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**Published in International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 2000, vol. 35,
no.2: 181-198.**

Heresy as a victorious political practice: Grass roots politics in Norwegian sports 1972-75

Abstract: This article deals with a question of sport politics: the fight for female participation in the most popular running competition in Norway between 1972-75. The focus is on the process from doxa (what we take for granted), through heterodoxa (the effort to challenge the doxa) and at the end 'winning the game'. Most research in sport politics has focused on formal politics in sports organizations and official political aims of the state, but not, as in this paper, on informal counter-cultural movements and 'ad-hoc-groups'. This is also an example of how private experiences become official stories. The approach used is that of the life story (my own, personal account of a particular experience), with some elements of life history (in the sense that I am placing my story into a particular cultural, social and political context). In addition to the use of Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, heterodoxa and symbolic power, Mary Douglas's symbolic systems of purity and dirt are also used in the analysis. The article demonstrates, through the life history method, how sport interlinked with gender politics and wider political alliances is challenging the sports establishment.

Key words: life story, gender, heresy, doxa, heterodoxa, symbolic power, pollution, action committee.

The Holmenkollen-relay: life story- life history

This article deals with certain aspects of politics in relation to Norwegian sports in the 1970s. Specifically, it is concerned with activities in which I had a role. My personal involvement was given central consideration as I did the research for this article (Harvey, 1990, Plummer 1983, 1990, Goodson, 1992, Sparkes, 1994, Emberly, 1996). According to Sparkes, life stories are when a researcher tells the story herself, with her own voice. This approach is in the oral history tradition. In this case I am both the narrator and the author/ interpreter. Because the voice is mine, it is an authentic and organic representation of events, feelings and identities. My action was tied to my political and cultural identities, as well as my identities as a woman and athlete. Further, with reference to the following question posed by Richardson (1990: 27): ‘How does our writing reproduce a system of domination, and how does it challenge that system?’, my story might be interpreted as a counter-cultural text against dominating ones (Goodson, 1992: 11) .ⁱ

My approach has to be placed within an analytic structure. In this way it is both a personal story and part of a collective one. Sparkes cites Goodson, as follows (Sparkes, 1994: 165):

The former (life story) is the ‘story we tell about our life; the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence... The crucial focus for life history work is to locate the teacher’s own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis.’

The link between life story and life history is where I place this story in a particular cultural, social and political context to do with Norwegian sport between 1972 and 1975. I use some central concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, as well as Mary Douglas, in order to pinpoint the dialectical process between the agency of individuals and the potency for change and the constraints in the social structure, which restricts opportunities. Life stories (without analysis) are being legitimised in academia, but it is still a rather unusual approach in sports sociology, although scholars across academic disciplines and national boundaries have increasingly found value in inspecting ‘a life’ (Plummer, 1990: 125). This article may be read as an inscription of an agent of resistance (Emberley, 1996: 100). In this sense, it may be interpreted both as a personal story and a critical practice, and also as an example of the way in which a private experience can become an official account. It is also a story about power, a fight against the status quo, and it is a story of success because we won the struggle for change. But the effects of this fight for me were ambivalent, because afterwards I lost the opportunities for selection to the first competition of the national athletics team and for the selection to important positions in Norwegian sport.ⁱⁱ

Telling my story is very complicated and in some respects, difficult to ‘prove’. As Eric Hobsbawm has said (Hobsbawm, 1983: 303):

For it is unfortunately easier to document the motives and intentions of those who are in position formally..., than new practices which spring up spontaneously at the grass roots.

Other active agents of this struggle would have told different stories, because 'each of us see the world through a different prism of practice and thought' (Goodson, 1992: 248).

Basis for our heresy in 1972

The last phases of the American war in Vietnam were the point of departure for several students, including myself, to question the legitimation of the hegemony of USA, not only as the peace-keeper of the world, but also on the basis of the dominating male values of work and leisure. Analysis of Dagbladet - a well-known tabloid and liberal paper of Oslo - from May and June, 1972, shows that I and other athletes officially supported the FLN, who fought against the Americans in the Vietnam war. (Dagbladet, 1972, May 3). In the flow of criticism against hegemonic values, the western feminist movements developed, of which liberal feminism, working on equal rights questions, is one category (Jagger, 1983:31,47). Inspiration for the new feminist movement in Norway came from USA, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch and the re-discovery of the French philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir's Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second Sex) from 1949.ⁱⁱⁱ In Norway two different women's movements were created at the start of the 1970s; 'Ny feministene' (radical feminists) in 1970 and 'Kvinnefronten' (marxist and socialist feminists) in 1972. In 1971 'Nyfeministene' staged their first demonstration for abortion rights in Oslo (Haukaa, 1982: 26). In 1974 the members of 'Kvinnefronten' were 3500 and 1000 among the 'Ny feministene' (Wiig, 1984: 326) in a country of nearly 4 million inhabitants. In 1973 the Equal Status Act – a key pillar of the later official Norwegian equal-status policy – was introduced as one of the ten major promises in the Labour Party's election programme (Skjeie, 1992:77). In this way equal rights became the agenda of

both official politics and of counter-cultural groups of sport. The resistance against the European Common Market (later the European Union) in Norway also contributed to radicalize students at this time.^{iv}

In Norway an action group of sports politics was formed in 1973, 'Idrettsaksjonen-73'.^v The aim of this group was 'Sport for All'. This was a reaction against the tendencies to focus on top sport at the expense of mass sport, the increasing commercialization of sport, and the discrimination against women and inhabitants of the regions of the country. In addition, the group claimed more money for sports from the state budget ('Sport for All', 1975, 3^{vi}). From this another network was formed: 'The Action Committee for Female Participation in the Holmenkollen-relay' (referred to hereafter as the Action Committee of the H-relay).^{vii} This relay, which I will describe below, was supposed to be the most important competition for the diffusion and popularization of running in Norway (Löchen, 1973:231). The event is also read as an institution in itself (Harnes, 1972: 263). In this sense it may be read as a major symbolic event. The number of female members in organized sports (The Norwegian Confederation of Sports) increased slowly until the 'take off' in the 1970s. From 1951-59, 23- 24% of the members were females. In 1969 there were 29% in contrast to 35% in 1979. Similar tendencies took place in track and field. The 1970s was also the start of the jogging period for both sexes.

The H-relay was started in 1923 by the all-male track and field club 'Tjalve'. In the first event there were about 100 male runners of 10 legs. In 1972, 2,985 male runners from 199 teams were registered to run 15 legs by the organizers, the all-male 'Tjalve's' club. The sponsor was the conservative newspaper, 'Aftenposten'. 'Tjalve' was one of the few clubs which formed the Norwegian Track and Field Federation in 1896. In addition, several of the best male athletes

have represented this club. Also, the leader of 'Tjalve' in 1972-75 was at the same time the president of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation. Further, in northern mythology the god, 'Tjalve', was the ruler of the world order (Hultkrantz, 1992: 91). In this sense the club might be read as the ruler of the running order in Norway, both symbolically and to some extent literally.

Both the start and the finish of the relay is from the Bislet Stadium in Oslo. In 1967 women were allowed to run in a relay at that stadium during the interval. I took part in this competition, and we were at that time satisfied with this marginal role. Before 1972 there was no debate either in organized track and field, or in the media, about whether women ought to take part in this relay of 15 runners. It seemed so 'natural' that this was a competition for men. The H-relay organizers were regarded as kind leaders when they included female runners to entertain the audience during the interval. Because of the new women's movement, our experiences with demonstrations against the Vietnam war, and the politics of the European Common Market from the 1970s, in addition to my candidature for membership of the students' board for 'Green Grass' in 1971 (a 'green-red' coalition close to 'The Peoples' Movement against the European Common Market'), my attitude had changed by 1972.^{viii}

Theoretical perspectives

According to Pierre Bourdieu the 'natural' and social world might appear as self-evident (Bourdieu, 1977: 168-169). Doxa is a 'political order' what we 'take for granted' as if it was 'the natural world', because it seems so obvious that we do not tend to or bother to reflect upon it. Therefore we do not question it. Bourdieu continues (Bourdieu, 1977: 167):

What is essential **goes without saying because it comes without saying**:
the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition;...

A condition of heterodoxa can be generated by a successful effort to challenge the doxa. Bourdieu also pinpoints the following (Bourdieu, 1977: 168-169):

The truth of the doxa is only fully revealed when negatively constituted by the consideration of **a field of opinion**^{ix}, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses ...The critique which brings the undiscussion into discussion... destroys self-evident practicality.

The doxa, that this was an all-male event, was seen as a self-evident tradition where males were the 'natural' participants and females were only viewed as spectators. This was taken-for-granted for 49 years, from 1923 until 1972. The fact that women were allowed to take part during the interval in 1967, did not imply that we questioned the doxa at that time; the latter being that the 15-stage competition was for men only. From 1968 onwards we were, however, not allowed to run in the interval, because according to the leaders of the relay the spectators preferred women`s gymnastics. This made me angry. A few of us thought it was unfair. For the rest of the track and field 'interval' entertainers, it seemed 'natural.' In this sense the doxa acted upon them as a manifestation of symbolic power, in Bourdieu`s sense, (Bourdieu, 1992: 23):

... symbolic power is an 'invisible' power which is 'misrecognized' as such and thereby 'recognized' as legitimate... (it) presupposes certain forms of cognition or belief, in such a way that even those who benefit least from the exercise of power participate, to some extent, in their own subjection.

We were unable to reveal the doxa before 1972. Although a few of us did not believe in the legitimacy of power, it was, nevertheless, unthinkable for us to see ourselves as active agents who could change the traditions of the H-relay. In this sense, we were all subjected to the power of tradition because, although we wanted to participate in the contest, but were not invited, we felt unable to challenge the all-male rules. But by 1972, attitudes were beginning to shift.

In 1972 I was a potential member of the Norwegian national athletic team and my coach at the time, a member of 'Tjalve', tried to persuade the organizers to include just one female team of 15 in the competition in 1972, but in vain. The entrance ticket or passport to the run was simply to be born male. Because of our political activism, in addition to the unsuccessful attempt of the national coach, a female running friend of mine and I slowly created a private field of opinion among students. Here informal competing discourses were included in that of the protest against the European Common Market. This was in March 1972, the H-relay was in May and in September the same year a national referendum was to be held on whether or not Norway should join the European Common Market. The two spheres of sport and politics were equally significant discussions in our private field of opinion. The focus of this article is on the process from the doxa, through heterodoxa, the effort to challenge the doxa and at the end winning the game in the H-relay. The main question to be asked here is 'What are the important turning points in the process from 'doxa' to 'winning' the game?'

According to Bourdieu, heterodoxa is the phase when competing discourses take place in the field of opinion. Then the (Bourdieu, 1977: 168):

political truth may be overtly declared... The practical questioning of the... (doxa) in a particular way of living ... is brought about by 'culture contact'....

Such a critique might bring the unformulated into formulation. This was a period of new network building between students, journalists, athletes, artists, environmentalists, young gainfully employed, politicians and research persons through, for instance, demonstrations, actions, meetings and/or the production of leaflets.^x

The (formal) field of opinion that informs this research was constituted by two national newspapers, the conservative 'Aftenposten' and the liberal, 'Dagbladet', in addition to the leaflets of the Action Committee of the H-relay, 'Sport for All' (edited by 'Idrettsaksjonen-73') and letters from the organizers to the leader of the Action Committee of the H-relay from May 1972 till May 1975.^{xi}

The analysis will also draw on some of Mary Douglas's work on symbolic systems of purity and dirt (Douglas, 1966: 36-37):

It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt, then, is never a unique, isolated event... Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obvious symbolic systems of purity.

Her focus is on how actions of marginal groups are interpreted by dominating ones. This is applied to the context of women's sport in Norway. In that sphere,

by 1972, female bodies could be read as symbols of purity as spectators, but symbols of dirt as participants.

From doxa to heterodoxa

The process started in 1972 when a friend of mine and I took part in the relay illegally, using synonyms of male names as if we were members of a male student team. A male student friend of ours, Sigurd Haga, from our own close network and private field of opinion, made the initiative. He was active in student politics against the European Common Market. Our slogans were 'Yes to women in the H-relay' and 'No to sex tests in the H-relay'. Because of this the two of us were punished by the Norwegian Track and Field Federation and banned from trying to qualify at the first trials for the Norwegian National team that year.^{xii} This staging of a women's sports protest got huge media attention because one of us had been a Norwegian champion and had been on the national team for several years. Besides, we were young and fearless. In addition, there were 11 men on our team who were running with slogans against the European Common Market.^{xiii} Even 'Pravda' in the USSR had a note on it.

We celebrated our protests in my flat in Oslo the same evening. While we were drinking, discussing and creating a song about the H-relay, telephones from a journalist of the leading paper of the Labour Press ('Arbeiderbladet') and that of the Norwegian Broadcasting Television Cooperation wanted more information about our protests.^{xiv}

From then on the media began to give voice to our radical cause, and generate the conditions conducive to the emergence of an heterodoxa. Under the headline

of 'No to sex test' and 'Yes to women' the following report appeared in 'Dagbladet' (1972, May 15):

They took the challenge - the women. They wanted to prevent the Holmenkollen-relay continuing to be a male competition.

Unfortunately, we might say that they were never participants, formally...

On the second leg Sigurd Haga was to start. He had an anti-EEC slogan on his runsuit. Before the takeover, he was stopped. (He was) Drawn into a police car to give an explanation. The police were according to him going to take him to Møllergata 11 (the jail) ... Instead of a baton, Ingrid Ellingsen used a flower...

Why this demonstration? Because there are a lot of women in this country who want to run in the Holmenkollen-relay. The ladies call this huge discrimination. They think that female athletes are fit enough to run all the legs. Therefore they think it is natural to include female participants in the competition the following year....

The demonstrators did not wish to be heretic. They would have liked to avoid what happened. Because the organizers had not listened to them so far, they thought it necessary to protest'.

'Dagbladet' was to become the main speaking voice of the protestors against the club, while the sponsor, 'Aftenposten', was that of 'Tjalve'. 'Dagbladet' gave legitimation to the protest, while 'Aftenposten' did not include our version of the struggle.^{xv}

What happened further?

From heterodoxy to winning the game

The leader of the H-relay organizing committee came out with a 'statement' which read (Hemsvik, 1972, June 9):

The organizing committee of the Holmenkollen- relay does not intend to discuss press reports of this year's relay, what happened during the relay, but to state the following:

1. According to the laws of the Norwegian Confederation of sports, paragraph 1, sport is a non-political movement. Thus, no demonstrations for political views are permitted by competitors in a sports competition....

2. According to police regulations one has to get permission to demonstrate at an official arena... One of the above mentioned teams was in addition disqualified because it included competitors who did not represent the club. In this respect two female athletes who, firstly, represented another track and field club, and secondly, were unable to take part because of the rules of the federation in which male and female competitors are not allowed to compete together...

The organizing committee strongly regrets that one tabloid newspaper of the town supports political demonstrations in sports arrangements. We assume that several of our loyal organizers throughout the country are not inclined to work a lot in their leisure time in order to let people who are hot on politics get the chance to demonstrate and advocate their political standpoints on all kinds of sports competitions...

This might represent the orthodoxy of organized track and field, while the text from 'Dagbladet' might represent the heretic practice, an example of an emergent heterodoxy.

The claim that organized sports was supposed to be a non-political movement was the orthodox justification supported by paragraph 1 of the 1971 'Norwegian Confederation of Sports: Handbook' (1971:7.); as follows: 'The Norwegian Confederation of Sports is a ... political neutral organization.' Further, this was an echo of the 1920s, when the 'political' Worker sports` movement was established in Norway from 1924 till 1940 against the 'neutral' bourgeois sports, and in 1936 when participants of this 'neutral' and 'non-political' sport movement went off to the Olympic Games in Nazi Germany (Kristoffersen, 1974: 41-43). The doxa was that the dominating view was interpreted as 'neutral' and the radical as 'political'.

The sports editor of 'Dagbladet' responded as follows (Isdal, 1972, May 15):

I do not believe in the idea of not integrating sports and politics, because it is impossible... We do not find any rules or paragraphs, either in the laws of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports or in those of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation, which state that such innocent actions (to run with slogans in the H-relay) are against the laws of sport.

The gender order of national track and field of the time was that men compete against men and women against women. A consequence of this was that women were not allowed to take part in competitions for men. As the two female runners in the H-relay in 1972, we had broken three different paragraphs of sports rules through what was characterized by the male track and field establishment as heresy.

By this time women throughout the western world were breaking new boundaries in sport. This implied a shift in gender relations of power. While

several men were clinging to traditions, some women were questioning what for years had been taken for granted. Roberta Gibb ran illegally in the Boston-Marathon as early as in 1966 (Pfister, 1997: 6-9). Kathy Switzer repeated this on April, 19 the following year (Jutel, 1995; Cooper, 1998: 157-60). Without knowing about Gibb's and Switzer's run, we had also taken part in an all-male event. Further, we represented a student club, which we had created to protest against the Common Market and sex discrimination in this relay. Thirdly, we had destroyed the 'honour' of track and field sport by our rule breaking.

A meeting was held with three members of the board of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation, the male leader of our club, 'Tyrving', and the rule breakers, the two of us characterised as heretic and intruders in an all-male contest ('Sport for All', 1973, 1). The fact that we had broken other rules was not so important to them. The disrespect for the gender order was the main issue.

The following year, in 1973, lobbying for female participation in our Female Committee of the H-relay, we handed out leaflets during the competition, which started with a quotation from the organizers in 'Track and Field', (Action Committee of the H-relay, 1973):

No other arrangement has been of such importance for the diffusion and popularization of running in this country as the Holmenkollen-relay. Is sport for males only? What about the importance of the H-relay for the diffusion of women`s running?'^{xvi}

In November the same year we sent a formal application to run in the relay.^{xvii} In addition, we prepared an advertisement to show our adversaries that we had many supporters. The signatures of support were sent by post to my home

address in Oslo. I had to tell the postman what was going on, because he wondered why I got such a huge number of letters. The days when I got an extra load, he used to make the V-sign with his fingers; that of victory from WWII. The advertisement was published in 'Dagbladet' on November 8, with the signature of nearly 400 females and males, including for example a later president of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation and the former national soccer coach, Egil 'Drillo' Olsen, a well-known Marxist-Leninist on the national soccer team in the 1960s, who became the manager of Wimbledon in 1999, a Premier League soccer club in England.^{xviii} On the same day 'Aftenposten' announced, as part of their growing antagonism to our fight ('Aftenposten', 1973, November 8):

I want to state at once that there is no chance what-so-ever to include females in the Holmenkollen-relay. It is technically impossible... We do not want to take the risk of reducing or destroying an arrangement, which for the time being is running well and is a success.

Here is the core of the unspoken doxa - what is taken for granted must not be discussed. This could be read as a dogmatic statement in defence of a tradition where the male bodies were supposed to be the 'natural' ones. Douglas's symbolic concepts on purity and dirt (cited above) may be relevant in this context. The gender order was that of an all-male event and the contravention to that order was the illegal run. In this sense our bodies were read as a symbol of dirt.

Our Action Committee of the H-relay used the most orthodox answers of the leaders of the event in our campaigning publicity for equal rights in sports. In

this way we added more fuel to the fire. The following is a quote from a letter I got as the leader of this group from Hemsvik, the leader of the H-relay:

... we cannot of course focus on a whim of the moment because it is our responsible task to evaluate how many athletes would take part in the relay in the future... we want to state the misleading arguments which are used in the (above mentioned) campaign (which, for example, Egil Olsen supported) staged in order to get female participation in the Holmenkollen-relay; 'No to discrimination of women in sports'. One ought to understand and accept the technical and other problems...^{'xix}

According to the organizers the reasons why women were not able to participate were 'technical and problems of arranging the competition', but not the real reason as we saw it; that they did not want to include women. The leader of the H-relay, Hemsvik, wrote the following in a letter to me:

For several years we have had a start every 5 minutes and this seems ...natural and fits in very well and is not likely to be changed. It is therefore out of the question to include an extra competition in the Holmenkollen-relay of today.^{xx}

The H-relay was seen as the 'property' of 'Tjalve'. It was their arrangement and their members worked in their leisure time to suit the needs of the male competitors.

The action group also tried to get the case on the agenda of the General Assembly in the Norwegian Track and Field Federation on November, 11th. through one of the members of the board of 'Idrettsaksjonen-73' (Sport for All

action group). Our man was a young conservative member of the board of a 'Oslo-club', who worked for sport for all and not for top level sport. He made all the correct formalities, but still he was not allowed to speak about the principle of our fight. As a last chance he presented the case under the cover of another case, and the chairman, who was both the president of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation and leader of 'Tjalve' of the time, stopped the speaker resolutely with the gavel.

The doxa here may be read as that of symbolic power in a relationship between the president and the male member of the 'Idrettsaksjonen-73', who was tied to our Action Committee. The way of acting in the General Assembly was supposed to be like that of a gentlemen, in the sense that the members are expected to stick to the agenda of the meeting, which constituted the symbolic power of those who had decided what to discuss. Our man did not follow the agenda or live up to the expectations of the president, because he knew that those in power had excluded his case on the agenda. In Bourdieu's terms, he saw the arbitrary social construction of the agenda (Bourdieu, 1992: 23.):

... symbolic power requires, as a condition of its success, that those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of power and the legitimacy of those who wield it.

In spite of the consistent opposition to women's participation by the establishment of male organisers of the H-relay, there was growing support for women's participation coming from male participants, and particularly from those connected to the 'Idrettsaksjonen-73' and other student activists. In 1974 more than 100 male participants from students' clubs of the H-relay wore slogans against discrimination of women on their sportsuits during the

official opening of the competition. Also, more than 60 females stood up in protest in the spectator seats (stands) when the leader of the relay started his speech. At the same time a big banner spread out from the open ceiling of the stands, on which 2/3 of the slogan was visible:

‘We want to....’ (The whole slogan read: ‘We want to take part, too’)

One of the fractions of the women’s movement which supported us did not like this action, because it was not 100% successful, because the last bit of the slogan was not visible.^{xxi} How did this happen?

This is how I remember it and how it has been retold in the press several times. The night before the relay, two men from the ‘Idrettsaksjonen-73’, my boy friend of the time and I climbed over the high fence surrounding Bislet Stadium, where the start and the finish of the competition were to take place. What we did not know at that time was that two old women had seen us while we were climbing into the stadium. They phoned the police, because they remembered the fuss two years earlier.

When the two of us were upon a big roof, over the spectator stands, and two others down among the seating, trying to fasten the rope of the slogan, we heard the police coming. Two of us - myself and Åge Fiskerstrand (a former, tall, athlete at the Olympic team in rowing in 1972) lay flat out on the roof with a good distance between us, while the other two ran away. I was afraid to be caught and arrested, because I was at that time a teacher of young teenagers and as a former top athlete the media would most probably make a comment on it. I could hear three different voices. One policeman talked about the old women who had telephoned and another said after a while that they ought to leave,

because there was no one in the stadium at this time. Or, the old 'ladies' must have misunderstood the situation, a third voice stated. They searched for a while after that, before they went away. It took some time before Åge and I dared to stand upright on the roof. The two others did not return, so we had to finish the job. We were a little nervous and did not fasten the rope to the slogan sufficiently securely. When Åge Fiskerstrand pulled the rope from the roof the following day, the whole of the slogan did not come out. But insiders, those who wore slogans and 60 of the spectators, understood the message.

Between 1973 and 1975 some of us in The Sports Action Group of 1973 ('Idrettsaksjonen-73') took part in several political meetings. In one of them the well-known German left-wing student activist, Rudi Dutschke (the red Rudi), was the main speaker. (He was shot in Berlin during a meeting in the Republican Club in 1968, but he survived.) After this meeting in Oslo, I talked with him at the following 'Nach-spiel' (night party). Here Rudi taught me how to focus on the aim of our political struggle and how to legitimate our stance. We talked a lot during this night, and his energy and charismatic personality made an impact on me, which I will never forget.

A few of us were also invited by several students' associations in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Lillehammer and Halden to talk about sports and politics. We included always in our discussions the fight for female participation in the H-relay and summed up the most recent events on the radio and in the press. The meetings with students were successful in relation to winning more and more support for women's participation in the relay. We discussed sports politics not only during the formal meetings, but continued during night parties afterwards. Here we got the chance to answer more questions, listen to proposals for further strategies and to tell more stories about the leaders of 'Tjalve'. In this way we

got to know several active student leaders in their leisure time and they got to know us better. Because of this they seemed to identify more easily with our aim. The spread of the opposition network led to more organized propaganda against 'Tjalve' and 'Aftenposten'. The co-operation between the two student action groups was effective, because we had a clear, common aim and some of us were members of both networks. Most of us were students or gainfully employed without children and with sporting-, talking- and writing capital, which we used continually for three years. According to Bourdieu there are different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1992: 14). Economic capital (material wealth) is only one form. In this article cultural- (for example knowledge, skill) and symbolic capital (which is to be converted into other forms, for example the capital derived from a Norwegian championship may be converted into sport journalism) are relevant forms. The most active student agents from 1972 till 1975 were first and foremost left wing persons of both sexes. Our arguments were disseminated by 'The Action Committee of the H-relay', and the local groups of 'Idrettsaksjonen-73' throughout the country. Most of our supporters of both sexes outside our network were active members of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation, many of the men were competitors in the H-relay. I became a freelance sports journalist during the fight. In addition, I took part in the Norwegian championship in track and field after I had left the national team to see old friends and to talk about female participation in the relay. After a while we also got important support from among the best male athletes of 'Tjalve' and from the president of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports, Ole Jakob Bangstad, a former Major Admiral of the Norwegian Army. In this way the growth of popular resistance grew.

Before 1975 we had also visited a lot of clubs, who supported us. By now our arguments were well known to most sports leaders and members of the

Norwegian Track and Field Federation and among younger members of several sports. The male support was important in order to reveal the incompleteness of the orthodox view.

1975 was announced as the Women's Year of the United Nations. This we used to give weight to our campaign. The initiator of this was a male leader of a ski club in Oslo. We asked the following question to members of some sports clubs: What could be done in sports to follow up the intentions of the United Nations? Here the H-relay was an eminent target. We had built up a strong support during these years. The female leader of the Socialist Party in Norway ('Sosialistisk Ventreparti'), professor of social psychology, Berit Ås, even supported us in a discussion she initiated in the County Council of Asker (next to Oslo). Journalists in most papers except for 'Aftenposten' backed us. The sports editor told me in an interview in 1992 that he supported us, but he could not make it official because of the co-operation with 'Tjalve'.^{xxii}

The representatives of the orthodoxy were in the end isolated. They could no longer make any sort of credible defence. The pressure against the male leaders of 'Tjalve' was too strong within the larger track and field community. The fight in the field of opinion, lasted, however, until the day of the run. The Hemsvik group sent a letter to the best track and field clubs with female members with a deadline to answer by December, 31th. 1974 to see how many clubs supported our claim and were prepared to run ('Sport for All', 1975, 1). Only 21 out of 52 clubs answered that women ought to be included in a women's event in the relay and only 2 could promise a women's team of 15 at that early stage ('Aftenposten', 1975, February 25th.). Neither the females of the Action Committee nor the organizers believed at that time that many women's teams would be able to take part with 15 participants. Therefore we had asked for a

shorter relay as our first priority. This was well-known by the readers of the (formal) field of opinion.

The Norwegian Broadcasting Company (radio) stated on behalf of the organizers in one of their news reports in March 1975 that women's interest to participate in the H-relay was next to nothing ('Sport for All', 1975, 1). The H-relay leaders did not decide officially to ask women to join until April, 2th.^{xxiii}, although they had stated that women **might** join on February, 25th. On April, 5th, the leading organizer, Hemsvik, also stated in 'Aftenposten' that running in the H-relay did not suit women (Hemsvik, 1975, April, 5th.) In addition, the organizers made the deadline for women's teams, April, 7th, in contrast to April, 21st for the men's teams.^{xxiv} The rationale of the Hemsvik group was the following (Hemsvik, 1975, April 5th):

This of course is not sex discrimination, but a practical necessity to know whether there is sufficient interest to establish a special class for women this year.

But some clubs read this - as we did - as another example of sex discrimination perpetrated by 'Tjalve' ('Akershus Arbeiderblad', 1975, April, 2). However, the Action Committee had prepared the clubs to react quickly^{xxv}, and the organizers underestimated the response. They did not know how many teams would actually start and they did not reflect upon or understand the wider social implications in relation to equal rights. Gender equality was no longer a theme for radicals only, but for wider sections of the population as well.

On May, 6th, 'Aftenposten' was still in their world of yesterday ('Aftenposten', 1975 May 6) :

We are not convinced that all the women's team know what they are doing (in the relay).

Thirty female teams started and finished the run. The spectators applauded, while the organizers did not seem to believe these facts at first. But the women *did* know what they were doing and had organized themselves to enter 30 teams, victoriously, in the H-relay. The day before the female triumph the editor of 'Dagbladet' wrote the following (Isdal, 1975, May 10) :

Tomorrow the ladies are invited to take part in the Holmenkollen-relay for the first time after a couple of years intense fighting on behalf of the ladies and the same intensity of resistance on behalf of those who arrange the event. The fact that 30 women's teams are ready to run in this tough competition is, in itself, a great victory for women's sports. The work of the Action Committee of the Holmenkollen-relay has been phenomenal. This group did not only manage to wipe the floor with the organizers, but also to make them open the temple gate for women.

The final irony was that Ingrid and myself - the two women who had started the battle for women to run in the H-relay by taking part illegally in 1972 pretending to be men, were both members of 'Tyrving. Our club won the first legitimate women's race with me on the team in 1975. Even 'Aftenposten' called this 'A new success in the H-relay'.^{xxvi}

Discussion and summary

The first important turning point from doxa to heterodoxa was the illegal run in 1972 and the huge, positive media coverage of our civil disobedience.^{xxvii} The legitimation of the standpoint of the orthodoxy was that it was technically impossible to include women. The sponsor, 'Aftenposten', wrote in 1973, as stated earlier, that it did 'not want to take the risk of reducing or destroying an arrangement, which for the time being is running well and is a success'.

We live in symbolic universes, where our taken for granted 'reality' is socially constructed. The threat of destroying a popular competition might be interpreted in a context of Mary Douglas's symbols of purity and danger. Before 1975, women's bodies in the H-relay might be read as dirt, as inappropriate elements and matter out of place. The ordered set of relations were male bodies in an all-male event, arranged by a male club. The 1970s was a decade of change in work and leisure for female bodies. Changes might according to Douglas be read as chaos. Then, we tend to construct a stable world in which objects have recognisable shapes and are located in their 'proper' place. Discordant cues tend to be rejected. In this way a conservative bias is built in. Our actions were a threat to the orthodoxy of gender – defended so consistently over the years by 'Tjalve' and 'Aftenposten'.

The H-relay may be interpreted as one of several political instruments contributing to the reproduction of the male body as 'natural' and powerful in the established order of sport. Until 1972 this stance was taken for granted, because it was seen as self-evident and undisputed - in line with Bourdieu, its symbolic power long established. The effect of our exclusion was 'inscribed' in our bodies. The border between the excluded and the included was so obvious, that it was not noticed before 1972. Our heresy did not only question the doxa, but it also exposed the arbitrariness of the male values.

Our heterodox standpoint was **easy** to understand: Women ought to be allowed to run. The period of 1972-1975 was one of debate on equal rights in the field of opinion in most western countries (Eduards, 1983:192-241). Most important, it was a *new* phase of the debate, with several young women in the front position, which journalists interpreted as interesting. In this way our fight was included in the national women's movement.^{xxviii} Our female group had a lot of necessary capital. Some of us had been Norwegian champions, been on the national team, been featured as educated, tough, daring and sexy.^{xxix}

Our counter cultural and political views were first and foremost marginal among important leaders within organized track and field, in contrast to most journalists of both sexes. Politics is, as I see it, about the power to define 'reality'. We managed, after much struggle, to secure the power to define the criteria of suitability to run the relay.^{xxx} This had nothing to do with technical problems argued by the organizers, but with gender, sexuality, fitness, stamina and athletic capacity ('Dagbladet', 1975, April 29 and May 7). In this way we won the game, because of the impact of our capacity to *objectify* unformulated and 'private' experiences. Further, to make them public, we produced principles about the construction of social reality, defined the orthodoxy of gender as old-fashioned and contradictory and wiped out their symbolic power to exclude women. This was a question of equal rights in sports in the category of liberal feminism. Although some of our strategies might have included elements of radical, socialist or marxist feminism (leaflets, demonstrations, our network) and unorthodox methods (climbing over the fence of Bislet Stadium and preparing for the demonstration), our aim of the struggle was easy to include in the overall liberal feminist politics of the Labour Party and some of the bourgeois parties as

well. Our struggle could also be interpreted as a break through for equal rights in organized sports.^{xxx1}

We were active agents of our network in the female action committee and 'Idrettsaksjonen-73', who together with several other agents and contributors in the field of opinion, had made this change possible. This issue was far from a 'whim of the moment', but was tied to similar political and cultural questions in other fields, both nationally and internationally. This was essential for our victory, for winning the game.

The fact that only Ingrid and I were punished by the Norwegian Track and Field Federation for our actions in May 1972 and not the men demonstrating against the Common Market, had a deep and long-lasting impact on me. During the short period of exclusion from top level sport, I started to reflect on the ideology of sport in a new way. I had been on the Norwegian team for 10 years. After our civil disobedience I was not allowed to qualify for that team. The effect of this was that I stopped doing sport at top level, although the ban was for a short period only, and I decided to finish my 'career'. For once in my life I had prepared well for the coming season. As a sprinter (100, 200 and 400m) I was a lazy athlete concerning hard training, but I loved to compete. Being excluded in this way, I lost 'the feel for the game'. This new lived experience ('experience vecu') - the exclusion from top level sport - made me angry.^{xxxii} I realised that heretic female bodies were interpreted in a special way by middle-aged male leaders of sport. To them women were seen as spectators, because we did not have the necessary symbolic capital - our bodies were not recognised as bearers of worthy capital (needed qualities) in that context. The organizers regarded our action as a scandal and they were shocked. Because female bodies had broken the law of silence, which guaranteed the doxa, we had to be punished. But by

our action we could symbolize pollution, because our run was out of order, and simultaneously make our own rules by running with a flower instead of a baton in a male contest. In addition, we were presented as heroines in the media.

The main elements of this story have been reproduced nearly every year in the Norwegian press. In 1999, for example, in a newspaper feature about the success of the (marathon runner) 'Grete Waitz Run' in Oslo from 1984, there was the following reference to women`s role in the H-relay (Ringheim, 1999, October, 26th.):

Gerd von der Lippe reminds us that women were excluded from the Holmenkollen-relay until 1975 and that several newspapers as late as in the 1970s mocked female long distance runners.

In this way our fight for female participation is to some degree still tied to my identities as a woman, a female runner, and a sport researcher, it is also linked to a certain period of cultural, social, and political issues, when the doxa of male-dominated sport could be challenged by an effective blend of the personal and the political; and a radical re-evaluation of women`s role and women`s bodies could make sport a catalyst for the generation of the conditions necessary for the stimulation of an heterodoxa. In this way, through the reproduction of events and memories, the transition of an individual life-story into a corroborated life-history shows how radical heresy can create the basis of victorious political practice in grass-roots sports practice and politics.

Notes

ⁱ Life stories in a political context may be presented from several perspectives, of which a counter-cultural is one.

ⁱⁱ We won the game. The logic of this fight was, however, that some doors seemed to be closed. As the leader of this action committee and later that of the “Idrettsaksjonen-73” I was not able to be elected to leading (important) positions in organized sports in the 1970s and 1980s. Our actions were also associated with the Marxist-Leninist group in Norway, although I saw myself as a “Green-Marxist” (not a Leninist, mainly because of his ideas about the sovereignty of the party). Reasons for this were that this left-wing group together with other ones supported us, further, because our methods (for instance demonstrations and producing leaflets) were supposed to be symbols of those of the left-wing rebels and some of us had been demonstrating on May, 1st together with the Marxist-Leninist group. The leaders of “Tjalve” and the organizers tried to marginalize us. (Se von der Lippe, G, 1975: “Det er ittno som kjem ta sæ sjøl”. In *Kvinnens Årbok* 1976, Oslo: Pax: 136-7.)

These elements were the main reasons why I as the former leader of the action committee and “Idrettsaksjonen-73” did not get the following jobs: 1) As a teacher at “Tåsen skole” in 1973. (I walked up to the headmaster and asked for a job, because I knew they needed teachers. When I asked him why I did not get a post, he told me out straight.) 2) A permanent research job at the Norwegian University of Sport and Physical Education (NIH) in Oslo in 1977. (Talk with the director of NIH at a party, June, 1983. This was a strategy of mine, because I did not think he would admit this in a formal interview, but rather when he was in a social setting, drinking wine at a party. The Committee of Evaluation for a position as assistant professor concluded as follows: “If the committee ought to choose between GvdL and X with the point of departure of their works done by now, they would rank GvdL as number one, first and foremost because she has done more research. Concerning, however, that the college through this position is testing promising applicants, the committee chooses, with doubt, to rank X first, primarily because we assume he has a better point of departure for further

development.” (NIH, 1977, May 12). In addition, my telephone, together with those of about 15,000 other student activists of the time, was tapped. The Secret Police of Norway (POT) seemed to believe that we were a threat to democracy. In the 1990s this has been criticized by members of the National Assembly, and a committee was formed to look into this question in a critical way.

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘The Second Sex’ was published in Norway as late as 1970, while it was published in USA in 1953 and in Denmark in 1965.

^{iv} The question about the European Common Market (‘Folkebevegelsen mot EEC’) seemed to divide the research persons in two groups: for or against this market. The institute of sociology at the University of Oslo presented its view as follows (‘Dagbladet’, 1972, May 19): “The institute of sociology against ECM” (‘EEC’) (and) “Why yes to the Community” On the Workers’ Day, May 1 1972, about 12,000 people in Oslo demonstrated first and foremost against the Common Market (‘Dagbladet’, 1972, May 2), but also for equal rights and against the Vietnam war. In addition, 15,000 took part in a demonstration against this market in June 7 (‘Dagbladet’, 1972, June 8) in the same town. This day symbolizes the day of freedom in Norway, because King Håkon returned to Norway after he had been in exile during World War II.

^v An action group called ‘The Action Group Against the ECM’ (The European Common Market) was formed in June 1972, in which I was not an active agent (‘Dagbladet’, 1972, June 6). (The leaders of this group were members of the Marxist-Leninist party, ‘AKP-m-l’).

^{vi} The volumes of ‘Sport for all’ are in the archives of the library at the College of Telemark, Bø.

^{vii} The members were the following: Ingrid Ellingsen, Ragnhild Jenssen, Sofie Hvidsten Harnes, Kari Høgseth (now Fasting), Anne Mette Vråle, Berit Skirstad, Wenche Nystad and Gerd von der Lippe. I was the only member of this female

group who also was a member of the board of the 'Idrettsaksjonen-73'. In the last mentioned action group I worked regularly with about 4-5 females and 4-5 men. The central activists in this struggle were 4-5 of us in the female group and 8-10 in the 'Idrettsaksjonen-73'. The female action committee initiated for example the demonstration in May 1973, while 'Idrettsaksjonen-73' proposed the demonstration by the competitors in May 1974.

^{viii} The members of the Students' Society of the University of Oslo elected a new board every year, which decided the agenda of the students' meetings.

^{ix} I distinguish between a *private* and *informal field of opinion* among students and that of Bourdieu's formal one, which is in focus here. The informal one together with our experience as demonstrators might be read as a necessary process of warming up for the fight to come. Bourdieu does not seem to include private fields of opinion. Neither does he seem to focus on how anti-cultural actions might be created to win a fight. This private field of opinion was necessary for the forming of the Action Committee for female participation in the H-relay.

^x The Mardøla -action of July 26, 1970 was the first main counter-cultural movement of the time staged by Sigmund Kvaløy and his environmentalist group to save the Mardøl waterfall and the environment near. Young artists formed an action group in 1974, to fight for more money from the State.

^{xi} The field of opinion consisted of articles and readers' opinions in more newspapers, 'Arbeiderbladet' (Labour), 'Akershus avis' (Labour), 'Fædrelandsvennen' (Bourgeois), 'Ny tid' (Socialist) and 'Klassekampen' (Communist), in addition to the Youth Programme of the Radio of the Norwegian Broadcasting Company, 'Ungdommens radioavis'.

^{xii} Private note from Rolf Staver, the leader of our track and field club, 'Tyrving' to me in May 1972. (In vdL's private archive). Only the two of us who had demonstrated against sex discrimination got a penalty. None of the men in our or

any other teams who had demonstrated against the European Common Market received any penalty.

^{xiii} Two men of the team were running with slogans FOR the European Common Market.

^{xiv} My information was in the end not used by the company at that stage.

^{xv} The strategy of 'Aftenposten' was to make both our heresy and our equal rights politics in sport, in addition to the actions against the European Common Market, invisible to their readers.

^{xvi} The leader of 'Tjalve' and the president of the Norwegian Track and Field Federation was interviewed in 'Aftenposten', November 11 1973. According to the paper these were his words. In the second publication of the paper, this interview was cut out.

^{xvii} According to Lippe, von der, (1975) it was our second application, but the first in a correct official manner.

^{xviii} 'Ja til kvinnelig deltagelse i Holmenkollstafetten' (Yes to women in the Holmenkollen-relay). In 'Dagbladet', November 11 1973 (The same day an advertisement for abortion was published with the support of more than 400 people of both sexes: 'Vi krever kvinners rett til selvbestemt abort' (We claim the right of women to decide themselves for abortion).

^{xix} Letter from Jan Hemsvik (leader of the organizer) to Gerd von der Lippe, leader of the action committee, of December 29 1973. (In vdL's private archive).

^{xx} Letter from Jan Hemsvik to Gerd von der Lippe. (In vdL's private archive).

^{xxi} The discussions about the means to achieve the end - participation in the relay - were not of course a harmonious process. We had frequently tough discussions and the whole of the action committee did not agree on all our demonstrations.

^{xxii} He was interviewing me in November 1992. He spontaneously told me this when he asked me about our fight for female participation in the H-relay.

^{xxiii} Hovedkomiteen: ‘Holmenkollstafetten’. Announcement in ‘Aftenposten’, 1975 on April 2 and 3 (morning and evening paper in addition to the morning paper on April 5) to join the relay.

^{xxiv} According to ‘Aftenposten, April 9, this deadline was changed to April 21.

^{xxv} I had to argue with the sports’ editor to include our article from the Action Committee in ‘Aftenposten’ on April 2. I was sitting outside his office for about two hours after he had turned our article down. Seeing me still sitting there, he told me to shorten the article drastically and quickly. This he thought I would not do. When I did, he finally agreed, though hesitantly, to publish it.

^{xxvi} ‘A new success in the H-relay’. In ‘Aftenposten’, 1975, May 12. The text indicates that the paper for the first time used our term (H-relay) instead of ‘Tjalves’, ‘Holmenkollstafetten’. This may be read as a symbolic victory as well, because we now had the power to define the nature of the relay.

^{xxvii} ‘Dagbladet’ published an article with the following heading on May 13, the day before the run: ‘Ready for the great male test: Why such hatred against women, Tjalve?’ (I do not remember whether the journalist knew about our plans. He might have done, because we knew each other beforehand).

^{xxviii} Christie, E. and Haukaa, R., 1983: ‘Introduction to an issue on women and sport,’ in Kjerringråd (Old Women’s Advice; A Periodical of the Women’s Movement), no. 3-4, Oslo. In 1978, as the leader of the Action Committee for Female Participation in the Holmenkollen-relay and the later leader of the Sport Action Group, I was regarded as the key speaker at the ‘Youngstorget’ (the Workers’ Place) in Oslo on April 8, in an advertisement in ‘Dagbladet’, 1978, on Women’s Day (April 7). Besides, the two most important fractions of the Women’s Movement in Norway supported the aim of the Action Committee for Female Participation in this relay from 1972-75.

^{xxix} The most active women involved in this fight are today professors and researchers in sport in Norway, leader of the main sport library in Oslo, Norway

and former members of different committees in the Norwegian Confederation of sports (NIF). Some of us used fashion clothes of the time. One of us used a very short skirt in a TV programme, while others wore ‘hot pants’ (short, sexy pants) and high heeled boots during summer and winter time. As a free-lance sports journalist I was told by some male journalists that we were featured as tough and sexy.

^{xxx} According to Bourdieu (1977: 170) this is a struggle for the definition of reality. See too Holter (1996: 31), on gender in research and politics.

^{xxxi} In 1976 women’s soccer was included in the Norwegian Soccer Federation. Two of us from the Action Committee had been working together with female soccer enthusiasts on that issue. Women were also allowed to take part in one of the most popular skiing competitions of the country, ‘Birkebeinern’ the following year (‘Rena Idrettslag, Lillehammer Skiklubb’: ‘Birkebeinerrennet 21.mars 1976’, Instruks for løperne (Instructions for the skiers of the Birkebeiner competition).

^{xxxii} The term lived experience (‘experience vecu’) is from an interpretation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxieme Sexe*, 1949 in Moi (1998: 95).

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