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Female Flying Bodies in Norwegian Sports Media

Introduction

The first unofficial Norwegian female championship in ski-jumping (junior) took place in 2000, and the first official one (senior and junior) took place in 2004. On February 11, 2004 a front-page article of the *Aftenposten*, February reported that Torbjørn Yggeseth, a Norwegian leader of the ski jumping committee of the FIS (Fédération Internationale de Ski)¹, is supposed to have cited "(...) half of them jump, whereas the other half is doing something similar to sledding"². as a reason for unexpectedly denying women a chance to be "test flyers" at the Norwegian Vikersund competitions on March 8-9 of the same year. Ski-flying takes place in Norway on big jumps with a critical point (C-point) of 185meters for men and 90 meters for women. Only in Vikersund athletes can fly as far as 185 metres. "Test flying" is normally done by young men who are not yet qualified for FIS competitions in either ski-jumping or ski-flying. At the same time, Anette Sagen was ranked as the best Norwegian female ski-jumper. She and some of her ski-jumping friends, including Line Jahr from Vikersund, were interviewed in different media during that month, confirming that they wanted to test jump in Vikersund. Until the "Yggeseth-Sagen debate" started, ski-flying and ski-jumping were considered a male preserve by many male sports leaders. FIS's ski-jumping committee excluded women from ordinary ski-jumping competitions until 1998, and women are *still* not allowed to compete officially in ski-flying.

Nevertheless, on January 10, 2004 one of FIS's technical experts permitted the Vikersund organizers to include six to seven female ski-jumpers to be test-flyers. Nearly two months later, FIS reversed this decision. March, 4 there was a compromise, Anette Sagen, Line Jahr and two other female skiers were allowed as test-flyers before the male competition.

This article is part of the research project: "Tabloidization in the Norwegian Media: 1930's-2003". Three research questions are asked: What kinds of discourse on the female test flyers can be found in print media? What kinds among first year of students of sport at Telemark College in Bø? In what way is the "Yggeseth-Sagen debate" a tabloid tale? My data come from an analysis on the sport sections of three national papers: *Aftenposten* (conservative subscription), *VG* (conservative tabloid format) and *Dagbladet* (liberal tabloid format) from February 5 until February 15. All the texts cited are by the sports journalists of the papers. However, some of them appeared on the front pages rather than in sports sections. Both tabloid papers and broadsheet covered the story of the flying females.

¹ He was not re-elected later on in 2004.

² The quote refers to the athletes as "little girls".

The Norwegian Sports Press in 2004: A Dominating Male Industry

Media sport has as its central strategy the creation of more spectators, readers and listeners. Thus, sport is seen as an important point of departure for constructing and reconstructing ideas of femininities and masculinities.³ In the print media, women are often presented as decor.⁴ Texts and pictures of male soccer players dominate the sport media in Norway and the rest of Scandinavia.⁵ Although the Norwegian national male team did not participate in the European Soccer Cup of 2004, coverage of that competition consisted of 50% of the total sport coverage in VG, Norway's biggest tabloid paper. From June 12 to June 27, 41 % reported on men's sport in general and only 4% about female sports. (5% both sexes). When female athletes really excell they do get some attention. When Norway won the European Women's Championship in handball in 1998, reports of this competition dominated the press in the second biggest tabloid paper, Dagbladet.⁶ In 2003 the Norwegian team was ranked sixth in the world cup. However, only 18% of the total coverage in that paper concerned the competition. All sports editors in the biggest national papers and about 95% of sports journalists are male.

Tabloidization Processes

According to Jostein Gripsrud, the term "tabloidization" is tied to, if not full-blown moral panic, then at least to serious ethical and political concerns.⁷ Complaints about journalism's many deplorable features have been voiced ever since the birth of the modern press. Tabloidization processes have influenced the American press since its start, and the influence has steadily increased during the last 30 years.⁸ Tabloid format, however, does not necessarily mean tabloid contents. In Scandinavian media, there is a tradition of mixing entertainment with more or less relevant informational material; a tradition of "infotainment" much older than the term.⁹ Norwegian national, popular tabloids contain serious coverage of a number of more or less important issues, and ought therefore to be categorized as "middle-brow" papers.

Tabloidization processes are understood as follows:

"Tabloidization in the sports media is the processes by which the press increasingly focuses on entertainment aspects by presenting sports in a sensational, dramatic, and/or scandalous light. Triumphs and losses are emphasized. Aesthetics focus directly on critical points in the story. Other important features are simplification, polarisation, intensity (collision and conflict), concretisation and personification. Finally, the genre of soft news - made up of gossip, scoops, exclusives, biography, hero/heroine worship and "infotainment" is given priority over the genre of hard news;

³ Craig 1992; Eide 2000, Casmore 2002, Lippe 2002, 2004.

⁴ Duncan, Messner 1998; Gjørven, Grønn, Vaagland 2000.

⁵ Monday Morning 2002.

⁶ Lippe 2003.

⁷ Gripsrud 2000.

⁸ Sparks 2000.

⁹ Gripsrud 2000.

objective facts, scores and events including match analysis. Above all, the tabloid media is interpreted as the symbol of the intimization of the public room.”¹⁰

Analysis: Focus on a Critical and Qualitative Perspective

The focus is on qualitative analysis. I have been inspired by elements of Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis. He uses the term “discourse” in different ways. The point of departure of the concept of discourse in this article is as follows:

1. Identify the main parts of the world (including areas of social life) which are represented – the main “themes”.
2. Identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented.¹¹

My main focus is the question about female test jumpers, and my particular perspectives or points of view are the five following discourses: The discourse on equal rights, on defying FIS, on protecting the girls from injury, on ridiculing the sporting females and on a worn out opinion. I shall also discuss hybridized or mixed discourses in which texts articulate different discourses. In addition, I shall look into some of the metaphorical representations of the question in the different discourses. Fairclough also created a three dimensional framework (text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice) for analysis, in which he reflects on the relationship among texts (here: pictures, headings, articles and imagined letters from students). Fairclough is also concerned with processes of text production and consumption and with socio-cultural practices, in which ideologies and power relations are dealt with. In this article I identify asymmetrical power relations concerning who decides who is allowed to jump. What is in the text that may be explicit or implicit. “Analysis of implicit content can provide valuable insights into what is taken for granted as given, as common sense”.¹² With this in mind, I shall also search for latent meaning production in the relevant texts. Thus, micro-texts of a sentence are interpreted not only as giving “local” significance to the situation in which they occur, but also as possibly linked to latent macro-texts of dominating values in a culture.

Consumption is an aspect dealt with in the relationship between texts and discursive practice. The media coverage of ski-flying was presented to a small audience (first year physical education students at Telemark University College in Bø, Norway). This audience produced texts on March 3, 2004. After a lecture on the coverage of the female test jumpers (60 minutes), I asked my students to write two imagined letters (not sent); one to Torbjørn Yggeseeth and one to Anette Sagen. The students were asked how they draw on the different discourses signified by texts concerning female skijumpers. Thus the media’s and students’ discourses can be examined as a domain of cultural hegemony. Some discourses are central, while others seem to be more marginal.

¹⁰ This is a mix from Hernes 1982, Sparks 2000; Gripsrud 2000; Lippe 2003.

¹¹ Fairclough 2003, p. 129.

¹² Fairclough 1995a, b.

Doing Gender

Mass culture often assumes there is a fixed, true femininity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life. We hear about “real women”, “natural women” and the “deep feminine” as contrasted to “real men”, “natural men” and the “deep masculine”. Such constructions are hard to kill, and they are continually reconstructed in films, popular books, magazines, television programmes and the daily and weekly press.¹³ These constructions can be categorized as essentialist because they select single features that allegedly define the core of femininity and masculinity. The concept of femininity is, however, inherently relational. Femininities exist only in relation to masculinities. Women and men are doing gender in culturally specific ways.¹⁴ Doing gender for female athletes within the logics of heteronormality in Norway in 2004 is achieved through playing handball, soccer, and cross country skiing; not through ski jumping and ski flying. Accordingly, Anette Sagen and her ski flying friends are not reconstructing traditional female practices although a few Norwegian females have competed in this sport since 1863. Such practices have been considered marginal and not for “real women”.¹⁵ Hence, these young ski jumping females are attempting to construct new practices in 2004. Evident in this attempt is the classic asymmetrical power relationship in top sport: that of an older male leader: here Yggeseth, and young female competitors: Sagen and the other female competitors.

The media of late modernity are understood as *consumer culture imagery*.¹⁶ Important symbols are for example, youth, beauty, energy, fitness, movement, romance and enjoyment. “Body maintenance” today focuses on exercise that enhances sexual prowess. The traditional values of the industrial period, with its puritanical notions of moderation, patience and sex segregation of sporting activities, tend to be discredited in a consumer culture. It seems that the closer the actual body approximates the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty, the more suitable for media focus. For athletes, doing gender in today’s consumer culture implies – to some degree – challenging the segregation of athletes into traditionally male and female sports.¹⁷

How is gender equality practiced in sports?

Practicing Gender Equality: A Short Outline

In the 1970’s, thanks largely to the Women’s Movement questions concerning gender equality became quite visible in the media. In 1973, the Proposal for a Gender Equality Act - a key pillar of the later official Norwegian equal-status policy – was introduced as one of the ten

¹³ Gray 2001; Lippe 2001; Sandvand 2003.

¹⁴ For example: Butler 1990, Connell 1995.

¹⁵ Lippe 1997.

¹⁶ Featherstone/Hepworth/Turner 1991.

¹⁷ Lippe 2004.

major planks of the Labour Party's election platform.¹⁸ The intent of the Gender Equality Act of 1978 was to promote equal income, workers' rights and education regardless of gender.¹⁹ Family life and religious organizations outside the state church are not under this law's jurisdiction.

The *Gender Equality Law* constructs a very narrow picture of power.²⁰ The authors believe that the barriers still facing gender equality are structures that are difficult to change. An example of this is the gender representations of leaders in, for example, the police (98% men), the private business/industry sector (92% men) and voluntary organizations (73 % men).²¹

The discourses in the Print Press²²

The discourse on equal rights

“(Yggeseth) won't let the girls fly” was the title of a small article on one of *Dagbladets* sports pages on February 5, 2004.

“National ski jumping team member, Line Jahr from Vikersund responds strongly, knowing that the leader of the competition, Sepp Gratzer, is trying to stop the women from ski flying. - This is very discriminating of both the International Ski Federation and the leader of the competition. They are not looking at this in a sporting view, only in a gendered way, says Jahr. Anette Sagen jumped 127,5 meters in Kollen (Holmenkollen) last Sunday. – According to FIS she should not have jumped there either.”

“Yggeseths about-face” was the biggest headline on one of *Dagbladets* sports pages on *Dagbladet* (February 12). The introduction goes as follows:

“As early as during the ski flying world cup in Kulm in 1996, Torbjørn Yggeseth, leader of the FIS' Ski Jumping Committee, proposed that women could participate in ski flying. He's made a 180 degree turn”.

Yggeseth is sure that Vikersund is going to exclude women, states *VG*, (February 9):

“We are not going to let Vikersund arrange (ski flying) meets in the future if they (let them jump) (...) Women are allowed to jump the weekend before the meet.”

Yggeseth agreed that women could jump in Holmenkollen in contrast to Vikersund, although the C-point in the national hill is higher than 90meters.

“Women revolt against ski-jump refusal” was the biggest headline of *Aftenposten's* sports pages on February, 11. The Gender Equality Ombud, Kristin Mile is cited in this text:

“The Gender Equality Act is quite clear on this: women and men have the same possibilities in all areas of society. This is also stated in the United Nations' Convention on Gender Equality”.

“Without influence” was one of the *VG's* biggest sports page headlines on February 11:

¹⁸ Skeie 1992.

¹⁹ Haavio-Mannila 1983.

²⁰ Ellingsæter and Solheim 2002.

²¹ Skjeie and Teigen 2003.

²² An English speaking colleague of mine has helped me with the translation of the texts.

“According to Valgerd Svarstad Haugland, the Minister of Culture, she “is going to study the Gender Equality Act and “look under every stone” in all other laws to find a solution”.

Further, this was the comment of the president of the NIF, Kjell O. Kran: “I think this is (...) completely impossible to comprehend”.

“We’ll stop the Vikersund meet”. This was the biggest headline on one of *VG*’s sports pages on February 12. Further in the text:

“The Sheriff in Modum (a police official) threatens to stop the ski flying meet in Vikersund, if women are not permitted to jump. Vikersund AS has applied to the Sheriff’s Office to arrange the meet. Sheriff Halvor Hartz specifies in his answer that one of the requirements for the meet is that it is not in conflict with Norwegian law.- I assume that those in charge act in accordance with the Gender Equality Act. They are not, if they refuse women who are qualified to jump, says Halvor Hertz. Hartz has been involved in ski flying in Vikersund since the 1970s. He has watched women as test ski jumpers earlier on this hill (...)”.

Torbjørn Yggeseth sticks to his decision in an article on the same page:

“(He) claims that FIS is not going to change their point of view despite the massive pressure. He has no response to the letter from the sheriff in Modum.”

On February 13 *VG* reported that Anette Sagen had won the international ski jumping competition in Austria, 30,5 points ahead of number two, a woman from the USA.

“Imagine how boring it would be to jump on the 90 metre hills for the rest of my life, Anette says (...) The women themselves and above all their coaches, and not the heads of FIS, know where they are able to jump.”

Texts on Anette Sagen covered nearly five pages of *Dagbladet* (February 13). Four of them consisted of soft news about Anette, and the fifth was an academic comment in the “debate” section. The biggest headline of them all was as follows: “Gold girls” support Anette – Keep on fighting and you will go down in history like us”. The agents behind this were the gold medalists of the Women`s Relay in the Ski Shooting World Cup.

Sagen’s picture covered nearly a whole page attached to the heading: “The ski-jumping feminist”.

The readers see Sagen`s upper body in front view. Her long, light coloured hair is hanging loosely over her bare neck and one of her shoulders. She has eye and eyebrow make-up. A necklace and an evening dress encourage readers to believe that she is dressed for a party. An exclusive interview in *Dagbladet* and the picture covers three-fourths of a double page, the rest is about FIS reversal of their initial decision:

“During this short winter Anette Sagen has managed to become the new face of feminism and the struggle for gender equality in Norway. The old fogies of the International Ski Federation (FIS) do not wish to include Anette or other women as test ski jumpers in ski flying (...) - The feeling of being excluded, not accepted is the worst (...) - Ski jumping has given me self-confidence. I am satisfied with myself, and with my looks. I have become less insecure, and I do not think that I ought to have had a smaller nose, or been thinner or taller, Anette says (...). In any case, Anette`s has a clear dream – I am going to jump ski flying once. I know that I have the capacity to do this, and I hope it would become a reality.”

The discourse on defying FIS

Dagbladet, February 5:

“It is just nonsense, of course. We can not accept this, Jahr says to *Dagbladet*.”

VG produced on February 6 this headline: “Begging women ski jumpers to defy FIS”. The introduction states: - Be ready to jump. Then the FIS- tops will have to physically stop you. Further in the text:

“Espen Bredesen (Olympic champion, 1994 in ski jumping and a sports commentator in Obersdorf at the men’s ski jumping competition) is upset because FIS... refused to let the women be “test jumpers” in the ski flying meet in Vikersund... Espen Bredesen encourages the women to defy FIS: - Don’t give up! Opinion is on your side.”

This was one of the headlines on the sports pages of *Aftenposten* February 6: “Fidjestøl (former top ski jumper and competition leader in Vikersund) wants women ski jumpers to join in”.

The text is as follows:

“Ole Gunnar Fidjestøl is very discouraged about the International Ski Federation’s (FIS) attitude toward female ski jumpers. - FIS has no clear guidelines prohibiting women from doing jumps where the C-point is more than 90 meters. In Vikersund we will not need to make exceptions from the rules, he says (...) They (the women) are going to jump, says Fidjestøl to TV2. – I - no matter what FIS says (...) The leaders of FIS disagree with each other, and need to assert themselves, thinking, it is exciting to see the women, says Fidjestøl. Anette Sagen jumped as well as Sigurd Pettersen (one of the world’s best male ski jumpers that season) (127,5 meters) in Holmenkollen last weekend. She is happy about Fidjestøl’s support. – I think this is splendid. We need someone who backs us up against the old fogies in FIS, says Sagen”.

Of *Aftenposten*’s three pages on sport on February 11, one was about the “Yggeseth-Sagen case.” The biggest headline was as shown on page 5: “Women revolt against ski-jump refusal”.

Female top athletes in cross country skiing, down hill and cycling defied the legitimization of the FIS denial. The female General Secretary of the Norwegian Football Federation is quoted in this way:

“When I read and listen to this, my old feelings of aggression resurfaced (about men made rules of the federation). We recognize the same arguments and the same mechanisms female footballplayers experienced 30 years ago. At that time we were told that women were not able to play football. Today 90.000 girls are active players, and, thus, refute this saying every day.”

The discourse on protecting the girls from getting hurt

“We have said no to the women in Vikersund and we are not about to change our minds” was the biggest headline on one *VG*’s sportspages on February 11. Further, in the text:

“FIS leader Torbjørn Yggeseth considers they will ruin future opportunities for women if they let them jump now. They (FIS according to Yggeseth) fear they might fall and get hurt. Anette Sagen and her colleague must content themselves with smaller hills the following two years – Is it more serious for women than for men to get hurt? (the journalist) – Women in ski jumping are a special situation.”

The discourse on ridiculing sporting females

The front page of *Aftenposten* for February 11 includes the sentence quoted at the beginning of this essay::

“I (Yggeseth) have watched some female competitions (on ski jumping). I want to state that only half of them are jumping on skis. The other half is doing something similar to sledding.”

Dagbladet refers to *Aftenposten* on February 12:

“Yggeseth does believe it will be five or ten years before we see women participating in ski flying (...) Of about the 20 women taking part in FIS’ Women’s Cup (in Saalfelden in Austria), only half of them are jumping on skis. The other half is doing something similar to sledding, he said to *Aftenposten* yesterday. When *Dagbladet* reminded Yggeseth about this, he denied that he had proposed that women could participate in ski flying in 1996, when *Aftenposten* reminded him of this yesterday afternoon. First we have to establish a World Cup for women, then, World Championship and then the Olympic Games.”

Half of the page consisted of a smiling Yggeseth in front of a ski jumping hill, placed above a smaller picture of a smiling Anette Sagen.

The discourse on a worn out opinion

The following text from president Kran of NIF is the only one represented here. In VG (February 11) stated that Yggeseth’s stance was “antiquarian”.

The Students’ Discourses

The discourse on equal rights

First, some background information **give data on ages and number of males and females in this group**. 52 of the 54 students who turned up for a lecture in “Sport and Society” on the Yggeseth-Sagen case, (March 3) responded to the instruction,: “Write two imagined letters; one to Torbjørn Yggeseth and one to Anette Sagen.” All of them supported Sagen; only a few told Yggeseth that they understood his point of view, but did not accept it. Most of them referred to issues of gender equality, but with only two or three worlds.²³ Here is a part of one of the more elaborate answers, written by a 20 year old female student:

“(To Yggeseth). We are talking about a society based on gender equality.. I am aware that we probably are influenced by the media, and the way they interpret the case.”

Further, a letter from a 20 year old female student, to Sagen:

“Keep on truckin`! You are a pioneer for all of us! This ought to be your motivation to stay in the fight. If you give in, Yggeseth is likely to get his way.”

²³ Some of the students quoted here may have been influenced in their answers by my status as lecturer and author of articles in their syllabus for “Sport and Society. In particular, a chapter I have written on gender equality in the Holmenkollen relay.

Another text from a male, 22 years old is as follows:

“Hi Anette. I think that you are really tough. Keep on truckin` for gender equality in ski jumping. Norway needs women like you!”

Further, some student letters to Yggeseth argue that “it is unfair” (female, 24 year old); “discriminating” (female, 20 years old); “stupid” (male of 24 years old). One asserts, “(…) equal rights are a matter of course” (a 19 year old male).

The last imagined letter excerpt to be reproduced here (to Sagen) is from a 22 year old male:

“I have read about you and your fight to be a ski flyer for some time now. I fully support you, and I have for my part, written a letter to Yggeseth to tell him my point of view. There is only one solution to this case: Women have to achieve gender equality in this sport and in all other sports. Keep it up, Anette. We`ll meet in Planica!”

The discourse on protecting the girls from injuring

Here is part of a text from the same 20 year old female student who was quoted in the discourse on equal rights:

“The fact that you base your arguments on the danger of getting hurt is stupid. The way I see it, women are not any more likely to get hurt than men.”

This text is from a man, 24 years old:

“Torbjørn, your arguments about females getting hurt is just idiotic (…)”

The discourse on a worn out opinion

These texts are, of course, taken from imagined letters to Yggeseth. This is from a male, 23 years of age:

“You are stuck in your own “shit”, buddy! You are like an animal, with your back against the wall!”

This quotation is produced by a 19 year old male student:

“Everything you have argued against these years, has proved to revolutionize ski jumping; team jumping, v-style, and announcing the results after the first round. Why not let history speak for itself? Women’s participation is crucial if ski jumping is to survive as a sport in the years to come”.

Here is the last part of the texts from the 20 year old female student:

“You ought to reconsider your position in FIS... However, with macho persons like you, we’ve taken steps back into the past”.

Analysis²⁴: The Discourses in the Press

The discourse on equal rights

Norwegian politics is about 120 years old. The idea of equal rights derives historically from the idea of the free and rational individual. Norwegian sport-specific discourse in equal rights dates from 1972, the start of the fight over the Holmenkollen relay. Above all, the question seems to be clear: Does public opinion support the exclusion of women from the Vikersund competition? Answering this kind of formal gender equality question seems to be simple. The discourse on gender equality in Norway has contributed to the notion that gender equality has already been achieved in Norway.²⁵ Because of this, gender equality seems like a matter of course. It is something “we” already have. Gender equality presents itself in this context as something all Norwegians simply as Norwegians, must support. In fact, according to Cathrine Holst, Norwegian citizens believe Norway to be the world champion in gender equality.²⁶

This belief was problematised by the ski flying controversy. According to *Dagbladet* Anette Sagen has “become the new face of feminism and the struggle for gender equality in Norway”. The debate became heated when, for example, the Sheriff of Modum, after Yggeseth’s 180 degree turn, threatened to stop the ski flying meet in Vikersund.

The discourse on defying FIS

This is an old discourse. FIS wanted to include big skiing competitions in the Olympic Games of 1928, but the conservative Norwegian skiing leaders at first disagreed with the somewhat radical FIS on this issue. Referring to older athletes like Espen Bredensen and Ole Gunnar Fidjestøl, Anette Sagen used the metaphor “old fogies”, which indicates a negative connotation of a powerful ski leader, whose ideas are hopelessly old-fashioned. This language legitimizes defiance. The headline of *Aftenposten* on February 11 about the “Women revolt against ski-jumping refusal” could be classified as equal rights discourse or as the discourse of defiance. The female General Secretary of the Norwegian Soccer Federation – a (former) feminist and Socialist Left voter, stated, “(...) My old feelings of aggression resurfaced” vis-à-vis the illegitimate

²⁴ My intention is not to give an objective picture of the discourse on ski flying. That would be impossible, since I also have been excluded from a men’s only competition Holmenkollen-relay. Together with students and young athletes and leaders of both sexes we fought for this case for three years. In 1975 I took part in the relay. Besides, I have discussed this case with Torbjørn Yggeseth both in a radio programme and in the programme “Tabloid” on TV2. I supported the young women in these programs. Most of the students had read this story in VG and listened to the Norwegian Television Station 1 (the state television and the biggest) and TV2 (the biggest commercial television). Most males wrote the more elaborate imagined letters to Sagen and Yggeseth. Some of them told me that this was because she was so sexy and tough, and that they really disliked Yggeseth.

²⁴ Skjeie and Teigen 2003.

²⁴ Holst 2002.

²⁴ Vertinsky 1989.

legitimation of Yggeseth. Her words can be seen as a part of a hybridized or mixed discourse, because they can also be included in the discourse on equal rights as well.

The discourse on protecting the girls from injuring

This discourse is as old as organized sport in the western world.

“The way I see it, women are not more likely to get hurt than men.” These words appeared in conjunction with Yggeseth’s quoted utterance, “that they might fall down and get hurt“ (*Aftenposten*, February 11). It is well known that historically, women were impeded in developing their prowess in sport. This is acknowledged by male and female sports sociologists and sports historians who have a gender perspective in their research. Women were warned to be cautious. They should avoid events supposed to be extreme activities and physically foolhardy. The fact is that “protection” was first and foremost given to females and not to males, because male doctors and sports leaders construed females as being “different”, as lacking the “natural” sporting bodies of the males.²⁷ Accordingly, the “weaker sex”, they were not allowed to take part in Norwegian championships in ski jumping until 2000. If women were to do test flying in 2004, they would according to Yggeseth, ruin the chance to jump later in international competitions.

The discourse on ridiculing sporting females

This tactic is also very old, usually produced by male leaders who emotionally disliked female athletes in traditional male sports. Every country has innumerable examples of this. Yggeseth’s version is as mentioned before: “(...) only half of them are jumping on skis. The other half is doing something similar to sledding”. The reference to sledding derived from the fact that some of the female jumpers fell down on their backs after the jump during FIS’ Women’s Cup in Saalfelden in Austria in 2004.

The Students’ Discourses

We can now include elements from Fairclough’s second dimension: the relationship between texts and discourse practice: students’ consumption of the texts on test jumping.

First, the genre is that of an imagined letter. The style is very informal, rather conversational. Language such as: “Keep on truckin`” and “You are stuck in your own “shit”, buddy (...)” are obviously “speech acts”. “Everything you have argued against these years (...)” is argumentative, whereas the mode of the poem, which is included in the very end of this article, is rather romantic.

The texts of the students are, as I see it, typical for first year sports students. They produce rather short texts and speak bluntly.

The discourse on equal rights

Not unexpectedly, the discourse on gender equality was the most prevalent. Yggeseth are told, “We are talking about a society based on gender equality” and “Equal rights is a matter of course”, something is taken for granted, and thus, indisputable. Therefore, advice to Anette seems simple: “Keep on truckin`!” and “Keep it up, Anette.”

The discourse on a warn out opinion

Only students, except for the president of NIF, are included in this discourse in this article. Discourse such as “You ought to consider your position in FIS (...)“ “(...) with macho persons like you, we`ve taken steps back into the past. “, “Your are stuck in your old “shit”, buddy! You are like an animal, with your back against the wall!” and “Everything you have argued against, has proved to revolutionize ski jumping (...)” is direct, colloquial, and vividly metaphorical. The It is important to remembers that this language is from imagined letters and not real ones.

In What Way is the”Yggeseth-Sagen Case” a Tabloid Tale?

Most of the texts cited here are in a public-colloquial discourse style, which seems to dominate the sports press. I shall now explore this in light of Fairclough`s third dimension; the relationship between the texts and socio-cultural practice

The story of ski flying for young women and their adversary, Torbjørn Yggeseth, seems to include several elements of a tabloid tale. Most importantly perhaps is the fact that Anette Sagen, who represented the somewhat heretic females, is portrayed as a young, attractive and sympathetic woman. In addition, skiing symbolizes Norwegian winter sports. Thus, this debate is ultimately about Norway as a skiing nation. The discourse takes off when it seems obvious that the FIS leaders have changed their minds: women are not allowed to jump after all. The following question is relevant: Has someone been toying with these young women?

Yggeseth represents these “old fogies”. First, he initiated ski flying for women: When Dagbladet reminded Yggeseth about that, he denied that he had proposed that women could participate in ski flying in 1996 ...Now he is doing an about-face. Then, he ridicules popular female ski jumpers (half are doing something similar to sledding). Also, the media present him as having threatened the organizers of the Vikersund meet by implying they will not be given competitions in the future if they let the women jump (VG, February 9). In addition, his fear that women ski flyers may “fall down and get hurt” places him out of touch with contemporary opinion. This kind of fear is voiced only in reference to the “weaker sex”.

When “natural, human rights” appear to be denied, the transgressor is represented as a cabal of “old fogies” who are positioned against a progressive beautiful, young, athletic feminist. Male sports journalists are able to construct a very popular tabloid tale in newspapers like *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet*, tabloids that focus on young and not older people.

From February 9 on, Yggeseth and Sagen were featured as opponents in the debate on sky flying. During this phase, which started in *VG*, Anette Sagen appeared often in the press, on television and on the radio along with Yggeseth. Features of *polarisation* are obvious as well as *collision*, *conflict* and *concretisation*. “We do not accept this” (Line Jahr in *Dagbladet*, February 5). It comes down to a question of “yes” or “no” to ski-jumping: it is as simple as that (*simplification*). The element of *personification* is strongly represented by Yggeseth and Sagen. The old male leader *claims that FIS is not going to change their point of view despite the massive pressure*. I interpret him as the stereotypical soldier who never gives in, but sticks to his guns no matter what. *He has no response to the letter from the sheriff in Modum*. He is presented as a man trying to confirm his gender construction through the industrial type of masculinity. He does this among other things by supporting sex segregated sports politics, i.e., by denying the females to fly in Vikersund. There is a certain amount of ambivalence here since it seemed at first that he would allow them to jump. According to the former ski jumper, Ole Gunnar Fidjestøl (currently one of the competition organizers at Vikersund), the guidelines from FIS are not clear about women’s ski jumping. Yggeseth is easily targeted as the arrogant, authoritarian interpreter of ambiguous rules.

Sagen is featured as a young, beautiful, sexy, fit female representative of consumer culture in *Dagbladet*’s exclusive interview with her. Her hairstyle, make-up, necklace, dress and statements about herself become idealized symbols: *I am satisfied with myself, and with my looks. I have become less insecure, and I do not think that I ought to have had a smaller nose, or been taller, (...) This text is also an example of the intimization of the public room by the genre of soft news, although not in an extreme way. She has also revealed that her dream is to fly on skies. She is portrayed as a crosser of traditional borders.*

Furthermore, the story has *sensational* elements: Well known officials like the Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture (including sports), and Gender Equality Ombud all back the young women against Yggeseth and the rest of FIS. For those who believe the Prime Minister has influence in many different fields, it might seem sensational that he has no influence in the field of international FIS-sponsored ski jumping competitions. Neither does the Minister of Culture, the Gender Equality Ombud nor the president of NIF.

The *dramatic* features are represented in questions like: Will they be allowed to fly? Will they be allowed jump? Will Yggesth never give in? It is also a story about *triumph* or *loss*. Who will win? Yggeseth, or Sagen?

Of course, the biggest headlines are in *VG* and *Dagbladet*. Further, we do not find intimate texts in *Aftenposten*, only in *Dagbladet*. Support for Yggeseth is only found in the conservative

Aftenposten, in a commentary. Concerning the content of the rest of the texts, there are no differences in most of the them between the tabloid papers and broadsheet format paper.

This is also a story about a fight between those with and without formal power. In this way it is understood as a classical example of *an asymmetrical power relation*; old male leaders versus young female competitors. This kind of relation symbolizes the confirmation of gender construction through industrial masculinities and consumer femininities. Yggeseth is understood and presented as opposing public opinion and even common sense: The leaders symbolize responsibility as they see it. The young women want to break down barriers in ski jumping. Exploiting the fact that Norwegians believe that “we are the world champion in gender equality”. Sagen and her friends altered the balance of power by securing support from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture, the president of NIF, the Gender Equality Ombud, Ole Gunnar Fidjestøl, Espen Bredesen and the Sheriff of Modum. These male allied used their power directly and indirectly with their cultural capital in and outside the field of national and international ski flying.

Was it finally a victory for those without formal power in the field? After all, only four women were allowed to fly. The point is here that the media constructed the tale as a victory and as a triumph. Male editors and male sports journalists produced the news on equal rights in a male dominated industry. Thus, this is a tale contrary to a full-blown moral panic of the Norwegian version of the male tabloid, and one that had progressive effects on sports politics. Credit fo this goes to a young, clever and sexy Anette Sagen who prevailed against an outworn Torbjørn Yggeseth.

Conclusion

The analysis on the Yggeseth-Sagen case is inspired by elements of Norman Fairclough’s discourse analysis. The discourse on gender equality is understood as the prevailing over reference to protecting the girls from injury and ridiculing sporting females. When the “natural” human right to gender equality is taken away from popular, young, female ski jumpers, the story creates the potential for a tabloid tale.

The story was constructed as such in *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet*. Several of the elements of the tabloidization processes mentioned on page 2 are included in this discourse: Polarization (Yggeseth-Sagen), collision, conflict and concretisation (asymmetrical power relation between the FIS leaders “of yesterday” and Sagen and her friends “tomorrow’s women”), simplification (the answer is “yes” or “no”), personification (Yggeseth –Sagen), intimization (the soft-news about Sagen in *Dagbladet*), possible sensation (the Prime Minister, the Minister of Culture, the president of NIF and the Gender Equality Ombud who have no formal power in this question), drama (are they going to jump or not?) and triumph or losses (who will win in the end: Yggeseth or Sagen?). Most importantly perhaps, is the fact that Anette Sagen was portrayed as a young,

good-looking and sympathetic athlete representing the consumer culture, while her adversary was constructed as an arrogant “old foggy” representing an outworn culture of industrial masculinity.

Fairclough’s element of consumption is also included with point of departure of the students’ texts; imagined letters to Yggeseth and Sagen. Possible connections can be made between the ongoing Norwegian discourse on gender equality and the “unexpected news” that the young female ski jumpers were deprived of their equal rights to participate in ski flying competitions.

The tension between the gender constructions of one of the “old bogies”, (Yggeseth), versus the young and sexy Sagen, created a tabloid tale about the skiing nation of Norway in 2004. The most intriguing thing about this is that the tale was told by male editors and sports journalists, writing for conservative journals such as *Aftenposten*.

I will conclude this article with a poem written by a male student:

*Fly on the wings of love
Keep on truckin`
You go girl
We will lift you up and carry you further
Fly you further into our hearts!.*

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