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Ball Games Among Women in Norway: Volleyball-from a Stalinist Escapade to a Colonized Practice, and Handball— Castrated “Bourgeois” Soccer?

The paper focuses on the diffusion of the first ball games among female athletes in organized sports in Norway. Volleyball-diffused from the Stalinist Soviet Union—was introduced to the workers’ sports organizations in 1936, through a decree at the national level. Handball diffused first and foremost from Denmark via Sweden, and was established in 1937 in “bourgeois” sport associations. After World War II, the two sports organizations merged.

The central focus of the paper is the different cultures of the leaders of the two organizations before 1945, and the feminist perspective of the new, post-merger organization. The central argument is that while this union was ostensibly one between two equal parts, in reality it was an amalgamation in which the working-class elements were colonized. To a large extent, “bourgeois” culture permeated the new organization.

The specific question posed is: why did bourgeois handball dominate socialist volleyball after World War II? The main sources are the archives of the sports organizations, national newspapers, and interviews with former administrative leaders and athletes. The theory employed is hegemonic masculinity with a feminist twist.