachers in schools, and a paper presented at the yearly meeting of the National Conference for the Leaders of Women's Committees in 1948.

The chosen classifications are consistent with the work of other authors of the time, even if they tend to pinpoint the values instead of disguising them. All the authors seemed to be updated in their field and used references from research in many Western and Eastern European countries.

Theoretical Perspectives

This discussion on metaphors focuses on unacceptable actions as seen by the dominating culture of the time.¹⁹ Of particular value are retired anthropology professor Mary Douglas's analysis of marginal practices as symbols of dirt. Her analysis of pollution and dirt centers on actions which do not fit the classification system of the dominating groups in a culture:

Dirt, then is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involved rejecting inappropriate elements. Thus the idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic system of purity.²⁰

We live in symbolic universes in which our assumed "reality" is socially constructed. <P>According to Douglas, the social order is primarily a symbolic order of signs and classifications. Ideas of dirt are constructed in situations in which people act in ways that might create a threat to the internal boundaries between accepted and unaccepted values and actions within a culture, such as when Norwegian females discussed women's emancipation in public in the 1870s. In this way they exceeded the scope of what female bodies "ought to do." To classify them as whores made them symbolize dirt, rather than purity. This is an example of a process of dirt-avoidance staged by the social order to cleanse the culture from danger. According to Douglas, our idea of dirt

is composed of two factors: concern for hygiene and respect for conventions. Doctors in our nineteenth-century cultures assumed the role of professional guardians in this respect.

A study of metaphors in a work may reveal the position of the author. Aristotele noted that "The metaphor transforms (overfører), as the word indicates, the understanding from one area to another, it turns (trophe) the language from its literal expression into pictures."²¹ A metaphor is therefore a picture on something, not of something.²² It is not a real physical thing, but figurative. Professor George Lakoff of the University of California reminds us that the choice of words in texts should not be read as neutral, even if the normal rhetorical strategy is to disguise the values of authors. The detached form of language in mainstream science, with its impersonal voice, according to Elliot Eisner, a professor of education at Stanford University, imposes a distance between language as written and the reality it represents.²³ Any form of style seems to use metaphors and might therefore be an object for analysis.

Norwegian doctors of medical texts often wrote in an emotional and argumentative style. Several doctors saw themselves as the authoritative teachers on bodies and health of the nations of the western world. Therefore they tended to simplify their messages to reach a broader audience. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz ideology tends to be simple and clear-cut.²⁴ Further, the ideological picture uses sharp lines and contrasting black and whites. The ideologist exaggerates and caricatures in the fashion of a cartoonist. In this sense doctors' texts may be interpreted as ideological. Here metaphor is an important device:

The power of a metaphor derives precisely from the interplay between the discordant meanings it symbolically coerces into unitary conceptual framework and from the degree to which that coercion is successful in overcoming the psychic resistance such semantic tension inevitably generates in anyone in a position to perceive it.²⁵

Analysis of a text's metaphors might reveal its ideas and ideology, although it is of course the readers who interpret the metaphors and texts in their individual, class, racial, and gendered ways.

Doctor-Produced Metaphors

The First sport federations in Norway were formed in the 1890s: gymnastics and Turnen in 1890, followed by skating in 1893, track and field in 1896, and rowing in 1900. Few athletes were involved in top level sports in Norway before the 1920s and the knowledge about sporting bodies was sparse. Each of the following texts addresses different aspects of health for males and females.

Døderlein published *Vore Skoleborns Hygiene* in 1890. The main aim of this book was to educate parents about how to avoid sickness and how to achieve physical and psychological balance in children. Sport provided just one of several issues. Døderlein remarked that, during puberty, "boys ought not to take part in today's countless sporting competitions, long distance and hard swimming, rowing, cycling, skating and skiing."²⁶ He thought boys should restrict physical activity because the rapid growth of their bodies might cause some pathological symptoms. The myth about the "big

athlete's heart" did retain some influence on some doctors in Norway until the 1920s.²⁷ The heart of a trained athlete is larger, beats less frequently, and sometimes exhibits arrhythmia. Doctors in the US and Europe interpreted this as abnormal.²⁸

Døderlein then discussed sport in an article in the review of the organized sport [Skiing from a hygienical perspective, with special attention to women] in 1896. Skiing was regarded as the national sport in Norway.²⁹ Therefore this sport appeared often in the public focus, and women's activity was included. In his 1890 book, Døderlein had already warned parents to be particularly cautious with girls. In 1896 he went on:

One ought never to forget: A full-grown woman has her special physical form, her special task in life, which places her in a special position demanding caution about strong physical effort, especially on the part of the married women, where the organs after pregnancy and childbirth often bring about a pathological condition. Childbearing has always altered the form and placement of women's inner organs.³⁰

Pathological symptoms might be a common metaphor for sporting bodies of both sexes. This occurred, however, only during puberty for boys; but for the lifetime of married women of the bourgeois (as a pathological condition). Working class or farm girls did not seem bound by the same expectations. Most of them had to do physically hard work in relation to those from the bourgeois. A young girl might ski as playfully as a young boy. If she was to live in accordance with the Victorian ideal, she had to change her lifestyle at the moment her menses took place. This was legitimized by women's physical weakness and incomplete physical development.³¹

Three texts from the period 1915-25 reinforce this metaphor. Peter Torgersen's article "Litt om kvindens legemsøvelser" [A short story about women's physical activities] was published in *Urd* in 1915.³² Texts by both Døderlein and Torgersen might be labelled "biological determinism," because the sex of a person determined her activities in work and leisure. In this sense a person's gender determined the life of an individual, and biology thus legitimized social norms and values.³³ This is also called biodeterminism as a form of biological reductionism, an ideology which limited women's physical activities and sport.³⁴ One Latin proverb of the time is "omne mulier in utero" [everything a woman does ought to be wholly in terms of her reproductive functions, in constant orientation to that function].³⁵

To Torgersen, visible muscles were "men's birthright." What about muscles of middle-class women? "The truth is that women are subjects of physiological functions which are inconsistent with hard muscular work. Pregnancy, breast feeding, and menstruation are conditions needing a great deal of energy, which causes rapid exhaustion when combined with muscular exhaustion."³⁶ In contrast to Døderlein's pathological viewpoint, Torgersen uses exhaustion as a metaphor for the bourgeois women. Medical men believed bourgeois women to be born weaker than working class- and farmer babies. Torgersen explained that one must "exclude all exercises from the girls repertoire which aim at developing strength... Such exercises would not only be useless, but they would cause deformations—they would influence the beauty of the body and her health in an unfavourable manner."³⁷

The metaphor of a sporting female who includes building strength in her repertoire could be interpreted to be that of physical ruin. The picture of strongly built working class women, a poor farmer's wife or females of "uncivilized, primitive people" may be interpreted as a threat to people of the bourgeois in the western countries, particularly if women of their own class were to work and look like them. Because then gentlemen would perhaps not be needed: "The idea of physical strength is usually tied to the arms. The human being attacks and defends himself by the arms. The definition of a man is, after all, a person with muscular strength and efficient biceps."³⁸ The image of strong biceps invokes an important quality of a man of the time.

The possibility that gentlemen might not be needed to protect a woman intrigued medical commentators of whom physically strong females seemed even more so, because such women were believed to be independent of men:

In farmers' districts where the country women take part in hard work on the fields, one detects that her beauty fades away and she grows old at an early age. If a woman does really hard physical work, this is not only a moral degradation, but also a physical one.³⁹

Metaphors of women's sporting bodies of the bourgeois might result in both "moral and physical degradation," because their beauty was believed to "fade away."

The converse situation could make it impossible for the bourgeois woman to do her main duty in life—produce children—because she was not believed to be as strongly built from birth as a farmer's wife. The prize of civilization seemed to be beauty and bad health for women of the middle-classes in towns. According to Linda Borish, the ideology on farm women's well-being in the nineteenth century US could be interpreted as a romantization of farmers' life.⁴⁰ In this respect rural life was glorified against the attacks by urban boosters, because such pro-urban texts criticized farm life as inferior to modern, urban life. The idea that the life of farmers seemed "uncivilized" in contrast to urban life was echoed by the urban doctors like Torgersen.

Kristiane Skjerve, a female doctor, published her book *Sunnhetslære for unge kvinner* [Hygiene for Young Women] in 1916. Sexuality is the most important theme in her text, both indirectly and directly. According to her, and other contemporary authorities, the purpose of sexuality was to produce children to build a strong nation. On the other hand, the culture of the time prohibited discussion of sexuality in "cultured" families. Skjerve wanted to change this, to get the debate out in the open. She focused first on male sexuality. If the testicles were removed, "Mentally these beings would have no backbone, courage or moral strength. They would be dwarfed beings, where body and soul are enslaved. The characteristics which define a man as a man seem to be dependant on the capacities of the testicles."⁴¹

Neither work nor leisure seem to allow "dwarfed beings without backbone." Another image for these physical constraints in life and inability to set one's goals in life, might be "handcuffs." The male sex was often seen as the repository of the characteristics of Norway's white race. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the construction of national identity as an invented tradition in western countries occurred between 1870 and 1914.⁴² The media in Norway seemed to focus on this process quite strongly,

mainly because of its history as the subordinate part in unions with both Denmark (from the end of the fourteenth century until 1814) and Sweden (1814-1905).

Skjerve wrote that it seemed to be the task of a woman to choose a suitable partner. One of the subjects covered in the book was "How to choose the suitable father for her children."⁴³ In this sense, women could be interpreted as being the backbone of the nation, because medical advisors regarded them as the glue of the family. According to Skjerve, bourgeois women might involve themselves in sport. Competition, however, she interpreted as uncivilized and inappropriate for middle-class females.

In the 1920s sport became more common for males. In addition to skiing, skating, track and field, and gymnastics and *Turnen*, soccer became popular among males. Helge Løvland and Carl Schøitz wrote *Idrettsbok for norske gutter* [*Sport Book for Norwegian Boys*] in 1925. This text aimed to produce more healthy young boys throughout the nation. Educating adults on how to avoid sickness in young boys was the most important goal of the book. At that time, tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in the country. Medical and sport writers now saw sport as an important means to create healthy males: "Through sport the male sex finds outlets for its inborn fighting instincts. Violence and brutality declines. Playing boys are not fighting seriously. Both inborn fighting instincts and care instincts (in girls) need to have outlets."⁴⁴ In the late nineteenth century, the US and England viewed sport as a means to teach boys aggressive instincts necessary for war, conquest, and colonization. In Norway, male sport in relation to war was not on the agenda. As a country in a union with and under Sweden, colonization and conquest was not relevant. Emotionally positive terms seem to be tied to sport for both sexes, although the activities had to differ in order to give outlet to fighting instincts and caring instincts to maintain gender boundaries, and hence bodily differences, between men and women. Since instincts were regarded as a condition of nature, different sports for the two sexes were supposed to be a "natural thing," determined by biology.

School boys and girls in Oslo were now tested physically by doctor Carl Schøitz.⁴⁵ The pupils had to high jump, throw a ball, and run 60 meters. The best of the boys were called "all-round-champions." In addition, doctors measured their height and weight. Those who performed the least well could be described as "frail, hunch-backed, faded away young boys. Those one might discover on the streets, at school, in the homes... with tuberculosis..."⁴⁶ A "hunch-backed body" might be a metaphor for a non-sporting male of the time, while an all-rounder was still the ideal of a sportsman in 1920. Further, a specialist was described as a "flat-chested cadaver with daddy-longlegs."⁴⁷ The image of a flat-chested cadaver may symbolize schoolboys who specialized in one event or one sport. This is not seen as a representative of the coming generation to build the new Norwegian nation of well-rounded white men, but rather the opposite. The construction of Norwegian national identity was built upon the idea of the strong, healthy and independent Viking, tied to the modernization of Norway in work and leisure.

The next three texts examined here are from the first athletic period of Norwegian women, the 1930s which was rather late in comparison to females in Europe,

the US and Canada. Female practices had changed in Norway too from 1890 to 1930. We have seen that, for example, women gave birth to fewer children, and that some of them had fought to achieve the right to vote for candidates for seats in the *Stortinget*, which was achieved in 1913. In general, they obtained better houses and equipment, better education, and more practical clothes. Before World War I, summer clothes for women weighed, in general, two or three kilograms, while after the war they weighed from three-quarters to one kilograms. Similarly, equivalent winter clothes changed from weighing three or four kilograms to one or two kilograms.⁴⁸ These changes did not necessarily imply better opportunities for women in sport, but did seem to open some doors. The field of sport was a socially contested area—and still is to some extent.

Gisela Lyng, a female doctor, examined female athletes before they competed in walking. In this context she wrote an article in the *Tidsskrift for den norske Lægeforening* [Review of the Norwegian Association of Doctors]. She tested 22 female competitors in walking competitions in Trondhjem, because the male Committee of Doctors in the Norwegian Track and Field Federation opposed women's walking in 1932. This was mainly because young women were competing in a popular walk in Oslo while it was raining, and the onlookers could detect their bras and figures under the wet clothes. Further, many young women walked in irregular competition clothing, like skirts and beach costumes. Some sports, like skiing and walking, contributed to bringing about dress reform in Norway. Most of the tested competitors in Trondhjem were from 20 to 24 years old. The tests took place before and after the competition. Lyng weighed them, measured their temperature, pulse, respiration, blood pressure and analyzed their urine. Their health seemed to be very good. "People notice quickly unaesthetic movements made by women, but to claim that marching is more unhealthy for females than for males—when training conditions are taken into consideration—is not correct."⁴⁹ According to Lyng, criticism of female competitions was often poorly argued due to improper methods insufficient and data. This was consistent with the position of Knud Secher, a well-known Danish doctor.⁵⁰ A metaphor on the texts of the doctors on female elite sports might be classified, in the same argumentative way as the earlier doctors, as "irrational." Secher added that "several agents [where doctors were active] in the press debate claimed that the development of the growing sport movement ought to be discouraged; particularly women's track and field and walking ought to be banned."⁵¹ Lyng recommended competition for women if doctors examined them before participating.

Carl Schøitz published his book *Lærebok i hygiene* [How to teach hygiene] in 1938. This text, more than 400 pages, considered most relevant issues of the time. Sexuality was only one small theme of the book; one chapter was entitled "The sexual hygiene problem."⁵² The book focused on sexual problems, not on pleasures. The idea of building a nation where sexual practices were restricted to between husband and wife was still dominant: "According to morals and the law sexual needs are to be satisfied within marriage... All kinds of sexual activity before marriage are immoral."⁵³ According to Dr. Schøitz, doctor young persons first felt the impulse for sexual activity at the age of fifteen to seventeen, several years before the possibility of marriage.

Statistics from 1930 show that only 50% of men and 40% of women were married at the age of 29 years. The appropriate metaphor on sexual activity seems to be “wait.”

The last period to be studied includes the years immediately after World War II, from 1945 to 1950. These years encompassed rebuilding of the whole nation, including sport primarily for boys and men. This period of peace might also be labeled one of the “normalization of the gender order.” In 1945, Harald Goksøyr and Alex Strøm published *Vokster og helseøkt* [Hygiene and growth]. Schøitz was to have been the author of this book, but after his death his younger colleagues finished the work. The aim of the book was to educate teachers in order to produce a healthy nation. The main issues included sickness, physical growth, nutrition, and cleanliness. Sport and physical education was only a minor issue of the text. Goksøyr and Strøm denigrated the capacity of the female body in comparison to the male: “The nerve impulses of women seem to move more slowly than those of men.”⁵⁴ In this context “absence” may be an appropriate metaphor for femininity in elite sport. Females were supposed to react physically to stimuli more slowly than males. Slow nerve impulses, male doctors believed, were the main explanation for this.

Otto Johansen gave a paper at a conference in the Norwegian Confederation of Sports in 1948 entitled “Kroppsoving for kvinner sett fra et medisinsk symspunkt” [Physical education for women in a medical perspective]. Although Johansen was a former doctor in the *Arbeidernes Idrettsforbund* [Worker Sport Movement], he seemed to be in agreement with dominant medical viewpoints of the leaders of bourgeois sports of the 1930s and 1940s: “If endurance sports and strength exercises are kept out of the repertoire of women—because they are unhealthy and they make her more masculine—she might take place in any [other] sport. I think swimming, tennis, figure skating, volleyball, and handball are best suited.”⁵⁵ The common metaphor for women in accepted female sports might be just “feminine,” in contrast to those “masculine” women who were involved with marginal sports.

Metaphor in Perspective

In order to understand them, the metaphors of the medical texts from 1890-1950 must be tied to perspectives of Douglas and an understanding of Geertz’s interpretation of ideology. On the whole, we have seen that doctors were situated in different networks and institutions, in which their relation to sport and physical education was only one of several fields of expression. Further, this group of professionals had the authority to define what was healthy and what was pathological. Doctors tied together sport and sexuality in women’s lives with metaphors like “wait” and fear of creating masculine bodies, women unable to produce children and being unattractive to men. On the other hand, the other sex—the men—were encouraged to use sport extensively as a means to be healthy and to build the nation after the turn of the century.

The metaphors presented here may be best characterized as emotional. In line with ideological devices of Geertz they contribute to exaggeration and sometimes to make caricatures. The lines between symbols of “accepted”, “right” or dominating on one side and “unaccepted”, “wrong” or marginal practices are produced in sharp lines to the other. Sports were, for instance, considered by medical expertise either healthy

or pathological.

According to Douglas, unaccepted practices may symbolize dirt to classify rejected elements of ordered systems; in the male social order. When sporting female bodies blurred these boundaries they contributed to create “matter out of place”; a borderline problem⁵⁶ for those identifying with the orthodoxy. Thus, “a conservative bias is built in. It gives us confidence (in order that things and ideas do not get out of place).”⁵⁷ If women were to fit into the idea of the building of a nation during a period of feminist activism and possible crisis of masculinities, married females had a “special task” in a system of a narrowly parental family.⁵⁸ Health advisors and doctors perceived the backbone of the nation in this context of proper behavior. In doctors’ argumentative texts, the female athlete was interpreted as either civilized or not within the realm of the family. As Douglas might explain, the ideal of a bourgeois housewife could be understood as near to sacred things, in which holiness and impurity are at opposite poles.⁵⁹

In the 1890s the metaphor “caution” might be a picture on sport for male and female exercises. According to Vertinsky, excess activity seemed to be morally and physiologically foolhardy. Training and competitive sports were a new phenomenon in Norway at that time: “In a chaos of shifting impressions, each of us constructs a stable world... The most acceptable cues are those which fit most easily into the pattern that is being built up.”⁶⁰ According to Douglas body symbolism is part of the common stock of symbols. These are deeply emotive because of individual experience. Norwegians seem to look for such guidance to Denmark, Germany, England and the US.

Medical authorities in sport and health changed these metaphors of pathological symptoms in sport for males, after the turn of the century, to accepted classifications. For females, classification of “pathological conditions” were shifted to “masculinity” after World War I. “Masculinity” as a description of females symbolizes impurity and danger to the gendered order constructed in medical texts.⁶¹ Particularly marginal and unaccepted practices may create heavily negative feelings in a culture based on the dominant ideology, such as the image of men without testicles. “Handcuffs” may be a metaphor on “spineless dwarf,” which may be interpreted as a symbol of pollution—a classification of elements of disorder. What image could possibly be worse in a young nation of a thinly populated country building its national identity on healthy, paternal families? From about 1920 onward, the mainstream view accepted sport’s contribution to this nation-building. The metaphor of a “hunch-backed body” might be a picture on those who did not. If you did not gain physical strength in the proper way, however—the ideal of the all-around champion—one could become a “flat-chested cadaver”.

Women who practiced strength training in 1915 seemed best symbolized as dirt, because they might not be able to “produce” children. The metaphor of “physical ruin” may symbolize the fear of the male order of any challenge to the medical ideology about women’s bodies.

Changing conditions in society contributed to the increase in sporting women. In addition, some female doctors managed to legitimize a few of the marginal female

sporting practices, but without changing the “masculinity” metaphor of female athletes in unaccepted sports. This classification is used so often that it no longer creates any semantic tension. Although the same might refer to “strong biceps” associated with a man, the cultural connotation reveals the opposite for a man than for a woman in this dualistic logic of gendered bodies.

Female competitors in walking had crossed the forbidden boundaries between decent competition clothes and daily dress in 1932. This might be interpreted as the *doxa* (what the social order takes for granted and appears as self-evident and is therefore not discussed⁶²) of the so-called health problem in women’s walking. In this context these women did not symbolize purity of young females. The testing of the competitors did of course not solve this problem, but it seemed to be an important authoritarian ritual to cleanse this sport so as to restore the accepted internal boundaries.

Although changing metaphors of sport itself appear between 1890 and 1940, those of sexuality in relation to the family seemed to retain the status quo. The metaphor “wait” expressed this phenomenon. Those who did not could be labelled “fallen women.” Corresponding terms for potential “fallen men” were nonexistent in the vocabulary on sexuality of the time.⁶³ Those women who did not wait symbolized pollution, particularly if they were born into the bourgeois cultures of the time. The poorer working-class and small-farm families were not expected to have such innate moral sense or character as the bourgeois women.

After World War II, primarily male sport was to be rebuilt after the Nazis had tried in vain to Nazify Norwegian sports.⁶⁴ The most famous skijumper in 1940, Birger Ruud, who won Olympic gold medals in 1932 and 1936, was imprisoned by the Nazis because he did not choose to do sport in the newly formed Nazi sports organization. For four and a half years, most Norwegian athletes went on strike against the Nazification of Norwegian sports. Fields of symbolic actions were again to be restored. Every activity that involves bringing some order involves something of a social ritual. To re-establish the order of peace in 1945, women were again left to the order of the household and only certain accepted sport.

Douglas’s analysis also points out the boundaries between the classification systems. These might generate awe, danger and potency. Although her analysis so far seems to fit into the understanding of Geertz’s ideological understanding and the metaphors presented, her analysis on ambiguity also surpasses the doctors’ clear-cut ideas of black and white. Women who engaged in marginal activities, like track and field in 1946, symbolized of pollution as clear in Doctor Johansen’s work, but perhaps also endowed with special spiritual power.⁶⁵ In certain contexts practices might symbolize both dirt and potency of people in positions of authority. Female participants in the European Championship in track and field at Bislet in Norway in 1946 might be a picture of this ambiguity. They were believed to compete in a male sport, but the competition took place in Oslo, as a reward for the anti-Nazi practices of the Norwegian people during World War II (according to the male leaders in track and field). How could these women symbolize dirt, and dirt only? The first years after World War II seemed to give some women a larger space to try out their favorite sports as

long as the memories of the celebration of the victory had any impact on the everyday life.⁶⁶ In 1946 a “teaspoon” of witchcraft might still be accepted—if the track and field results had been good, as one was.

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1. Roberta Park, “Sport, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective,” in ed. J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park, *From “Fair Sex” to Feminism* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 58-97; Patricia Vertinsky, “Exercise, Physical Capability, and the Eternally Wounded Woman,” *Journal of Sport History* (1987): 7-28; Gertrud Pfister, “Vom schwachen zum starken geschlecht? Frauensport im medizinischen Diskurs in der ersten 20. Jahren der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in ed. Thirry Terret, *Sport and Health in History* (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag, 1999), 202-14; and Else Trangbæk, “Health, Science and Ideology in Relation to Gymnastics and Sport,” in Thirry, *Sport and Health in History*, 101-11.
 2. The German sociologist, Max Weber, distinguished two other basic aspects of stratification besides class: “status” and “party.” He adapted the notion of status groups from the example of medieval estates. His German word was “Stand,” meaning both status and party. Anthony Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 218-19.
 3. Ida Blom and Sølvi Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie* [A Gendered Perspective on Norwegian History] (Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag, 1999), 153.
 4. Bjørg Moen, ed., *Barnetall i ekteskap* [The Number of Children Within Marriage], Rapport 88/21, Statistisk Sentralbyrå [Statistical Central Bureau] (1988), 13, 18.
 5. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (London: Abacus, 1997), 193.
 6. Roger Daniels, *Coming to America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 165.
 7. Blom and Sogner, *Med kjønnsperspektiv*, 233.
 8. Gro Hagman, *Det moderne gjennombrudd 1879-1905* [The Rise of Modernity in Norway], *Norges Historie* [The History of Norway] No. 9 (Oslo: Aschehough, 1997), 19.
 9. *Ibid.*, 20.
 10. Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, 202.
 11. Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1988* (New York: Stockton Press, 1992), 6.
 12. Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, 49.
 13. Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sexroles in Modern America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975); Michael Kimmel, “Men’s Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century,” *Gender and Society* 1: 261-84 (Sep. 1987).
 14. Christian Døderlein, *Vore Skolebørns Hygiene* [The Hygiene of Our School Children] (Christiania: Gammemyers Forlag, 1890), 26-27.
 15. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 97.
 16. These texts may have a conservative bias compared to the values of the doctors on “the grass roots.”
 17. The capital’s name was changed to Oslo in 1925.
 18. Finn Olstad, *Norsk Idretts Historie* [Norwegian Sport History] (Oslo: Aschehough, 1987), 145.
 19. The terms “actions” and “practices” are used interchangeably in this article, although the first concepts are traditionally used in a Weberian tradition and the second in a Marxist one.
 20. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), 36.
 21. “Introduction,” *Klasse og Kulturanalyse* [Class and Cultural Analysis] 2(7): 78 (1995). This was a special issue on “Metaphor.”
 22. Arild Utaker, “Metaforen som sammenlikning” [The Metaphor as Comparison], *Livstegn* no. 7:

- 178-86 (1989).
23. Elliot Eisner, "The Primary of Experience and the Politics of Methods," *Educational Research* 17(5): 15-20 (1988).
 24. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 209.
 25. *Ibid.*, 211.
 26. *Ibid.*, 58.
 27. Bøckmann, "Lægekontrol—Træning—Overtræning" [Doctors' Control—Training—Overtraining], *Idræt* no. 4: 27 (1924).
 28. James Whorton, "Athlete's Heart," *Journal of Sport History* 9: 30-53 (1982).
 27. Christian Døderlein, "Skiløbning seet fra et hygienisk standpunkt med specielt hensyn paa kvinden" [Skiing From a Hygiene Perspective, With Special Attention to Women], *Centralforeningen for udbredelse af idræt* (1896): 71.
 30. *Ibid.*, 73.
 31. *Døderlein*, Vore Skolebørns Hygiene, 65.
 32. Peter Torgersen, "Litt om kvindens legemsøvelser" [A Short Story About Women's Physical Activities], *Urd* no. 3: 28-30, no. 4: 41 (1915).
 33. Toril Moi, *Hva er en kvinne?* [What Is a Woman?] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1998), 39.
 34. Ruth Hubbard, *The Politics of Women's Biology* (New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1998), 108.
 35. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 153.
 36. Torgersen, "Litt om kvindens," 41.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *Ibid.*
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. Linda Borish, "Was Woman's Constitution Less Robust...? Farm Women and Physical Health in the Agriculture Press, 1820-1870," *Canadian Journal of Sport History* 15(1): 1-18 (1994).
 41. Kristiane Skjerve, *Sunnhetslære for unge kvinner* [Hygiene for Young Women], Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd [National Council for Women] (Christiania: Aschehoug, 1916), 35.
 42. Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 303.
 43. *Skjerve*, *Sunnhetslære*, 42.
 44. Helge Løvland and Carl Schiøtz, *Idrettsbok for norske gutter* [Sports Book for Norwegian Boys] (Christiania: Aschehoug & Nygaard, 1920), 8.
 45. *Ibid.*, 22.
 46. *Ibid.*
 47. *Ibid.*, 30.
 48. Harald Goksøyr and Axel Strøm, *Vokster og helsekrøkt* [Hygiene and Growth] (Oslo: Fabritius & Sons, 1945), 115.
 49. Gisela L yng, "Enkelte bemerkninger om kvinneidretten på grunnlag av lægeundersøkelser under marsjkonkurranse," *Tidsskrift for den norske legeföreningen*, no. 2: 63-68 (1934).
 50. Knud Secher, "Idrætsøvelsernes betydning for menstruasjon og fødsler." *Ugeskrift for Den Norske Lægeförening* no. 2: 63-69 (1934).
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. Carl Schoitz, *Lærebok i hygiene* [How to Teach Hygiene] (Oslo: Fabritius & Sønners Forlag, 1938), 298.
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. Goksøyr and Strom, *Vokster og helsekrøkt*, 61.

55. Otto Johansen, "Kroppsoving for kvinner sett fra et medisinsk synspunkt," Paper at the National Conference on Women and Sport for the Leaders of the Women's Committee, May 8-9, 1948, 1-5.
56. The term "borderline personality" is used in psychology to describe persons who do not see themselves as distinct from other people, and thus for example project their problems to others and the other way round. The term is used here about the problems of those who identify with the orthodox values of clear boundaries about what is accepted and unaccepted and who see margins as dangerous in a certain time and space.
57. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 37.
58. Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (London: Penguin, 1991), 282-85; Bente Rosenbeck, "Seksualitens historie: En kort oversikt" [The History of Sexuality: A Short Review], *Hefter for historie* (1984): 90-101.
59. This is my interpretation of her general statements about sacred things.
60. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 37.
61. This might still be the case in some cultures of the western world of today—for example, females playing competitive soccer—regardless of their success. The Norwegian women's soccer team has been one of the top six programs since women's soccer gained international status in the late 1980s.
62. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164-71.
63. Henrik Ibsen used the term "a fallen man" in a context of sexuality in his drama *Gjengangere* [Ghosts].
64. Gerd von der Lippe, "Nazi-Idrett i Bø" [Nazi Sport in Bø], in ed. M. Goksøyr and K. Mo, *Norsk Idrettshistorisk Årbok 1989* [Norwegian Sport Historical Book, 1989] (Oslo: Norsk Idrettshistorisk forening [Association for Norwegian Sport History], 1989), 80-91; Gerd von der Lippe, "Sport Under the Nazis," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 1: 112-16 (1985).
65. This could of course also symbolize fertility, but fertility was seen as an inappropriate subject at the sport arena.
66. Gerd von der Lippe, *Endring og motstand mot endring av femininiteter og maskuliniteter i idrett og kroppskultur i Norge, 1890-1950, med et sideblikk på Tyskland, Sverige og Danmark* [Changing Femininities and Masculinities in Sports and Body Cultures in Norway, 1890-1950, With a Side-ways Glance at Germany, Sweden and Denmark] (Oslo: HiT (Telemark) og NIH, 1997), 414.