

An Historical Perspective On Beliefs About Women's Health Issues Which Had An Impact On Attitudes Towards Women's Sport Participation in the Nineteenth Century

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Since the time of Aristotle, the roles assigned women have attracted an elaborate body of medical and biological justification. This has been especially true in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, as the intellectual and emotional centrality of science steadily increased. Would-be scientific arguments have been used in the rationalization and legitimization of almost every aspect of life, and with particular vehemence in those areas in which social change implied stress in existing social arrangements.

This essay is an attempt to identify some of the social attitudes and gynecological and health issues which provided the foundation for the argument against vigorous sport competition for women in the nineteenth century,

Godden religions and the role of the healer (medical person) are traced to show that what was formally a woman's role in previous centuries was taken over by males and possibly led to the antagonistic social role of males and females in the 19th century. This essay represents a hybrid of social and psychological history from a controversial point of view. Sociological, biological and medical views serve as a sampling device suggesting an illuminating pattern of social continuity, change, and tension.