

# MASCULINE BRAVE IN THE FEMININE WINTER SPORTS

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**Abstract:** The sport has significant role in the changes of the genders relation and helped to transform the conception of the sexes during the last fifty years. The women started to do conventionally male sports; the newest event was the ski jumping for female athletes at the Olympic Games of Soci. The gender stereotypes in the women sports can be stronger or weaker depending on the success or on the water haul. This phenomenon helps us to understand the new conceptions of the sexes in the context of the relationships of genders.

**Keywords:** stereotypes, gender, winter sport, Winter Olympics

## INTRODUCTION

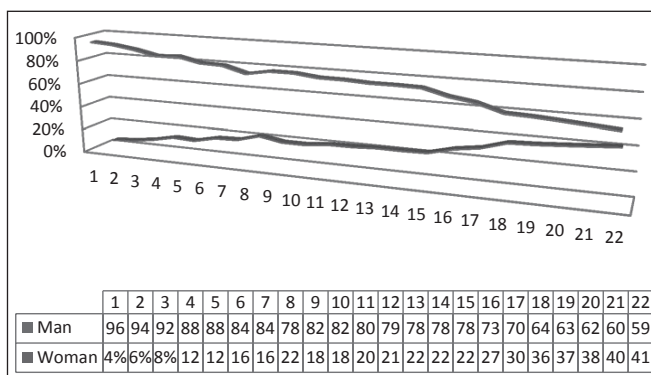
The first winter Olympic Games was held in 1924, in the rural area of Chamonix. In this sport event the athletes from sixteen countries competed against each other in sixteen events of six sports, but only 11 women were among the 258 registered athletes. Two winter sport were introduced before in Olympic Games; figure skating in 1908 and ice hockey in 1920. According to Metheny (1965) these two sports are on the opposite sides of the scale of the social acceptance. She rated the sports in three categories based on the issues of *esthetic*, *physical contacts* and *workload* (the weight of the used equipment or tools). In the last 40-50 years the women started to do sports which were originally masculine (Pfister, 1990; Kirk, 2002). The participation of the women in the Olympic Games show us a great development, in Chamonix there was only one event for ladies, but the question was in Soci which discipline will have no chance to be on the schedule.

The aim of my paper to show masculine and feminine sports and their athletes on the apropos of the winter Olympic Games.

## WOMEN ON THE WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

In the western countries the sport sociologists and sport psychologist investigated the gender stereotypes since decades. In the field of sport there are masculine (ice hockey and ski jumping) and feminine (figure skating and ice dancing) sports, but in the last thirty years it is going to be equitation of the genders (Diagram 1). In the 2010 Winter Olympic Games there were 38 events for women and only 7 more were held for men nearby the 3 mixed events (www.olympic.org).

**1. Diagram:** The share of the participation of the genders on the winter Olympic Games



The 2<sup>nd</sup> diagram shows us the increasing number of the women athletes on the Winter Olympic Games from 1924-2006.

**2. Diagram.** The numbers of the women athletes on the Winter Olympics (www.ksh.hu)

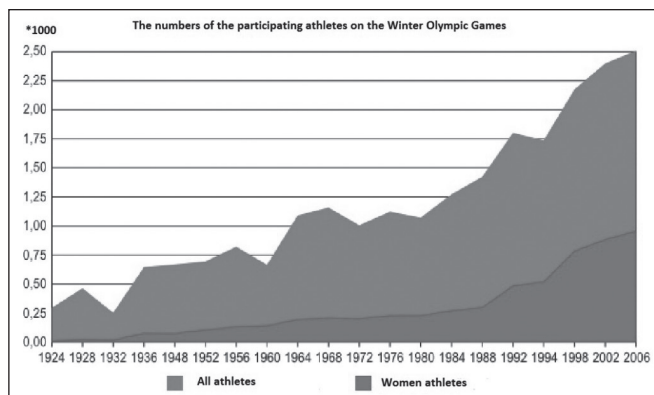


Chart 1.: The events of the winter Olympic Games

Year	Place	Country	Sport	Events nr.	New female events	Female	Male
1924	Chamonix	16	6	16	figure skating	11	247
1928	St. Moritz	25	4	14		26	438
1932	Lake Placid	17	4	14		21	231
1936	Garmisch-Partenkirchen	28	4	17	Ski alpine	80	566
1948	St. Moritz	28	4	22		77	592
1952	Oslo	30	4	22	Country skiing	109	585
1956	Cortina d'Ampezzo	32	4	24		134	687
1960	Squaw Valley	30	4	27	Speed skating	144	521
1964	Innsbruck	36	6	34	Toboggan/Luge	199	892
1968	Grenoble	37	6	35		211	947
1972	Sapporo	35	6	35		205	801
1976	Innsbruck	37	8	37	Ice dance	231	892
1980	Lake Placid	37	6	38		232	840
1984	Sarajevo	49	6	39		274	998
1988	Calgary	57	8	46		313	1110
1992	Albertville	64	7	57	Biathlon; Short track; Ski acrobatics	488	1313
1996	Lillehammer	67	6	61		522	1215
1998	Nagano	72	7	68	Snowboard, Ice hockey; Curling	787	1389
2002	Salt Lake City	77	7	78	Bob; Skeleton	886	1513
2006	Torino	80	7			960	1548
2010	Vancouver	82	7	86		1021	1545
2014	Sochi	88	7	98	Ski jumping; Slope style ski and snowboard; Ski half pipe; Snow- board parallel slalom	1166	1656

The ski jumping which is an original masculine sport appears in the schedule of the Soci Winter Olympic Games (1. Chart), this sport is one of most dangerous sports and required a lot of brave by the athletes. The area of Asia pressed the International Olympic Committee since 2011 to take the ski jumping on the events' program. Unfortunately we haven't in Hungary women ski jumper, but because of the Olympics there will be great chance to participate on the games in this event also.

The other very dangerous sport is the skeleton; from 2002 the female could compete against each other on the Olympic Games, but in this sport there was absolutely no Hungarian participant ever.

Bem (1974) created the individual rating system of the athletes based on the gender identity, called Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). In many investigations there were stronger gender atypical selections of the androgynous people comparing to the womanlike males or the masculine women (Bem and Lenney, 1976; Matteo, 1986). Matteo (1986) examined also the adequateness of the sports for the athletes and also she

investigated how the individual experience affects the sport selection. Salminen (1994) observed that the Finnish women like more the masculine sports than the men the female sports. Koivula (1995) declared that the gender rating influences the individual behavior and the habits; she revealed that there are gender differences by the sport selection, which fits to Bem's results. If we want to answer the question why, we can say that the sports were probably the tool to understand the gender roles in the socializations of the athletes. According to our investigation, the women who do a masculine sport are in the stereotypic thinking always "tomboys", so a ski jumper should be mannish.

As you can see on the picture above, the ski jumper women not really mannish, they care about their outfit. The experts say that Nordic skiing and biathlon also traditionally masculine sports, the origin of these sports was the hunting. The Hungarian ski runners had good results in 1964 and 1968; in Innsbruck our 3\*5 km relay team (Balázs Éva, Tarnai Sándorné, Hemrik Ferencné) was the 8th in the ranking. In



1. Picture: Female athlete in skeleton (source: www.olimpic.org)

Grenoble Balázs Éva was the 24th and 27th in Nordic ski events. In the 70's the Hungarian ski sport was stagnated, but the biathlon started as a new sport. The number of the participants weren't more; the appearance of the new sport just shared the number of the athletes. The Nordic skiers started immediately the biathlon and this phenomenon resulted that the importance of the Nordic skiing just decreased automatically in Hungary.

The first women ice hockey appearance was in Nagano, in 1998. Although we have 30 years women ice hockey tradition in Hungary, we couldn't participate on the Olympics.

The old-style stereotypes for women have progressively been changing and the sport is a good tool currently to gain mannish characteristics. Ice hockey is a very good sample of previous taboo sports for women; it is a very hard sport because of the rules and the speed of the athletes. In the female elite sport the participants have analogous skills as the males have, they should own the explosive strength, the assertiveness combined with less body contacts. In the homeland of ice hockey the Canadians think the same qualities and skills about the women ice hockey players than the male players.

The figure skating is the only sport which is especially feminine sport according to Metheny (1965) categories, but traditionally was prevailed by men (Adams, 2011). After she recognized this phenomenon, she turned to a historical investigation on how gender expropriation occurs in sports. The dominating milieu of the socialization is the family, which determines alternatives of sport also; the children firstly should try the sport which seems to be adequate in the parents' eyes. The former athlete parents' children have bigger chance to do sport and the sport socialization of girls are more effectively if their moms were athletes or they are participating in today's sport (McPherson et al., 1989). According to the findings of Velenczei and Gál (2011) the level of the education and the financial position of the parents also determine the choice of the sports or the children can or can't do sport at all.

Investigation, the future

At the 127th Congress of the IOC the members voted with one voice the modernization of the Games, the Olympics of the future won't be so expensive. Thomas Bach announced the new deals which ensures more effective and flexible

application system. The organizing city has chance to reduce the costs of the games through cooperation with other cities or countries. New component in the bid that the applicants have opportunity to held an arbitration with the experts of the IOC about the main issues to avoid the plus outgoings. It was bad news for the IOC that from six applicants of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games four withdrew their bids because of the great amount of the spending, so the competition between Beijing and Almati will decide about the place of the games.

## METHODS

This paper show some result of a nowadays running investigation which examined the existing stereotypes in the winter sports.

I used semi-structured deep interviews (N=37) with the women athletes of Hungarian biathlon, figure skating, ice hockey and Nordic skiing sports. I collected data from university students also, with the help of a questionnaire



2. Picture. The announcement of results in 2014 (source: www.olimpic.org)

(Q=19) which contained close and open questions and was fulfilled by volunteer sport faculties' students (N=1107) of all the Hungarian universities where sport is presented in the curriculum between 2013. and 2014.

**I hypothesized**

1. Although nowadays most of the sports are open for both gender, the stereotypes of the most feminine and masculine sport don't follow this phenomenon.
2. The male athletes of the masculine sports and the women athletes of the feminine sports accept less the athletes who selected the other gender's sport.
3. The stereotyping is characteristically stronger by the male athletes comparing to the female athletes.

**RESULTS**

In one hand my results show that the women refused more the masculine sports except if their sport also male sport traditionally. On the other hand the male athletes of masculine sports refused the participation of the women in masculine sports and also the men participations in feminine sports. The experts of sport accepted better the women in masculine team sports than in the individual male sports.

I couldn't do any interview with women ski jumpers in Hungary, because this sport is new at the Olympics and nobody did it in Hungary at the time of my investigation. The international media suggests that the women athletes held themselves feminine in a traditionally masculine sport as well. I found that the women of all winter sports think that they are feminine in their personal life but among the ice hockey team members there were girlish girls and boyish girls as well. Among ice hockey players there were only one who has chosen figure skating by her parents as the first sport, but later on she would have chosen ice hockey. All the interviewee said that the ice hockey hard and masculine sport, but only 26% hold it adequate for women 74% told that it is not passing for ladies. According to an opinion of an ice hockey player there is impossible to take difference in many cases between male and female players in an ice hockey game (in the youth program the girls can play together with boys): „*The spectators can't differentiate if the players are female or male. Just maybe from the pink glows and laces.*” an ice hockey player.

**Chart 2.** The students' opinion about ice hockey.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very feminine	6	,5	,5	,5
	Feminine	15	1,4	1,4	1,9
	Neutral	137	12,4	12,5	14,5
	Masculine	540	48,8	49,4	63,9
	Very masculine	395	35,7	36,1	100,0
	Total	1093	98,7	100,0	
Missing	System	14	1,3		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1107</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

You can see in the 1st chart the university students' opinion about ice hockey. Almost 50% thought that *Masculine* now the 36% of them believed it *Very masculine*. My results verify Metheny's (1965) rating of sports; the answers and the content of the interviews show us this even if the ice hockey is on the schedule of the Winter Olympic Games.

In Hungary the women parallel did the Nordic skiing and the biathlon. Both of the sports are pretty masculine, the origins of them were from the military. I found that all the women athletes of Biathlon and Nordic skiing held themselves feminine; they shouldn't be masculine because of their sport. According to the answers of the survey, the university students think gender neutrally (82.3 %) the Biathlon sport and also the Nordic skiing (80,5 %) which is in contrast with the international publications(Chart 2 and 3).

**Chart 3.** The students' opinion about biathlon.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very feminine	0	0	0	0
	Feminine	12	1,1	1,1	1,1
	Neutral	900	81,3	82,3	83,4
	Masculine	174	15,7	15,9	99,3
	Very masculine	8	,7	,7	100,0
	Total	1094	98,8	100,0	
Missing	System	13	1,2		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1107</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

**Chart 4.** The students' opinion about Nordic skiing.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very feminine	4	,4	,4	,4
	Feminine	18	1,6	1,6	2,0
	Neutral	886	80,0	80,5	82,5
	Masculine	187	16,9	17,0	99,5
	Very masculine	5	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	1100	99,4	100,0	
Missing	System	7	,6		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1107</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

Nowadays the figure skating is one of the most feminine sport besides the Rhythmic Gymnastics and Synchronized skating. The esthetic and the harmony of a women figure skater promotes the femininity although originally it was masculine sport. During decades the figure skating changed its gender. In the investigated sample among the figure skaters there were no one who was boyish. The figure skaters thought that their sport is a very feminine, special sport. They never chose such sport where they couldn't use their effeminacy like ice hockey. All the same they think that their sport is a very hard sport, where the trainings are very hard, but it is not as popular as it can be. The university students hold the figure skating *Very feminine* in 28,5% now 48,7% thought that *Feminine* only 0.7% see it *Masculine* or *Very masculine*(Chart 4).



„I like it, it is one of the most multiple sport in the world. Unfortunately the spectators are not acquainted with figure skating. They don't know, what is inside.” a figure skater.

Chart 5. The students' opinion about figure skating.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very feminine	313	28,3	28,5	28,5
	Feminine	535	48,3	48,7	77,2
	Neutral	243	22,0	22,1	99,3
	Masculine	7	,6	,6	99,9
	Very masculine	1	,1	,1	100,0
Total		1099	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	8	,7		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1107</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

## CONCLUSION

In the last fifty years the women started to do originally masculine sports. According to the “suffragette” writers who were involved in sport, this was the most significant period to reduce the dissimilarities between the genders (Guttman, 1991). The equivalence in the sport led to a slow revolution of the traditional thinking about the roles of the genders (Hall, 1996). The appearance of women in most of the sports open the possibility for those sports to be “both gender” sport. In some traditionally masculine sports changed its gender identity and use the feminine issues during the events like facemask, womenlike clothes, harmony or esthetic in the movement. Now the women athletes of the masculine sport are not tomboys, they are positively underlining their effeminacy. Although in the Olympic Games the genders almost are equalizing, but the participation of the male athletes in feminine sports drop behind the women's participation in masculine sports.

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