

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: "THIS ROT SPREADS LIKE AN EPIDEMIC"
POLICING ADOLESCENT FEMALE SEXUALITY IN
ICELAND DURING WORLD WAR II

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The thesis examines events, perspectives and prevailing discourses that led to the criminalization of adolescent female sexuality in Iceland during World War II. Provisionary law was passed that became the foundation to submit young women to the mercy of special Juvenile Court, which tried girls for real or suspected sexual relationships with British and American servicemen, and sentenced them to rural homes or to a reformatory. Through the critical theory of Nira Juval-Davis, I have demonstrated that in the national discourse, Icelandic women who dated the foreign troops, stepped over the line that signified the nation's boundaries and failed to become the bearers of the collectivity's identity. Their lack of Icelandicness turned them into the threatening "other". They were placed on the margin of society, as legal actions were taken to protect and police their sexuality.

“THIS ROT SPREADS LIKE AN EPIDEMIC”
POLICING ADOLESCENT FEMALE SEXUALITY IN ICELAND
DURING WORLD WAR II

by

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Introduction: A Female Juvenile Delinquent.

During the years 1942 and 1943, a special Juvenile Court operated in the capital city of Iceland, Reykjavik. The court tried adolescent girls exclusively for moral offenses, that is, real or suspected sexual behavior. The female juvenile delinquents were usually sentenced away to private homes in rural areas or to an isolated reformatory in the countryside. Without exception, the girls were accused of having had sexual relationships with American or British servicemen who were stationed in several military camps all over the metropolitan area as well as in all strategic regions of rural Iceland during World War II. Great many of the alleged juvenile delinquents were even forced to undergo pelvic examinations to prove or disprove their virginity.

The following court verdict is one among many that were passed by the Juvenile Court during this period. The case concerned the adolescent girl, Thora¹, then fifteen years of age, who was found guilty of an illicit sexual relationship with an American soldier:

As the girl's confession correlates with other aspects of this case, it is established that she has lately lived a life of promiscuity. Under the circumstances, it is deemed appropriate . . . to sentence her to confinement at a private home in the country, but if this arrangement turns out to be unsatisfactory, she shall be transferred to a reformatory. . . . The judge further decided . . . that while the ruling was in force, all her correspondence, as well as all letters she would receive, would be subject to inspection.²

¹ In consideration to the people concerned, all names of the delinquents and other private persons have been changed.

² ÞÍ. [The National Archives of Iceland] Skjalasafn Sakadómara í Reykjavík. [Records of the Criminal Judge in Reykjavík]. Mál nr. [Case number] 14/1943: Ungmennadómur Reykjavíkur. [The Juvenile Court of Reykjavík] 4. All translations from Icelandic to English are mine.

Among the court's records are detailed reports of a policewoman, who was in charge of the so-called Juvenile Correction Office that was a part of the Reykjavik Police Department. The court also had a written testimonial by a court appointed pedagogue determining the suspect's intelligence quotient. In this particular case, gynecological examination was not necessary, since the girl had not hesitated to confess sexual intercourse with the soldier. She had however refused to reveal his name, rank, and the military camp where he lived.

As soon as the verdict was read to her and her father who had accompanied her to court, the girl was taken to the so-called Child Welfare Agency,³ which operated as a detention center. There she stayed for two months, until a nurse brought her to a private home in the countryside. The Juvenile Correction Office had Thora under attentive observation at the farm, which served as a place of correction. The girl's mistress, the farmer's wife, was obliged to report to the policewoman on the girl's behavior. Any signs relating to the girl's suspected obsession with the opposite sex were diligently recorded. According to the mistress, the delinquent did not hesitate to pull herself up from a sickbed when "boys" came for a visit at the farm. "She needs only to hear someone knock on the door. Then she runs up to her room to change clothes and put on make up." No man, however, came close to measuring up to the American soldier: "she talks about him constantly . . ."

³ This respectable name was used over a juvenile detention center in Reykjavik, which operated from spring 1942 until the turn of the year 1944. Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið í norðri II, Þrífylisárin*. Ísafoldarprentsmiðja: Reykjavík, 1947, 656. – Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. "Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn.

and “blames her unhappy love for him, for her own moodiness and faulty character.

Mornings and evenings, she goes outside and shouts into the wind: ‘I LOVE YOU SO!’ The children at the farm are entertained by this, but their teasing has no effect on her.” The witness added that Thora’s deepest wish was to be moved to the reformatory at Kleppjárnsreykir, since there she could correspond with her beloved without interference from the juvenile authorities, and “bite and scratch the old maids at will.”⁴

The girl seemed to be beyond redemption. In spite of her lack of freedom, she lived in the hope of reunion with her beloved GI. She even let herself believe that her mistress was a loyal collaborator, which is obvious in a letter Thora wrote to her, while the latter spent some time in the city

‘My darling,’ Sigga!

I have become so impatient waiting to hear from Bob.

Dear Sigga, I know you understand me so well, I have waited and hoped for so long . . . I love him, love only him and always only him. There is not a single cell in my heart that doesn’t belong to Bob. . . . Love is the mightiest

power in the world I will never forget, as long as I live, when you said ‘we shall fight with love as a weapon.’

Yes, my dearest Sigga, we shall fight with this weapon and we shall remain faithful.⁵

In spite of the mistress’s perceived understanding towards the girl, her true loyalty lay with the authorities. Obeying the Juvenile Court’s ruling, she turned over the letter to the Juvenile Correction Office where it was copied by hand in full length. The police record even shows two handwritings in the filed copy. The copiers left nothing out, not even the small childishly scribbled hearts punctured by the Cupid’s arrows as the girl

“Ástandskonur” og aðrar konur í Reykjavík í seinna stríði.” *Sagnir. Tímarit um söguleg efni*. 19. árg. Reykjavík, 1996, 19.

⁴ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 14/1943: Skýrsla Ungmennaeftirlits til Ungmennadóms, 6. maí 1943.

had desperately tried to demonstrate her affection for her GI. All her behavior and movements were monitored and reported, according to the following testimonial:

At 2 p.m. she put on her finest dress, curled her hair and applied make up. She looked rather pathetic . . . I watched her sprint to the main road. Several military trucks passed by, but I did not see her get into any of them, but still, she could possibly have done so without me noticing. She did not return home until after midnight, looking so totally exhausted that we fear that she may have gotten herself into more than a little trouble.⁶

After this adventure, Thora was taken ill and consequently hospitalized in the city. This was the last straw for her mistress who refused to take the girl back, declaring that she could not stand keeping the girl “as a prisoner in the home.” The staff at the hospital kept a watchful eye on the young female delinquent, who according to the policewoman’s report “soon became restless.” The girl seemed to be a major soldier magnet, as the nurses complained to the Juvenile Correction Office “about unusually heavy traffic of military vehicles circling around the hospital.” Those military maneuvers were attributed to Thora, although no one at the hospital knew anything about her when she was brought there. The policewoman claimed in her report that the girl also had a troubling effect on other patients in the same hospital room: “It is so bad that two patients almost left the hospital because of her, and one of them has been there for three years.” She then suggested that the lovesick juvenile be turned over to the city’s only psychiatric asylum for thorough examination. The medical physician at the hospital refused to comply with the policewoman’s demand. At the request of the doctor

⁵ Ibid. A letter from Thora to her mistress, 3. maí 1943.

⁶ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr.14/1943: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 471, 28. maí 1943.

and the girl's father, she was finally sent to the juvenile reformatory at Kleppjárnsreykir, which was exclusively operated for female juvenile delinquents. Thora stayed there until the fall of 1943. Then a former Supreme Court judge, Einar Arnórsson was appointed a Minister of Justice of a new government. The new minister formally, and without warning, disassembled the Juvenile Court with related institutions, and annulled all its remaining decisions together with shutting down the infamous reformatory at Kleppjárnsreykir.⁷

In the mean time, Thora had to pay dearly for her love of an American serviceman. Her story is representative of the typical process and practice of the juvenile justice system, dealing with adolescent female delinquency in Iceland during the early 1940s. The state harshly interfered with Icelandic adolescent females who had close encounters with British and American servicemen in World War II. The purpose was to police and protect their sexuality. The intent of my paper is to explore the events, attitudes, and prevailing discourses that led to the passage and enforcement of legislation that became the foundation on which under - aged girls were submitted to the mercy of a newly established Juvenile Court.

The historian and feminist Joan Scott has stated that “gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” My goal is to show how gender was at the center of power relations in wartime Iceland. Nira Yuval-Davis's work has provided me with the theoretical framework for this study. She argues that in national and ethnic discourses, women are usually required to carry the “ ‘burden of representation’ , as they are

⁷ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 14/1943: Lögregluskýrslur nr. 445, 10. maí; nr. 471, 28. maí; nr. 479, 11. Júní; nr. 480, 16. júní. Sjá enn fremur skýrslu Ungmennaeftirlits til Ungmennadóms, 6. maí og afrit af tilkynningu Dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneytis frá 25. okt. 1943, til

constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honor, both personally and collectively."⁸ Building on Yuval-Davis theory, the positioning of Icelandic women in the national discourse in World War II will be central to my study.

I investigated a random example of forty court cases to bring back the voices of female juvenile delinquents who were tracked down by law enforcement and brought to the Juvenile Correction Office for interrogation, and then sent by the Juvenile Court to a private, rural home, or to a reformatory. I will also reveal how the delinquents, as well as their parents reacted to governmental interference into their privacy.

At last, I intend to shed light on the image of the typical Icelandic female juvenile delinquent who was identified in the prevailing discourse as the "Situation Woman". I will also compare her identity to a similar construction of the female sexual delinquent in wartime Australia, the so-called "Amateur".

formanns Ungmennadóms Reykjavíkur. - Helgadóttir, Herdís. *Konur í heretnu landi. Ísland á árunum 1940-1947*. MA ritgerð í mannfræði við Félagsvísindadeild Háskóla Íslands, vor 2000, 108 -109.

1. The Superpowers' Brothel

As the Icelandic nation woke up in the beautiful morning of May 10, 1940, British invasion troops had already occupied the country by placing two thousand Royal Navy marines in the capital city, Reykjavik. They met no resistance. By the end of July, more than twenty thousand men from the Royal Army had replaced the naval forces. Not only had the Icelanders been awakened from tranquil sleep by the British occupation, but also from that day onward Iceland faced the most revolutionary changes since the Viking settlement of the island in the ninth century.⁹

The small-populated westernmost European country counted about 120 000 inhabitants at that time, of which only 38 000 lived in Reykjavík.¹⁰ The presence of tens of thousands of young foreign men in their prime unavoidably led to a major social turmoil in this small and relatively isolated society. Iceland had been under Danish colonial rule for five centuries. It became a sovereign country in 1918, with a Royal union with Denmark, which continued handling Iceland's foreign affairs. With the German occupation of Denmark in April 1940, Copenhagen became incapable of carrying out its responsibilities towards Iceland. The Icelandic home rule government had to take foreign affairs in to its own hands, leading to a full breakup of the union

⁸ Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1997, 45.

⁹ Tómasson, Tómas Þór. *Heimstýrjaldarárin á Íslandi 1939 - 1945*. Fyrra bindi. Reykjavík, 1983, 58, 63. - Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. "Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn", 12. - Whitehead, Þór. *Bretarnir koma. Ísland í síðari heimsstyrjöld*. Reykjavík 1999.

¹⁰ *Statistics of Iceland II*, 82: *Statistical Abstract of Iceland 1984*, 11.

with the declaration and the establishment of the republic of Iceland in 1944.¹¹ Iceland, with no military of its own, had no previous history of direct involvement in warfare or military operations. The country had been formally declared neutral in any foreign powers' military conflict.¹²

A year after the British invasion in Iceland, the British occupation forces were badly needed on the real battlefields of the great conflict. Britain and the U.S. then made an agreement that allowed British forces to be gradually transferred from Iceland to the war fronts in Africa and Europe, and American forces to take over the military role of defending Iceland from a possible Nazi invasion. Several members of the Roosevelt administration feared that Iceland could eventually serve as a "stepping stone" for the Nazis to the northern part of the United States.¹³

On July 9, 1941, the Icelandic Parliament ratified a treaty between the governments of Iceland and the United States on the military defense of Iceland "during the war of the superpowers."¹⁴ In the fall of 1941, the United States deployed around 10 000 soldiers to Iceland. In the beginning, the British troops remained in place, creating an added tension on the already overcrowded Reykjavík's lovers' lanes. In the spring of 1942, the American forces counted 40 000 men. At that time, however, most of the British forces had left Iceland to engage in the bloodshed of the warring

¹¹ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. "Public View and Private Voices." *The Anthropology of Iceland*, ed. by E. Paul Durrenberger and Gísli Pálsson. University of Iowa Press: Iowa City, 1989, 98 - 99. - Jónsson, Bergsteinn og Þorsteinsson, Björn. *Íslandssaga til okkar daga*. Reykjavík, 1991, 359 - 360, 398.

¹² Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. "Ísland:Uheldige kvinner i et uheldigt land." Ellingsen, Björnsdóttir, Warring: *Kvinner, krig og kjærlighed*. Oslo, Gjøvik: Cappelen Forlag A S, 1995, 149.

¹³ Corgan, Michael T. "Aðdragandinn vestanhafs að hvernd Bandaríkjamanna á Íslandi 1941." *Sagnir. Tímarit Sögufélags XXX*. Reykjavík, 1992, 138 - 139.

¹⁴ *Alþingistíðindi* 1941, I - 9, 25 - 29.

fronts.¹⁵ From then on, Iceland was no longer an occupied territory. Instead, it was under the protection of the defense forces of the United States of America.

From the very first days of the British occupation, it was clear to the public that some major problems were inevitable in the relations between the natives and the foreign troops. As early as May 12, the largest newspaper in the country, *Morgunblaðið*, a conservative publication, reflected on “. . . the street tarts’ behavior, who acted so shamelessly covetous towards the newcomers, that it shocked both the soldiers and the locals alike.” The author reflected on the idea that these loose women should be specially labeled with a discriminating mark so they could be expelled from “civilized society,” until they learned to act properly. Since such methods were not considered to fit “contemporary humanitarian requirements,” in wartime Iceland, the newspaper suggested that “it would be best to confine these miserable creatures to an isolated area, where hard work and strict discipline would teach them self-respect.”¹⁶ These ideas depicted the women as social outcasts, placing them on the margins of society, because of their alleged “uncivilized behavior.” This was neither the first nor the last time such ideas would be proposed. Discriminating marks have often been forced upon women, who have stepped over social boundaries, and have been accused of causing shame and dishonor to their communities. One such discrimination was the mass shavings of the heads of women who were accused of collaborating with occupying German troops in various European countries during World War II.¹⁷ The

¹⁵ Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. “Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn”, 12.

¹⁶ “Úr daglega lífinu.” *Morgunblaðið*, 12. maí 1940.

¹⁷ Warring, Annette. *Tyskerpiger - under besættelse og retsopgør*. København: Gyldendal, 1994.
- Warring, Annette. “Danske tyskerpiger - hverken ofre eller forrædere.” Ellingsen, Björnsdóttir og Warring: *Kvinner, krig og kjærlighed*. Oslo, Gjøvik: Cappelens Forlag A. S, 1995, 81 - 148.

anthropologist, Herdís Helgadóttir has pointed out that the intention to humiliate and punish women for alleged sexual misconduct by shaving their heads, was a common theme among Icelandic men.¹⁸ The author, Gunnar M. Magnúss confirmed that “some men of extreme virtue had expressed that such girls should be flogged on public squares or branded.” He also claimed, that “there were incidents where fathers took their daughters and shaved their heads for this reason.”¹⁹ Yet, Iceland was not occupied by enemy troops.

Þjóðviljinn, a communist publication openly hostile towards the British forces, expressed a different opinion on the matter, blaming the newcomers for provoking the women. The paper demanded that “Icelandic women should be able to walk the streets of Reykjavík without being vexed by the invasion army.” Mixing the issue with local politics, the paper concluded that the women were not to blame for the situation. At fault were the “submissive bourgeois – publications,” that had “written about Icelandic women, as if they were for sale to any foreigner.” The newspaper criticized its political opponents for expecting “the same low standards from Icelandic women, as are within their respective political parties.”²⁰

In the fall of 1940, *Þjóðviljinn* stated that the hospitality towards the foreign troops had reached its peak. The paper blamed its political opponents for having “handed the British everything on a silver platter, even the women as soon as they have reached the age of sixteen or seventeen. Moreover, to the sinful lewdness of the British

¹⁸ Helgadóttir, Herdís. *Konur í herasetnu landi. Ísland á árunum 1940–1947*, 123 - 125.

¹⁹ Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið í norðri I (1947)*, 2. útg. Reykjavík, 1984, 92.

²⁰ “Brezkir hermenn áreita íslenskar stúlkur.” *Þjóðviljinn*, 29. maí 1940.

soldiers, their only answer is that Icelandic women have ‘become immoral’.”²¹ A year later, a controversial government committee report, the so-called “Situation-Report,” on the intimate relations between Icelandic women and British troops was released to the press. It concerned police records of approximately five hundred women, from the age of twelve to sixty-one, who were suspected of sexual relationships with the servicemen. Moreover, the Chief of Police thought it very likely that the police had only listed about twenty percent of the suspects, thus estimating the numbers of the “Situation Women” as close to 2500.²² This shocking news was followed by endless discussions in the Icelandic media. Among the newspapers that represented their standpoint to the “Situation” was a new socialist publication *Nýtt Dagblað*, which had replaced *Þjóðviljinn* (it had been banned by the British military authorities), by publishing an article that read: “The military high command must supply their troops with all necessities.” It suggested that the military should import prostitutes to Iceland, so the troops would not be tempted to “reach into the sanctuary of our women.”²³ The prevailing discourses were not only political, but also gendered. The dominant masculine discourse was characterized by the ideology that depicted the Icelandic woman as a “biological resource” of the nation.²⁴ This is obvious in the writings of the physician, Benedikt Tómasson, who was one of the authors of the Situation Report. He

²¹ “Á glapstigu” *Þjóðviljinn*, 17. september 1940.

²² Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið í norðri*, 144. - Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið. Mannlíf á hernámsárunum*. Tákn: Reykjavík, 1989, 165.

²³ “Ástandið í “ástandinu”. Herstjórnin verður að sjá hermönnum sínum fyrir öllum nauðsynjum.” *Nýtt Dagblað*, 29. ágúst, 1941. - Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 165.

²⁴ Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. *Mannkynbætur. Hugmyndir um bætt kynstofna hérlenis og erlendis á 19. og 20. öld*. Sagnfræðirannsóknir, 14. Bindi. Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands: Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun, 1998, 110 - 111.

warned against the threat that “the nation will mix with the British guests without realizing it, and that Icelandic women would decide to chose them rather than Icelandic men, either temporarily or indefinitely.”²⁵ Yuval-Davis has pointed out that in ethnic and national discourses “it is women . . . who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally and symbolically,” and who therefore, are constructed as the “ ‘bearers of the collective’ within these boundaries.”²⁶ Icelandic womanhood was constructed around these ideas in the national discourse.

²⁵ “Enn um siðferðisvandamálin”. *Tíminn*, 12. sept. 1941, 2.

²⁶ Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*, 2, 26.

2. Icelandic Manhood in Crisis

These particular constructions of womanhood seem to have been used by Icelandic men as a resource for resistance against the alien newcomers, who had crowded the “sexual scene” previously dominated by native men. Icelandic males were “suddenly faced with competition of foreign soldiers who were far too successful,” as Björnsdóttir has put it. The threatened manhood was expressed in various ways. In the newspapers, there were complaints “that Icelandic men could no longer attend the dance halls that were overcrowded by soldiers,” and occasionally, native men and soldiers fought over the women.²⁷ The Army authorities also complained to the Chief of Police that civilian taxi-drivers had in several cases deliberately attempted to run them over.²⁸ Usually, however, Icelandic men did not blame the soldiers for their loss of sexual domination. Instead, they made women scapegoats for the Situation in general. Some went so far as to justify servicemen’s physical violence towards Icelandic women.

One Saturday night in September 1940, some unknown British soldiers brutally attacked two Icelandic women as they were returning home from a visit to a private home in the northern town, Akureyri. Unprovoked, the soldiers hit the two women over their heads from behind with rifle butts, leaving the victims bleeding in the street. The soldiers got away and were never identified. Most of the local newspapers condemned the barbaric attack. One newspaper editor, however, defended the offenders by blaming the assault generally on Icelandic women, who had been dating servicemen. He stated that it was disgraceful how the behavior of several “loose-skirts” had “deprived

²⁷ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Public View and Private Voices”, 106.

²⁸ ÞÍ. Setuliðsmál frá R. J. Íslensk ameríska skaðabótanefndin. A letter from Lt. Col. Richard D. Stevens to the Chief of Police, Agnar Koefoed - Hansen, 29.jan. 1943.

foreigners of respect towards Icelandic women.”²⁹ According to this statement several ‘loose’ women had destroyed the honor of the whole Icelandic female population. As Yuval-Davis has argued, it is women who are “constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity’s identity and honor, both personally and collectively.”³⁰ Not only was the Icelandic nation losing its honor because of promiscuous female subjects. Icelandic manhood was facing a major crisis that had to be resolved to protect the biological national resource from the intrusion of the foreign troops, who used every means available to seduce the women. A desperate attempt to restore Icelandic manhood was made in the northern town of Siglufjörður, when a group of young men sought revenge against women for their lack of interest in their own countrymen. The men founded “an association whose members pledged never to date women who had dated soldiers.”³¹

Suggestions were even made in the newspapers that alcoholic beverages had to be made more easily accessible for Icelandic men, for them to be more competitive with the soldiers who could lure the Icelandic women to their nests with plenty of cheap booze.³² Lacking these desirable means, some native men became inventive in their quest for women. Two progressive young men put the following advertisement in the largest newspaper: “Now you are offered a unique chance! Here are two young, jolly and lively chaps, who wish to meet two girls age 15 - 18. Must not be in the Situation.”

²⁹ Hjaltason, Jón. *Hernámsárin á Akureyri og Eyjafirði*. Akureyri: Hólar, 1991, 127.

³⁰ Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*, 45

³¹ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Public View and Private Voices”, 106 - 107.

³² See for example *Þjóðviljinn*, 14. maí 1942, 2.

Those interested in this offer were kindly asked to send in their names in envelopes, marked 'Opportunity.'³³

These two young men were clearly more daring than most of their rivals were at the time. According to the Chief of Police, Agnar Koefoed-Hansen, who stated that it was a great worry among Icelanders of the older generation that the majority of young Icelandic men seemed to be "peculiarly inactive in association with women." He explained that native men suffered defeat in the competition for Icelandic women, made uneven by the splendor of foreign, uniformed gentlemen." Koefoed-Hansen also pointed out that the Situation was quite understandable as Icelandic men were known for behaving like clowns in the presence of women, having for ages treated them little better than bondwomen.³⁴ In a study carried out by the anthropologist Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir that involved Icelandic war-brides who married American soldiers in World War II, "the majority of the women claimed that American men usually were more courteous and showed women more respect than most Icelandic men they had previously dated. They made the women feel as if they were real ladies."³⁵ The historian, Eggert Þór Bernharðsson has suggested that the native men learned gentlemanly behavior from the troops, as they had found out that "results were not likely, using rough provincial rudeness against women, as had been so common".³⁶ All of these views indicated that Icelandic manhood needed to be redefined and

³³ *Morgunblaðið*, 5. janúar 1943, 1.

³⁴ Helgi, Jóhannes. *Lögreglustjóri á stríðsárunum. Agnar Koefoed-Hansen rekur minningar sínar*, 1951, 185 - 186.

³⁵ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. "Public View and Private Voices", 111.

³⁶ Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. "Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn", 18.

reconstructed. Lying behind these criticisms is the view now commonly held by feminist scholars that male behavior, i.e., gender is a historically constructed category.³⁷ Men and women can change their behavior and hence their culture's understanding of masculinity and femininity.

³⁷ Scott, Joan Wallach. Introduction. *Feminism and History*, ed. by Joan Wallach Scott. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 5.

3. The 'Khaki - Mad Dabbler in Sex'

A popular argument "claimed that the women were primarily attracted to the soldiers uniforms, the aura of the military might, and not their personalities."³⁸ Jónas Jónsson, a leading parliamentarian of the Progressive Party, which had overwhelming rural support, had his own explanation for such an awkward behavior among women. He traced the Situation to two "social diseases," which he thought particularly common among the female population. On the one hand, "a veiled, but very strong desire to live in urban areas" and on the other hand, a romantic fascination with foreigners, "especially if they are uniformed."³⁹ The writer, Steindór Sigurðsson took the notion a step further by defining the romantic influences on the highly modern Miss Reykjavík when she confronted the foreign soldiers:

The golden and red dingle-dangle on the uniforms, tufts, stripes and cords transforms into sparkling fairy finery in the dreaming mind of the primitive child of nature . . . and the exotic language converts into mystical tunes, unless she possesses a greater mental strength."⁴⁰

Sigurðsson traced the women's' behavior toward decorated soldiers to certain primitive qualities of what he referred to as "Eskimos and tailed-Negroes" (sic) that were disguised by the flamboyant appearance of Miss Reykjavík."⁴¹ The Icelandic Situation Girl was thus partly constructed as a signifier of 'otherness'. As Yuval-Davis has demonstrated, "the national and ethnic 'imagined communities' are supposed to

³⁸ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. "Public View and Private Voices", 111.

³⁹ Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 179 - 180.

⁴⁰ Sigurðsson, Steindór. *Setuliðið og kvenfólkið*. Reykjavík, 1940, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11 - 12.

transcend gender, class, regional and other differences, very often they can become signifiers, at least partially of 'otherness', constructed as having come from a different 'stock.' ”⁴²

The Situation Girl thus symbolized the negative image of the “uncultured and primitive” Inuit and African, as opposed to the positive being of a cultured and civilized white Arian Icelfander. As Matthíasdóttir has demonstrated, the Icelandic national identity was constructed around the idea that the typical Icelandic male characteristics were among others rationality, intelligence, strength, and self-control. She quotes the scholar, Valtýr Guðmundsson, who at the beginning of the twentieth, century depicted the real Icelfander as an absolute rationalist, who conquered feelings, moods, and mysticism.” However, these traits were constructed as masculine, as opposed to the irrational and emotionally charged feminine subject.⁴³ The depiction of primitiveness, closeness to nature, and a dangerous uncontrolled sexuality as characteristics of the Situation Girls was used to emphasize their lack of Icelandicness.

Parliamentarian Jónasson concluded, however, that this “social disease” did not only affect the Icelandic female population, as he considered it typical for all “civilized countries.”⁴⁴ The same argument was central to a pervasive discourse on a similar “situation” in Australia, when “superbly tailored beige-pinks, olive-drabs and light khakis,” attracted thousands of women to seek pleasures from American servicemen.

⁴²Yuval-Davis. *Gender and Nation*, 47.

⁴³ Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður: “Ídeón om det nationale og det maskuline í Ísland ved det forrige aarhundredeskifte.” *Kvinder, Køn, og Forskning*, nr. 3, 1999, 34. - Guðmundsson, Valtýr. *Íslands kultur ved aarhundredskiftet 1900 med en inledning om Íslands Natur af Th. Thoroddsen*. København: Ernst Bojesen, 1902, 19 - 20.

⁴⁴ Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 180.

“Their constitutions as sex-objects . . . encouraged women to position themselves as subjects in a sexual drama,” as Marilyn Lake has demonstrated.⁴⁵ She also pointed out that the “ ‘khaki-mad dabbler in sex,’ that is the sexually active woman . . . was deemed to be the source of venereal disease,” and was therefore, “declared by military authorities to be Public Enemy No. 1.” Hundreds of women in Sidney, who were found in company of American soldiers were “arrested and gaoled for vagrancy.”⁴⁶ The “decidedly nonmilitary danger to combatants from allegedly diseased women” was a common theme of “wartime anxiety in Great Britain and elsewhere” in World War I, as Philippa Levine has demonstrated. According to patriotic journals, it was “this new version of the ‘social evil’ in which sexually transmitted diseases, rather than bullets and bayonets, felled the unwary soldier.”⁴⁷ In contrast, the Icelandic “Situation Women” were not made scapegoats for being the primary source of venereal diseases. Instead, they were accused of threatening Icelandic nationality.⁴⁸

The diverse views concerning sexual relationships between native women and foreign troops in Iceland and Australia can presumably be partly explained by the constitution of these nations. Yuval-Davis argues that

given the central role that the myth (or reality) of
“common origin” plays in the construction of most ethnic
and national collectivities, one usually joins the
collectivity by being born into it It is not incidental,

⁴⁵ Lake, Marilyn. “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II.” In. *Feminism and History*, ed. by Joan Wallace Scott. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 437.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 437 - 438.

⁴⁷ Levine, Philippa. “Battle Colors: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldiery in World War I”. *Journal of Women’s History*, 1998, Vol. 9, N. 4, 1. [My citations are taken from a print out of the article on the Internet, 1 – 23]

⁴⁸ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Public View and Private Voices”, 98 -118.

therefore, that those who are preoccupied with the 'purity' of the race would also be preoccupied with the sexual relationships between members of different collectivities.⁴⁹

The Icelandic national collective or self identity was constructed around the idea of "common origin," generating that nationalist and racist ideology was closely interwoven. In a settler society such as Australia, "common destiny", rather than "common origin" was the "crucial factor in the construction of the national collectivity,"⁵⁰ which could explain the different attitudes towards the Situation among these nations. Racist ideology seems not to have been central to the Australian discourse on the subject.

The British, on the other hand, became alarmed when it was clear that Black GI's had attracted white British women. Several members of Churchill's cabinet considered the situation "a dangerous trend "and suggested various solutions. One idea was to pressure the American armed forces "to send more enlisted Black women and Red Cross volunteers to Britain so that Black male soldiers wouldn't have to look to white British women for companionship." The American government turned down the proposal. Leaders of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) had warned the Roosevelt administration that they did not consider the plan "as respectful of black womanhood: Black women were volunteering for the US army to be soldiers, not sexual companions."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*, 26 - 27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵¹ Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases. Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press , 1990, 68 - 69.

The historian, Francoise Thébaud has demonstrated that the subject of sexual liberation during World War I “took on something of a patriotic coloration in Europe. While female immorality was denounced as a crime equal to treason against the state, prostitution was officially sanctioned as the soldier’s necessary, not to say just, compensation.”⁵² In May 1944, when the Icelandic nation was about to celebrate its newly acquired status as a republic, the physician and socialist, Katrín Thoroddsen, criticized this bizarre double standard regarding women’s sexuality:

While the Icelandic nation prepares to celebrate regained freedom, two proposals that greatly affect the women population appear from prominent men. One is to establish a brothel, run by state and township, for the use of needy men, domestic and foreign. For the sake of cultural enhancement, it shall be given a lustrous name, such as "Comfort Kiosk". The other proposal suggests that all young girls, age 14-18, are to be separated from the public and hidden in seclusion in the mountains under the care of honorable women, to secure the prevention of their untimely deflowering. Sinful women are, however, to be imprisoned. ⁵³

This view seemed to have been central to the dominant masculine discourse in wartime Iceland as it was concluded that soldiers should be supplied with prostitutes. At the same time, Icelandic men condemned the proclaimed promiscuity of Icelandic women and their passion for foreigners by labeling them as traitors to their nation, as Björnsdóttir has demonstrated:⁵⁴

⁵² Thébaud, Francoise. “The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division,” in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot. *A History of Women in the West. Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century V*, ed. by Francoise Thébaud. Cambridge, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998, 49 - 50.

⁵³ Thoroddsen, Katrín. “Áróður og ofnæmi”. *Melkorka*, 1.árg. – 1.tbl., maí 1944, 17

⁵⁴ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Island: Uheldige kvinner”, 156.

when the concept ástand [the Situation] was used in connection with women, it had a very specific meaning. It was loaded with negative moral implications. One only had to say about a woman that she was í ástandinu to automatically capture her loose, unpatriotic character and her dismal fate.⁵⁵

Björnsdóttir has also revealed that women who dated servicemen “met public harassment,” as several students experienced where they “were not allowed to graduate from two of the most prestigious schools in Reykjavík simply because they were dating soldiers.” My study indicates that girls frequently lost their jobs for the same reason. Situation Women also encountered “various forms of name calling and physical threats. A common derogatory term that was used was *kanamella*,”⁵⁶ which could probably be translated as “Yanki-Whore”. It even went so far that women were physically attacked by men on the streets, even in “brigh daylight,” as Helgadóttir has stated.⁵⁷

Women’s views on the Situation were generally characterized by social and environmental explanations, while men blamed the moral weakness of the female population for the Situation. The women’s section of *Pjóðviljinn* criticized the bourgeois newspapers for not hesitating to blame the young girls for immorality, instead of looking for the roots of the problem, which the female author thought originated in the lack of proper education and poor working conditions. “These young, neglected daughters of Reykjavik are given all kinds of dirty nicknames, like coquettes, prostitutes

⁵⁵ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra: “Public View and Private Voices”, 102.

⁵⁶ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra: “Public View and Private Voices”, 112.

⁵⁷ Helgadóttir, Herdís. *Konur í hersetnu landi*, 125.

etc., but at the same time it is announced that these are mainly kids, 14-17 years old . . .
”⁵⁸ This statement reflects the common argument among women that the “Situation” was first and foremost a social problem. The women’s magazine, *Nýtt Kvennablað* was on the same track when it discussed the contact between the servicemen and the adolescent girls, which could turn into a serious problem, if nothing were done to guide these girls through “the difficult age of puberty.” Lack of education, poor economic environment, and family condition were regarded as the main causes of the girls’ interest in the foreign servicemen.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “Hver á sökina?” *Kvennasíðan, Þjóðviljinn*, 29. júní 1940.

⁵⁹ “Siðferðilegt vandamál og kvenréttindi.” *Nýtt Kvennablað*, 1. árg., 1. tbl., 19. júní 1940, 5.

4. The Situation Report

No public official was more efficient in encouraging the authorities to take legal action against this new public enemy than the Surgeon General, Vilmundur Jónsson. In July 1941, he sent a harsh, official letter to the Ministry of Justice in which he declared the extreme national danger consisting of close contact between “female children” and the British and American servicemen. According to him, the matter was so serious “that Reykjavík has become a training center for harlots, and is likelier to have a greater impact on the future women of the city, than churches and schools put together.” He expressed a rather pessimistic view of the nation’s future, predicting that the problem would “lead to the conclusion that Iceland will come to serve a brothel for the superpowers . . . and perhaps the country will serve as an ‘outpost for the so-called culture’.” The Surgeon General recommended that the police gather all prostitutes, and transfer them to an isolated place, where they could “*engage in constructive work, enjoy a healthy moral atmosphere and discipline.*” Furthermore, he advised “*that all female children, 12 -16 years of age, should be removed from the city to begin with, where they could be placed in proper educational environment, where no servicemen are stationed.*”⁶⁰

The Ministry of Justice was alarmed by the serious warning tone of the letter, and formed a committee consisting of three men, a minister, a physician and a schoolmaster who had been appointed by the Surgeon General, to investigate the

⁶⁰ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn landlæknis 1941. Bréf I - IV: “Um saurlifnað í Reykjavík og stúlkubörn á glapstígum,” 11. júlí 1941. Bréf I - IV, 1 - 2. - Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Public View and Private Voices”, 103.

situation and find a proper solution.⁶¹ In the fall of 1941, the “Situation Report” was released to the press and it was the last straw for Icelandic authorities. The police had registered the names and addresses of five hundred women from the age of twelve to sixty-one, who were suspected of having “very close contact with the troops.” Among these women were 150 considered to be “of very low morals.” In the report, special attention was given to a great number of “female children” as one third of the “women,” who were listed in the report by age, were under eighteen. More than half of the suspects was under the age of twenty-one. Attached to the report, were excerpts from two shocking and detailed police reports about two extreme cases of 15- and 16-year-old girls, who had confessed unusually high frequency of sexual activities with several soldiers over a very short period.⁶²

The report also suggested that the women, who had been registered by the police, were only a part of the suspects involved in the Situation. The Chief of Police suggested that it was likely that the police had so far only been able to collect data on approximately twenty percent of the women involved.⁶³ This statement indicated that there were probably close to 2 500 Situation Women in the capital city. According to the census of Reykjavík at the end of the year 1940, women from the age of twelve to sixty-one numbered 14 000.⁶⁴ The estimated percentage meant that at least every fifth woman in the city was in the Situation. This hit the newspaper headlines big time,

⁶¹ ÞÍ. Stjórnarráð Íslands I. Db.16, nr. 331. - Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 637.
ÞÍ. Skjalasafn Forsætisráðuneytis. “Ýmislegt”. I - VI: III, a letter from the Icelandic Prime Minister to the editor of *Alþýðublaðið*, 7. okt. 1941.

⁶² Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 626 - 630.

⁶³ Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 627.

⁶⁴ Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. “Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn”, 16.

shocking the nation. The conservative *Morgunblaðið* published the report under the headline: “Horrible Description of Reykjavik Women’s morality.”⁶⁵ The socialist publication, *Nýtt Dagblað* headline read: “The moral situation concerning the servicemen is more alarming than one can imagine.”⁶⁶ The third newspaper published the following statement: “Prostitutes estimated to count around 500 in the city.”⁶⁷

The report stated that it was a “new phenomenon in this country, that a large number of women sell their sexual favors. However, of those women who have sexual relationships with servicemen, only a minority is selling their sexual favors. Their widespread opinion is that *there is no reason to.*” The report criticized the Icelandic women for not understanding the difference between a whore and an honorable woman:

To Icelandic women the difference between a whore and an honorable woman is far from clear. They seem to think that the borderline is a financial one. A woman, who has intercourse with five soldiers in the same barrack, at the same time, believes herself to be an honorable woman if she does not accept money for the favor. The feelings of a woman who has sex with an officer at a hotel are mortally hurt if he wants to pay for the favor. A woman who receives money is a whore. The difference between an honorable woman and a whore is therefore, according to a large number of Reykjavik women, not a moral one, but a financial – or a professional one.⁶⁸

The report clearly indicated that all women involved in the Situation were in fact prostitutes, who out of pure ignorance sought no cash reward for their service, as the

⁶⁵ “Skuggalegar myndir af siðferði reykvískra kvenna.” *Morgunblaðið*, 28. ágúst 1941.

⁶⁶ “Siðferðisástandið í sambandi við setuliðið er ægilegra en nokkurn grunar.” *Nýtt Dagblað*, 28. ágúst 1941.

⁶⁷ Quoted in “Konurnar og “velferðarnefndin”. *Morgunblaðið*, 3. sept. 1941.

⁶⁸ Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 630 - 631.

historian Þorgerður Þorvaldsdóttir has pointed out.⁶⁹ The Situation Committee blamed Icelandic men for the women's behavior, stating that "women do not become prostitutes without men's involvement, and the rudeness of Icelandic men towards women has certainly not created the basis for sophistication among Icelandic women."⁷⁰

The Situation Report not only created a major tension among the Icelanders, it also alarmed The British Military authorities in Iceland. In a letter from the British Legation in Iceland, to the Icelandic Prime minister, Mr. Jónasson, the British criticized the report and expressed their dissatisfaction, and the imminent danger it could cause in dealing with the enemy:

Anybody reading the original report of the committee or the analysis of the evidence which was given to the press would have imagined that they were concerned with nothing other than the effect of the arrival of the British Garrison on the women of Iceland. Whether it was intended or not, no impartial observer could regard the report as anything other than critical of the conduct of the garrison and there is no question but that it would afford ample material for German propaganda. The fact that the committee chose to exclude all evidence about their own countrymen from what they published can only be regarded as extremely unfortunate.⁷¹

The Icelandic Prime Minister did not agree with these accusations, mentioning that he did not "think that it would be considered anything but normal that major social problems are bound to arise where numerous foreign garrisons have taken abode."

⁶⁹ Þorvaldsdóttir, Þorgerður. "Hvað er svona merkilegt við það að vera karlmaður? Athugun á hlut kvenna í kennslubókum í sögu fyrir grunn- og framhaldsskóla." *Saga* XXXIV. Reykjavík, 1996, 294.

⁷⁰ Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 632 - 633.

⁷¹ Skjalasafn Utanríkisráðuneytis. Db. 4/100. Evrópustyrjöldin X, 1. nív. 1941 - 7. jan. 1942. Afrit af bréfi til Hermanns Jónassonar, forsætisráðherra, frá British Legation, Reykjavík, dagsett 22. okt. 1941. 3.

“Therefore”, he said, “I do not consider the “Ástand report” any propaganda material at all” The Prime minister ended his letter by explaining that the principal aim of the Icelandic Authorities was “to preserve the Icelandic nation so it may continue to live a free life in its own country when peace is restored.” He then suggested in a friendlier tone, “whether the British Authorities might be willing to send one of their unbiased women experts in dealing with morality problems, to be able to advise and co-operate with the Icelandic Authorities.”⁷² The Icelandic Prime minister thus made it quite clear that the report concerned internal affairs only. The British ambassador, however, believed that the report could affect foreign affairs seriously:

I cannot. . . with the best will in the world accept your view that the ‘Astand report’ did not afford any material for propaganda. Our experience in this war of the methods of the enemy leaves me in no doubt whatever that he could make very effective use of the Report, and he is so utterly unscrupulous in these matters that we have to be continually on our guard.⁷³

In spite of the defeats among Icelandic men on the sexual scene, foreign servicemen were generally not blamed for the Situation. “It is no use throwing stones at the foreign troops,” wrote the social democratic daily, *Alþýðublaðið*, emphasizing the common view that “Soldiers are all the same, no matter the nationality. They are here numbering tens of thousands, without a home, far from relatives and friends.”⁷⁴ The socialist

⁷² Skjalasafn Utanríkisráðuneytis. Dd. 4/100/3074. Evrópustyrjöldin X, 1. nóv. 1941 – 7. jan 1942. Afrit af bréfi til Howard Smith, sendiherra Bretá á Íslandi, frá Hermanni Jónassyni, forsætisráðherra, 6. nóv. 1941, 1 - 2.

⁷³ Skjalasafn Utanríkisráðuneytis. Db. 4/100. Evrópustyrjöldin X, 1. nóv. 1941- 7. jan.1942. Afrit af orðsendingu til Hermanns Jónassonar, forsætisráðherra, frá Howard Smith, sendiherra Bretá, 17. nóv. 1941.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 180.

publication, *Nýtt Dagblað*, was on the same track stating that it was “pointless to blame the occupation force for the circumstances. “Wherever a large number of homeless men are gathered . . . one can always expect them to create a similar condition as here in those matters.” According to the paper, the most disturbing revelation in the report concerned the large number of young girls engaged in British relationships. “It is always a serious matter, when girls begin to have sexual relationships at the very beginning of their puberty . . . and the girl may be morally destroyed for the rest of her life unless she gets help quickly to redeem herself.”⁷⁵ *Morgunblaðið* expressed its disappointment in Icelandic women with the following statement: “We have allowed ourselves to believe and trust that the females of this nation could withstand this visit, without a large number of them forgetting their honor and losing their pride, and ambitions.”⁷⁶ The dominant masculine view was characterized by the opinion that soldiers’ womanizing was a natural phenomenon. Officially, on the other hand, the men condemned the soldiers’ female companions as fallen women or prostitutes.

Many women were upset by these accusations: “How dare they shout over land and sea that there are five hundred prostitutes in Reykjavík,” . . . wrote Guðrún Brynjólfsdóttir:

Girls, who have done nothing wrong besides love a man and allow themselves to be seen with their fiancés are now being blacklisted by the police, and officially labeled as prostitutes Is it not a tribute to the nation, if women in this country are more sexually adventurous than their sisters in other countries.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ “Ástandið í “ástandinu”. Herstjórnin verður að slá hermönnum sínum fyrir öllum nauðsynjum.” *Nýtt Dagblað*, 29. ágúst 1941.

⁷⁶ “Skuggalegar myndir af siðferði reykvískra kvenna.” *Morgunblaðið*, 28. ágúst 1941.

⁷⁷ “Hvaða rétt höfum við konur.” *Nýtt Dagblað*, 7. sept. 1941.

Sigríður Eiríksdóttir could not hide her dissatisfaction either when commenting on the report and its official publishing. She criticized that the report had been sent to the newspapers allowing excerpts to be taken out of the report and published under misleading headlines to create a provoking topic among the citizens. Taking the following headline as an example: “Prostitutes estimated to count around 500 in the city!” She asked if this headline meant that the Committee meant to imply that the girls involved were all “prostitutes,” considering the exact meaning of the word itself, ” Eiríksdóttir also remarked that this “social evil” was not a novelty. It had festered in the city long before the foreign servicemen arrived in the country. The dominant masculine discourse was consequently blamed for constructing a new problem that already existed.⁷⁸

The Icelandic Situation Woman, who was both labeled as a prostitute and praised for sexual freedom, was indeed a marginal creature, who did not seem to belong in the dominant discourse. Marilyn Lake has demonstrated a similar attitude to the Australian women, who had close encounters with American servicemen: “The sexually active women, neither prostitute nor married woman, defied old categories and could not easily be accommodated in prevailing discourses.” A new name was coined for this sexual creature: the “Amateur.” The American army magazine *Salt* joined Australian authorities and warned the soldiers against these dangerous creatures: “These Amateurs represent all classes of the community, cannot generally be classed as ‘bad’, and their only common traits are sex ignorance and promiscuity. Many of them genuinely like the man himself, as well as the act.” Health and social workers predicted that there were

⁷⁸ “Konurnar og “velferðarnefndin.” Morgunblaðið, 3. sept. 1941.

7000 'Amateurs,' in the metropolitan area of Sidney.⁷⁹ The estimated number of Situation Women in Reykjavík, 2500, would therefore seem astronomical comparing the populations in the two cities.

⁷⁹ Lake, Marilyn. "Female Desires", 437.

5. A Nation Threatened by Extinction

In spite of its suspecting enormous number of “prostitutes” in the capital city, the Situation-Committee did not recommend “strict prohibition,” but called on the nation to protect Icelandic nationality, culture, and language. The future of the Icelandic nation depended on “the youth of the country not forgetting their duty to their *blood and soil*.”⁸⁰ These last words in the report, a well-known Nazi slogan, alarmed many. An author of an article in the social democratic newspaper *Alþýðublaðið* was certain that some Nazi propagandists had “tried to influence the process of this sensitive subject by agitating people against the British servicemen.”⁸¹ It is doubtful that this was the case. Benedikt Tómasson, one of the members of the Situation-Committee, made it absolutely clear that he feared “that the nation will mix with the British guests without realizing it...” He also stated that “we want more than anything to be Icelanders, in spite of us being few, poor and small.”⁸²

Racial prejudices were not exclusively tied to Nazi elements in Iceland. In the early 1940's, racial policy was at the center of Icelandic foreign policy, when the government made the pre-requisition for the arrival of the American servicemen in 1941, that “only élite forces will be sent over here.” The Icelandic Prime Minister, Hermann Jónasson had to explain to the Icelandic legislative assembly what this clause really stood for. “Because of the national, domestic situation in the United States, it was

⁸⁰ Magnúss, Gunnar M. *Virkið* II, 626 - 627, 634. My Italics. - Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. “Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn”, 15 - 16. See also discussion on Nazi ‘blood and soil’ ideologies in Bock, Gisela. “Nazi Gender Policies and Women’s History,” in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot: *A History of Women in the West*, 147 - 177.

⁸¹ “Deilurnar um “ástandið.” *Alþýðublaðið*, 6. okt. 1941, 3.

⁸² “Enn um siðferðisvandamálin” *Timinn*, 12. sept., 1941, 2.

not considered a proper action to mention this in the message itself, but I can verify, that it has been discussed with the parties concerned, that colored regiments will not be sent over here.”⁸³ One of the parliamentarians even suggested that it was necessary to make certain that soldiers, who were brought to Iceland, were “of as related ethnicity as possible, and preferably of the Nordic races.”⁸⁴ Icelandic racism was thus not only about skin color, but also foreign blood. The Anglo Saxons could therefore easily pollute the nation’s gene pool as could African Americans. However, colored people were considered the most polluting for the purity of the Icelandic race.

While the Nazis’ goal was to regenerate the German Volk by means of eliminating the “inferior” stock among its people thereby creating the “master race,”⁸⁵ Icelandic authorities and officials aimed at protecting the unique Icelandic race. The Surgeon General even believed that sexually active foreigners could threaten the race with extinction. In spite of this fear for the nation’s gloomy destiny, he condemned the Nazi eugenics policy and exclusively denied that a pure human race existed and therefore that it could be regenerated. Moreover, he criticized his colleagues, who were sympathetic to the ideas of these “modern, German savages.”⁸⁶ Icelandic national identity was not constructed around the idea of a pure race as such, but rather around the unique mixture of Nordic and Celtic peoples. This ideology can be traced to the historian, Jón Aðils, who in the beginning of the twentieth century used these ideas to

⁸³ *Alþingistiðindi* 1941, C deild, 24, 65 og 57. - Whitehead, Þór. “Kynþáttastefna Íslands.” *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 13. jan., 1974. Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. “*Mannkynbætur*,” 105 - 106.

⁸⁴ *Alþingistiðindi* 1941, C deild, 57.

⁸⁵ Bock, Gisela. “Nazi Gender Policies,” 153,

⁸⁶ Unnur B. Karlsdóttir: *Mannkynbætur*, 123 - 124.

construct Icelandic national identity, as to encourage his fellow countrymen in the fight for independence. He idealized Icelandic nationalism by referring to a unique Icelandic history and culture that was grounded in the selectivity of Nordic and Irish descendants, as the historian Sigríður Matthíasdóttir has pointed out.⁸⁷ Her colleague, Unnur B. Karlsdóttir emphasized that this ideology sparked Icelandic nationalistic racism, which was at the heart of the Icelandic Nazi propaganda in the thirties and transformed the turn-of-the-century Icelandic nationalistic ideas into a biological idealization of the noble Arian race. They warned against racial intermixing among races at different cultural stages, since it would lead to degeneration of the master race and affect intellectual capacity.⁸⁸ Fortunately, Nazi propaganda did not become widespread in Iceland.

The Surgeon General did not doubt that imminent interracial mixing of Icelandic women and the foreign troops could lead to a national catastrophe. "There is a good reason", he said, "to doubt that the nation can endure these difficulties for long without perishing."⁸⁹ A similar attitude is revealed in a leading article in a conservative newspaper *Vísir* in the year 1938, which protested that Jews should be granted political refuge in Iceland:

Nowhere can immigration of foreigners and interracial mixing become as dangerous as among small nations like the Icelanders. A distinguished, Icelandic scientist has

⁸⁷ Jónsson, Jón [Aðils]. *Íslenzkt Þjóðerni: Alþýðufyrirlestrar*. Reykjavík, 1903, 48 - 50. - Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður. "Réttlæting Þjóðernis. Samanburður á alþýðufyrirlestrum Jóns Aðils og hugmyndum Jóhanns Gottlieb Fichte." *Skírnir* 169. árg. Reykjavík, 1995, 53, 64. - Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. "Mannkynbætur," 94.

⁸⁸ Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. "Mannkynbætur," 95 - 96.

⁸⁹ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn landlæknis 1941: Bréf I- IV: "Um hin siðferðilegu vandamál í sambandi við dvöl hins erlenda setuliðs hér á landi. Hugsanleg samvinna um lausn þeirra," 20. september 1941, 3.

argued that interracial mixing of fifty Jews is enough to wipe out all Nordic characteristics of the nation after two to three generations.⁹⁰

The Surgeon General was shocked when a spokesman on behalf of the British command of the troops informed him in the fall 1941, that British servicemen were fathering seventy children of Icelandic women. In a letter to the Ministry of Justice he wrote: "I disputed the number, wondering whether I had misheard or misunderstood, and asked the spokesman if he hadn't said seventeen, which I thought was plenty" The British officer estimated that the number would reach as high as 700 at the end of the war. The Surgeon General was alarmed by the shocking news, especially since the troops were more than twice as many as the total number of the Icelandic female population at the time. It also made things worse that the majority of the soldiers ". . . were at the disorderly age of uncontrollable sexual appetite and therefore more or less dominated by promiscuity and sexual irresponsibility, which is characteristic of soldiering."⁹¹

In the fall of 1941, when the Surgeon General wrote this letter, at least 25 000 British troops were stationed in the country. In addition, around 10 000 American soldiers had already been deployed in Iceland from the beginning of July that year.⁹² At this time, the problematizing of the Situation was reaching its peak. Icelandic masculinity faced an unprecedented threat and one might suspect that Icelandic men

⁹⁰ "Verndun kynstofnsins." *Vísir*, 11. maí 1938, 2.

⁹¹ Þí. Skjalasafn landlæknis 1941, "Um hin siðferðilegu vandamál", 4, 6 -7.

⁹² Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. "Blóraböggjar og olnbogabörn", 12.

would have agreed with their Australian and British fellow sufferers' claims that "the trouble with the Yanks is that they are overpaid, oversexed and over here."⁹³

According to the Surgeon General, there were two prevailing but conflicting groups focusing on the problem. One group consisted of the members of the judicial system, who had taken the *juridical discourse*, to approach the matter carefully, which meant dragging one's feet, "which has won them considerable popularity, especially among women," he said. They see problems like delinquency or crimes as non-existing, unless they are proven beyond doubt. A second group was the physicians who in keeping with the *medical discourse* regarded the problem "as a dangerous disease or a destructive epidemic, which should be fought with quarantine measures."⁹⁴

⁹³ Quoted in Lake, Marilyn. "Female Desires", 436.

⁹⁴ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn Landlæknis 1941, "Um hin siðferðilegu vandamál", 4 - 5.

6. Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality

The different opinions on the proper solution to the problematic situation seem to have been merged in a provisional law on juvenile supervision. It was passed at the end of 1941. According to the law, children's welfare committees and school committees could put young people under surveillance until they reached the age of twenty. A special juvenile court would be established and juvenile delinquents would be placed in private homes or reformatories, for up to the maximum time of three years.⁹⁵ During the discussion of the so-called "Situation Laws" in Parliament a few months later, the leader of the Communist party criticized the government severely for infringement of the constitution, as it stated that provisional law should only be passed in the case of extreme necessity. He also asserted that police activity could never create morality and culture.⁹⁶ In parliamentary proceedings in the spring of 1942, the assembly made several changes, curtailing some of the harsh punishment provisions. After the changes, the law applied only to youths under eighteen years of age, instead of twenty as was originally suggested. It was too much to expect, the assembly concluded, that the children's welfare committees could put people who were allowed to marry and start a family under surveillance. At this time, the legal age of consent was sixteen years, and one could marry at the age of eighteen. Although the parliament supported the main

⁹⁵ *Stjórnartíðindi fyrir Ísland* 1941, A deild, 280 - 281.

⁹⁶ "Ráðið til "að bæta siðferði unglunga" eru lögreglunjósnir og þvingunarvist." *Nýtt Dagblað*, 26. feb. 1942.

thoughts behind the law, it found doubtful “that a cure for this disease could be found through tough measures and harsh punishment at the hands of the authorities.”⁹⁷

Many people were upset by how far the government thought it could reach into peoples’ private lives, seeing it as a bizarre contradiction that girls, legally mature to marry and establish a family, could face punishment if their choice of bedfellows did not meet governmental approval.⁹⁸ The law enforcement was justified with the concept of nationalism, which served as a rationale for policing adolescent females’ sexuality and forcing them “to obey prevailing discourse and proclaimed interests of the Icelandic nation state.”⁹⁹

The promiscuity of Icelandic women was considered a threat to a nationality, which was characterized as an essential and natural quality. This national ideology was central to Icelandic cultural nationalism, which is considered by many Icelandic scholars to have been deeply influenced by the eighteenth-century German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder.¹⁰⁰ As Icelandic nationality was constructed as a primordial quality, Icelandic national identity was placed superior to all other identities. Therefore,

⁹⁷ *Alþingistíðindi* 1942, A deild. Þingskjöl með málaskrá, 317 - 318.

⁹⁸ Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 189.

⁹⁹ Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður. “Kynferði og þjóðerni.” *Íslenska söguþingið* 28. - 30. maí 1997. *Ráðstefnurit* II. Ritstj. Guðmundur J. Guðmundsson og Eiríkur K. Björnsson. Reykjavík, 1998, 263.

¹⁰⁰ Karlsson Gunnar. “Icelandic Nationalism and the Inspiration of History”, *The Roots of Nationalism: Studies in Northern Europe*, ed. by Rosalind Mitchison. Edinburgh, 1980, 81. - Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra. “Þeir áttu sér móður.” Kvenkenndir þættir í mótun íslenskrar þjóðernisvitundar”, *Fléttur*. Rit Rannsóknarstofu í Kvennafræði 1. Ritstj. Ragnhildur Richter and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir. Reykjavík, 1994, 69. - Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður. “Réttlæting þjóðernis”. - Hálfðanarsson, Guðmundur. “Hvað gerir Íslendinga að þjóð?” *Skírnir* 170. Reykjavík, vor 1996. - Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður. “Kynferði og þjóðerni”, 259.

Icelandic women were expected to “sacrifice their personal will on the national altar, if requested.”¹⁰¹

As I have indicated before, there were no women among the members of the Situation Committee, but they made sure, they were not excluded in the preparation of the provisionary law. The nurse, Sigríður Eiríksdóttir, criticized the Ministry of Justice for not respecting equal rights, by taking no notice of women when the department appointed only young and inexperienced men as members of the “Welfare Committee,” and who besides had little knowledge of “social” affairs in the city. She indicated that there were many presentable professionals among women, such as physicians, nurses, and schoolteachers, who were well acquainted with this social problem, and were therefore capable of assisting and presenting their own suggestions to find a solution. Men could not be trusted alone to solve such a problem that mainly concerned women. She also mentioned her own and other women’s struggle for nearly a decade to recruit women into the police force, among other assignments, to guide adolescent girls, “who have been led astray.” Eiríksdóttir also criticized the authorities for spending huge amounts of money in the defense against diseases and in improving the breeding of the agricultural live stock, and asked if there were anything less at stake “when the country’s youth, both boys and girls are in visible danger.” In her opinion, this particular social evil was not necessarily gendered.¹⁰²

Several days after Eiríksdóttir’s article was published, the Prime Minister, along with two other women, and a male member of Children’s Welfare appointed her

¹⁰¹ Matthíasdóttir, Sigríður. “Kynferði og þjóðerni,” 263.

¹⁰² “Konurnar og velferðarnefndin.” *Morgunblaðið*, 3. sept. 1941, 4.

to make suggestions on a proposal of the legal bill that had already been drafted by the “Situation Committee.”¹⁰³

The draft of the bill was explicitly gendered, as it only addressed girls under eighteen years of age. The first paragraph of the draft prohibited all personal contact between this gendered age group and the servicemen. This provision was very broad since it included not only restrictions on sexual relationships but forbade the girls to visit any military meeting-places. All communication between these groups of people was to be strictly forbidden and made punishable by law. The women’s committee did not accept the gendered attitude and the total ban of all contact between the girls and the military. Women insisted that the proposal be changed and advised that the law should include both boys and girls, although they advocated that limited contact should be allowed between adolescent girls and the servicemen. Even so, they were not to be seen in public accompanying soldiers, unless they were along with their parents or close family members.¹⁰⁴

Compared to the strict rule advocated in the masculine views, the women’s attitude mirrored a much broader tolerance. In spite of admitting that girls were more vulnerable than boys in communication with the servicemen, they objected to an explicitly gendered bill. The chairman of the women’s committee even stated that the nation could possibly enjoy the benefits of the foreign cultural influences, as to lead the nation “to increased maturity.” The masculine discourse on the other hand, presented its

¹⁰³ ÞÍ Stjórnarráð Íslands I. Db.16, nr. 330: Bréf frá Dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneyti 11. sept. 1941, til frú Aðalbjargar Sigurðardóttur formanns nefndarinnar. Þar er tiltekið, að ráðuneytið hafi sent henni, ásamt Guðrúnu Pétursdóttur og Sigríði Eiríksdóttur, skjöl til athugunar, “varðandi siðferðisástandið í Reykjavík.”

¹⁰⁴ ÞÍ. Forsætisráðuneyti:Ý. I - VI, IV.,1 og V.,1.

popular theme regarding a nationalistic moral standard that was reflected in an explanatory statement following the draft. It stated that the “communion between Icelandic women at the age of puberty, and the foreign servicemen stationed over here, is so close that common moral values and Icelandic nationality are threatened by it.”¹⁰⁵

When the bill had been written, one newspaper attributed it to three women, but also indicated that the propositions of the Situation Committee” had served as a base for it. However, Eiríksdóttir was not mentioned among the triad. According to the article she seems to have been replaced by another woman named Jóhanna Knudsen,¹⁰⁶ who had previously worked on a special assignment for the Police, collecting data on women who were suspected of close encounters with the servicemen.

Like Eiríksdóttir, Knudsen was educated as a nurse and became the first Icelandic policewoman.¹⁰⁷ Icelandic feminists seem to have been extremely happy for the woman who had crossed the gender line to become a member of the male-dominated Police force. They expressed their hopes, as they commented on the pioneer’s position in a feminist publication, wishing

this first policewoman all the best, hoping that she will have the good fortune to carry out her work in the best interest of the nation, managing to combine open-mindedness, humanity, and kindness. Traits, that will always be the core of all pioneer work.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ “Konurnar og vandamál æskunnar”. Útvarpserind flutt 19. júní 1943. *Nýtt Kvinnablað*, 4. árg. - 5. tbl., júní, 1943, 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Alþýðublaðið*, 27. sept. 1941, 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ártöl og áfangar í sögu íslenskra kvenna*, Ritstj Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir og Guðrún Dís Jónatanslóttir. Reykjavík, 1998, 50.

¹⁰⁸ *Nýtt Kvinnablað*, 2. árg., - 5. - 6. tbl, jan.- feb. 1942, 9.

Knudsen seems to have been very ambitious in her new assignment. In spring 1941, she presented a very radical proposal to the chief of the police, suggesting solutions to the “situation.” She found it essential to change the law, allowing the police and the children’s welfare committee to arrest and hold on suspicion young people under the age of 21. In addition, she advocated the implementation of an unprecedented vice regulation, which would allow the police to interfere with the city milieu, if it became “unacceptably uncultured.” Included in her ideas was police intervention if young girls of “blameless reputation” attended dances at the military camps. She advocated a special vice squad, a secret moral police that would have its own detention center, which would also serve as a scientific research institute seeking the roots of the evil plague that was about to poison the nation’s life.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Guðmarsson, Bjarni og Jökulsson, Hrafn. *Ástandið*, 194 - 195.

7. A Contagious, Sexual Epidemic

In the winter of 1941, Knudsen was promoted to the director of the Juvenile Correction Office.¹¹⁰ She launched a vigorous battle against the gendered “epidemic” that only affected the female population. One’s contamination by this plague was even worse than death itself, as she concluded in an article in *Morgunblaðið* in late 1943:

This rot spreads like an epidemic, and is in my opinion more dangerous than any other plague that could hit this country. Homes are defenseless against it and children’s schools are hard pressed. It is not an easy thing for parents to lose promising children to the grave, but to me it seems far more fortunate than having to witness the horror of them becoming victims of this plague.¹¹¹

It is quite clear that Knudsen supported the medical discourse on the subject, as she considered the close relationships between Icelandic girls and the servicemen to be a contagious disease. Moreover, she also warned against the threat to Icelandic nationality, as she demonstrated that the girls preferred the soldiers’ language and their customs, and dreamed of their country. She stated that “they would happily change their nationality, if they were able to do so, as they despise their own nation and their nationality.” Knudsen also predicted that many of the next generation mothers would become “moral wretches.”¹¹² In short, these young women were denying to be what Yuval-Davis calls not “just the biological reproducers of the nation, but also its cultural reproducers, often given the task of guardians of ‘culture’ who are responsible for

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 194.

¹¹¹ “Eigum við að eftirláta hernum stúlkubörnin”. *Morgunblaðið*, 30. des. 1943.

¹¹² Ibid.

transmitting it to the children”¹¹³ These ideas were put at the heart of the Icelandic national discourse, as it was considered to be the ultimate female subject’s duty, to carry what Kubena Mercer has called the “burden of representation”, and Amrita Chhachhi calls “forced identities”. Leaving women no choice, the future of the Icelandic nation rested on the “delicate shoulders of the Icelandic women”, as the writer Steinþór Sigurðsson put it, when criticizing the encounters of Icelandic women and the foreign servicemen.¹¹⁴

Knudsen’s language was different from Sigurdsson’s but the idea is the same. She also participated in the dominant discourse on the subject, which was mainly masculine, as she demonstrated the national danger that could be caused by female promiscuity. As a spokesperson on behalf of the authorities, she shaped her new position according to the public policy that was constructed by this discourse. Female promiscuity had to be battled to protect Icelandic nationality.

Knudsen seems to have considered the Juvenile Correction Center a detective establishment. She spied on young girls whom she suspected to have strayed off the straight and narrow path. She launched investigations of adolescent girls, interrogating them for hours, trying to force them to describe in detail, all contacts they might have had with foreign soldiers. The policewoman interrogated parents, close relatives, employers, and friends as well. The suspects were usually encouraged to inform on their female friends who found themselves in a similar situation. A rumor of a bad reputation was often enough of an excuse to summon a girl to the center for questioning, as the

¹¹³ Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*, 116.

following testimony indicates: “She has been summoned to see me, because she has had a very bad reputation since the occupation. She has often been seen at military dances, at the club Björninn . . . and other places in the company of soldiers. One day last year, she was noticed at the hotel Hekla . . . where soldiers were present.” The policewoman also mentioned that she had asked the sister of this girl “who also has a bad reputation” to see her at the office.¹¹⁵

Information from people who claimed to have witnessed promiscuous behavior of adolescent girls was also greatly appreciated and it often led to apprehension of suspects. Knudsen reports of a taxi driver, “who called me anonymously, informing me about a girl by the name Elísabet, 15 years of age, who worked at the restaurant Svalan, and appeared to be very promiscuous in her conduct.” Last night, he had noticed her at a dance held in one of the barracks, where her behavior had caught people’s attention. He reported that she had “roamed between the soldiers with extremely ‘foolish and frivolous behavior’, acting as if she was totally out of control.” Surprisingly, the girl did not seem intoxicated to the driver.¹¹⁶ Knudsen told another adolescent girl that she had learned from an outside source that “she had been seen one night dressed in an evening gown. She was overheard, while walking to a car that she was on her way to a dance

¹¹⁴ Sigurðsson, Steindór. “Sögur úr ástandinu.” *Kvenfólkið og setuliðið* III. Reykjavík, 1941, 5 - 6. - Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. *Mannkynbætur*, 110.

¹¹⁵ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 1188/1942: Ungmennadómur Reykjavíkur: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 1, 16. maí 1942, 1 - 2.

¹¹⁶ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2934/1942: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 253, 20. nóv. 1942. 1.

...” at a certain barrack.¹¹⁷ It is quite clear that the policewoman did not consider these girls to be sexual victims. On the contrary, she feared their sexual agency.

The evenings seem to have been the appropriate time to catch promiscuous, adolescent girls in the act. The Icelandic policewoman would probably have shared the view of the American colonel, who stated that the Australian girls “were ‘developed’ at fifteen years and waited on street corners to catch Americans.” As Marilyn Lake has pointed out, the girls were either “vagrants” with no regular employment, or “they were ‘Jekyll and Hydes,’ shop and office workers by day and sexual adventurers by night.”¹¹⁸

The policewoman cruised the city at night on her own to oversee the behavior of the young and adventurous daughters of Reykjavík. Her working hours seem to have been extremely long in some cases, according to her records. She reported for example that she had followed a certain vehicle, from 21:30 until midnight, “because it carried two very young girls in the company of soldiers.”¹¹⁹ She regularly checked out the most popular restaurants and meeting places in town. There she often caught her suspects. That is how she began to interfere with an adolescent girl, whom she had noticed working at the restaurant Svalan. To make matters worse, according to Knudsen, the girl “had applied a lot of make up.” The policewoman noted that soldiers were frequent

¹¹⁷ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 49/1942: Lögregluskýrsla nr.106, 14. júlí 1942, 2.

¹¹⁸ Lake, Marilyn: “Female Desires,” 438.

¹¹⁹ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 1353/1942: Lögregluskýrsla ónr.. 27. apríl 1942, 1.

guests at the restaurant, and remarked that she had been “forced to remove several girls away from the place.”¹²⁰

The word soon got around in the small town and rumors circulated about severe punishments that awaited young girls, if they happened to be caught and confronted by the policewoman. As one can imagine, it was often rather difficult to get terrified girls to plead guilty. For example, one girl of fifteen admitted to the policewoman that she had “lied” in the beginning of the interrogation, because she had heard that Knudsen was “so evil towards kids, that she would snatch them and send them away for five years. Therefore, I had planned to lie, to make sure that you couldn’t send me away.”¹²¹

Another girl at the same age had in the wake of an interrogation been ordered to see a female physician assigned by the Juvenile Observation Center to perform a pelvic examination. She was to get a certification to prove that she was still a virgin. Fearing her destiny, the girl had not obeyed the instructions. Instead, she chose to go to another physician, unrelated to the Juvenile Authorities, for the examination. The girl’s request did not make any sense to the physician, who was taken aback by the whole procedure and he decided to call the policewoman: “He asked why this girl needed such a certification, and whether this was necessary. He told me that the girl had come to him, because she feared to be put in a ‘concentration camp.’ . . .” The physician refused to examine the girl and issue the certification. In the end, the girl did not escape examination by the female physician, who worked for the Juvenile Observation

¹²⁰ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2741/1942: Lögregluskýrsla nr.574, 20. sept. 1942, 1.

¹²¹ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2934/1942: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 255, 2. nóv. 1942, 5.

Center.¹²² Her fear and suspicion also proved somewhat well founded, as the Juvenile Court issued the following sentence in her case: “It is proven that she has lived a promiscuous life with foreign servicemen, here in the city and neighboring townships Therefore, it is deemed suitable . . . to determine that she shall be placed in a private country-home, but if the provision turns out to be unsatisfactory, she shall be transferred to a reformatory.”¹²³

The suspects were sometimes removed from their homes with a police force, if they refused to show up at the Juvenile Observation Center for interrogation. It even happened that Knudsen picked the suspects up herself at their homes. She reported an instance when a girl of almost eighteen years, used every means to escape her destiny.

She was so cocky and insolent in her speech that I decided to ask my driver to call for police backup. When the girl overheard our conversations, she became hysterical: she jumped up on her bed and broke a window above it, attacked me and kicked me over and over and attempted to beat me, and threw a sooty kettle at me. She screamed so loud that neighbors came to check what was going on. I was forced to hold her with her mother’s assistance. I also removed the key from the front door. The mother cried, asking her either to go with me, or me to let her go, if she promised not to go out at nights anymore When the Police arrived, I had let the girl loose, but the mother was still struggling with her. They moved into the bedroom We heard the mother weeping bitterly, and said that the girl had gone out through the window.¹²⁴

¹²² ÞÍ Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2579/1942: Lögregluskýrsla ónr., 11. júní 1942, 1.

¹²³ ÞÍ Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2579/1942: Útskrift úr Lögregluþingbók Reykjavíkur, 1 - 2.

¹²⁴ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 11/1943: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 311, 5. jan. 1943.

The policewoman decided to give in, but only because the stubborn suspect would reach the age of eighteen within a few days, depriving the juvenile police of any jurisdiction over her.

Contrary to juvenile authorities, the delinquents themselves generally not always consider the restraint reforming at all. A letter from a teen-age girl who did time at the reformatory of Kleppjárnsreykir describes those feelings:

My dearest sister.

I want to write you a few lines, just for fun, although I spoke with you the other day. As you know, the connection was shut down because I did not watch the minutes. . . . This is how things have developed here, and it's getting worse all the time. It has been torture here, but never as bad as now. You know how I was when I was home. I was disrespectful. Now, however, I know you will not recognize me as the same person because I have become so cranky and ill-tempered that no human being can deal with me.

The girl also describes the solitary confinement she was put through after having visited a farm in the area with several other female delinquents without permission:

. . . I was put in a cell, where the windows had been so tightly covered with wood boards, that one could not even put a finger between them. It is dark inside. I ask the matron whether I am supposed to be there alone. At 11pm that night, Gunna is allowed to sleep there with me . . . the next day she leaves and I remain alone. . . . at 1pm the matron brings the food, and she tells me that I am to stay in there until I have improved. . . . When she is gone, I get so mad. The anger boils within me so I cannot control myself. I attack the window and do not stop until I have broken five of the wood boards . . . the second time, when we were confined to the cell, we broke the bed, the window and the door and went out. End of story . . . ¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Þí. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 1188/1942: Afrit af bréfi frá stúlku, sem dæmd var til hælisvistar, vorið 1942. Bréfið var ritað á Kleppjárnsreykjum og dagsett 17. febrúar 1943. Stafsetning hefur verið lagfærð á stöku stað.

In some cases, parents tried to protect their offspring against the juvenile authorities, as indicated by following event:

One night, a 16-year-old girl had escaped from the detention center. The police discovered her in her own home the next morning, in bed. Two policemen were sent to the house to bring her in for questioning at the Juvenile Correction Office, but they returned empty handed. “Her mother was furious and totally refused to let her go. She had maintained that the girl had had fever the night before, but tomorrow she would go to work at a farm in the country so all her clothes were being washed at this time. The girl herself also firmly refused to go with the policemen. The policeman said he would not want to take her by force, unless he had a direct court order to do so.”¹²⁶

It also occurred that furious parents showed up at Knudsen’s office to give her a piece of their minds. She reports of a couple coming to her office one afternoon, and the husband “was so furiously angry that he hardly seemed coherent. He accused me of all kinds of evil doings, cursing the police, the Juvenile Court, the reformatory at Kleppjárnsreykir, and the government, prohibiting all further interference with his daughter...” threatening to let a well known attorney “protect himself and his family.”¹²⁷

Parents were definitely not happy to have uniformed policemen picking their daughters up at workplaces for interrogations. An angry father condemned the police for their working methods: “I don’t need to be grateful for polite conduct against my daughter today at her workplace. I know it is in but few places, where such a mean and

¹²⁶ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 13/1943: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 256, 23. nóv. 1942, 1.

shameful method is practiced” He wondered if “the person, who sent this ‘gentle’ policeman, had ordered him “to call out the girl’s name,” or if he had decided it by himself. He mentioned that many people had watched as his daughter was told to leave the place in the custody of the policeman, as a criminal.

Such methods are greatly humiliating for all of us, especially the girl herself. I ask; is there a law to support this? I doubt it Children of the bourgeoisie would never have been treated like this Jóhanna K. [Knudsen] promised that she would not be picked up at the workplace. If this was done with her knowledge, then other things begin to fall in place.¹²⁸

The father seems to have been right when discussing class as a fundamental factor when explaining the behavior of the policemen. Most of the victims of the “sexual epidemic” in Iceland belonged to the working class, or at least those who were apprehended by the police did. The few exceptions were usually explained by a conflict between the girls and their closest family members on the home front. Desperate parents thus sometimes used the Juvenile Correction Office as a tool to control their rebellious daughters, who did not respect their authority.

The newspaper *Þjóðólfur* stated that among the adolescent girls, who accompanied the foreign soldiers, one could see “side by side, troublesome youth and girls from the most respected homes of the town A great threat, unknown in Icelandic history, lurked at every doorstep of every home in the country”¹²⁹ As Björnsdóttir has demonstrated it was a common view that the majority of the Icelandic women who socialized with soldiers, were “poorly educated, immoral,

¹²⁷ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 1090/1942: Lögregluskýrsla nr. 521, 7. júlí, 1.

¹²⁸ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík. Mál nr. 2742/1942: A letter from a father of a female suspect of juvenile delinquency, 12. nóv. 1942. The letter was probably sent to the Juvenile Court.

unpatriotic, and ignorant low class women, who were driven by wish for prosperity and glamour. ” However, based on her study of Icelandic women, who married American servicemen in the war, she reaches a different conclusion, by demonstrating that the war-brides involved came from all layers of the society. They ranged from daughters of unskilled laborers to those of high-ranking government ministers. Björnsdóttir has also pointed out that majority of the Icelandic war brides got higher education.¹³⁰

I have investigated a random example of 40 cases that were handled by the Juvenile Correction Office during 1941 and 1942, involving criminalization of adolescent girls’ sexuality. The majority of the suspects were tried before the Juvenile Court, and confined to private country-homes. At least eleven of the delinquents involved in my study had to expiate their sentence at the reformatory at Kleppjárnsreykir that was stationed in a rural area in the western part of Iceland. Some of the delinquents, however, like Thora were confined to the reformatory after an unsuccessful stay at private home.

According to the Juvenile Correction Office records, the majority of the sexual criminals were daughters of workers, fishermen, and farmers. Most of them did not get any form of advanced education, working as factory-girls and servants as they finished mandatory schooling. Both their parents brought up twenty-two of the delinquents involved in my study. Five of the girls had stepfathers, and two of them had stepmothers. Seven delinquents were daughters of single mothers (three of the mothers

¹²⁹ *Þjóðólfur*, 8. sept. 1941, 1.

¹³⁰ Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra: “Uheldige kvinner,” 159.

were widowed), and four of the girls involved lived with their widowed fathers. The juvenile delinquents often came from rather large families with poor economic means.

The historian, Eggert Þór Bernharðsson has studied police records from the years 1942 - 1943 and concluded that many of the female delinquents came from bad social environments, and broken families.¹³¹ However, more than 50% of the delinquents involved in my study did not come from broken families. I would argue that the juvenile authorities looked for juvenile delinquency among large working-class families, and among single mothers. Daughters of single mothers seem to have caused a particular suspicion by the Juvenile Correction Office, and in a few cases, their mothers were also suspected of having close contact with the troops. As Ellen Ross has pointed out, experts in the 1940s and 1950s “blamed mothers for their children’s ‘juvenile delinquency’ or ‘maternal deprivation’”¹³² As referred to above, the Situation Girls came from all layers of the society. However, the juvenile authorities seem to have focused on the working class, as the main source for female juvenile delinquency.

¹³¹ Bernharðsson, Eggert Þór. *Bóraböggjar og olnbogabörn*, 20 - 22.

¹³² Ross, Ellen: *Love and Toil. Motherhood in Outcast London 1870 -1918*. New York, Oxford: New York, Oxford, 1993, 5.

8. Comparative Analyzes

Knudsen's ideas about the treatment of female juvenile delinquency were certainly new in Iceland, but they had in fact prevailed among many female reformers, for example in the United States, since the beginning of the twentieth century, following rapid change in women's status.¹³³ This was especially characteristic among educated women involved in the Progressive movement, who

disagreed with the Victorian assumption of girlhood sexual passivity and victimization. Instead, they acknowledged female sexual agency and thought of young women who engaged in illicit encounters as "delinquents" in need of guidance and control. These reformers no longer blamed evil men for young women's moral downfall, but rather, influenced by recent trends in the social sciences, they looked to societal and family environments to explain sexual delinquency among young working-class women.¹³⁴

During the Progressive Era (1890 – 1920), American "juvenile courts tried girls almost exclusively for moral offenses, that is, real or suspected sexual behavior, and sentenced them to years away from their families."¹³⁵

¹³³ Freedman, E. & D'Emilio, J. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. - Abrams, Laura S. and Curran, Laura. "Wayward Girls and Virtuous Women: Social Workers and Female Juvenile Delinquency in the Progressive Era." *Affilia*, vol.15, No.1. Spring 2000.

¹³⁴ Odem, Mary E. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States 1885 - 1920*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995, 95 - 96.

¹³⁵ Abrams, Laura S. and Curran, Laura. "Wayward Girls", 49. See also Chesney-Lind, M. "Girls' Crime and Woman's: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency." *Crime and Delinquency*, 35, 1989, 5 - 29. - Chesney-Lind, M., & Shelden, R. J. *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1992. - Messerschmidt, J. "Feminism, Criminology, and the Rise of the Female Sex "Delinquent," 1880 – 1930." *Contemporary Crises*, 11, 1987, 243 - 263. - Odem, M. *Delinquent Daughters*. - Schlossman, S. J., & Wallach, S. "The Crime of Precocious Sexuality: Female Juvenile Delinquency in the Progressive Era." *Harvard Educational Review* 48, 65 - 94. - Schneider, E. C. *In the Web of Class: Delinquents and Reformers in Boston, 1810s – 1930s*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.

Therefore, Progressive reformers called for a gendered state intervention, by focusing more explicitly on working-class females, instead of their male partners. They lobbied for “the establishment of special police forces, juvenile courts, detention centers, and reformatories to monitor and correct sexual misconduct among young women and girls.”¹³⁶ One of their first goals was the hiring of policewomen, and they insisted that female professionals should control the new institutions that were operated to treat and correct the female juvenile delinquents.¹³⁷ Knudsen, among other Icelandic professionals in the health and social sector seems to have been familiar with the above-mentioned procedure. The Icelandic detention center was in many ways operated on the American model, as it served “as a temporary ‘home’ but also as a center for scientific diagnosis of delinquent youths. In the United States, physicians and psychologists conducted physical and mental examinations in order to identify mental problems that could have caused the juvenile delinquent behavior. “In addition, all female inmates faced compulsory pelvic exams to determine if they were virgins and compulsory testing and treatment for venereal disease.”¹³⁸ In Iceland, pelvic exams were only conducted when girls were suspected of sexual intercourse with soldiers, and had denied the accusations.

As Abrams and Curran have demonstrated, criminologists “posited a strong link between female criminality and low intelligence.” Therefore, caseworkers, as well as physicians and sociologists, “focused on feeble-mindedness as a determinate of female

¹³⁶ Odem, Mary E. *Delinquent Daughters*, 96.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

sexual delinquency.”¹³⁹ These ideas seem to have led to mental examinations of Icelandic female sexual delinquents as well, as these inspections mostly involved testing for intelligence quotient. The Icelandic Surgeon General did indeed worry about the harm that mentally underdeveloped girls might cause, as he wrote an explanatory statement following his legal proposal on sterilization, which in 1938 passed as law in Iceland. He pointed out that these “girls become prostitutes in large numbers, bear illegitimate children at the first stage of puberty age, and often have difficulties fathering [their offspring], spread venereal diseases, and all kinds of filth....” He also claimed that feeble-minded women posed more threat than men of the same mental capacity, since “even good-looking ones” usually did poorly in the free competition for female attention. On the other hand, feeble-minded women did “not lack male companionship.”¹⁴⁰

The Surgeon General did not mention the fact that ‘feeble-minded’ women were more likely to be led astray by men and sexually mistreated. The juvenile authorities seem to have followed the medical discourse on this subject, as the intellectual capacity of the Situation Girls was to be measured scientifically. Their bodies were also clinically explored, with and without clothes. Michel Foucault has pointed out that since sexuality became “a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try to detect it – as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom – in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of

¹³⁹ Abrams, Laura S., and Curran, Laura. “Wayward Girls”, 60 - 61. - Odem, Mary E: *Delinquent Daughters*, 98 – 99.

¹⁴⁰ Jónsson, Vilmundur. *Afkynjanir og vananir. Greinargerð fyrir frumvarpi til laga um að heimila í viðeigandi tilfellum aðgerðir á fólki, er koma í veg fyrir, að það auki kyn sitt*. Reykjavík, 1937, 40 - 41, 45. - Karlsdóttir, Unnur B. *Mannkynbætur*, 134 -135.

the skin, or among all the signs of behavior.”¹⁴¹ The records of the Juvenile Correction Office indicate that this was certainly the case in dealing with adolescent female sexual delinquency in wartime Iceland.

¹⁴¹ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I. An Introduction*. New York: Random House, 1990, 44.

9. The Americanization of Icelandic Femininity

As I mentioned above, the Situation Woman was described as ‘highly modern’ and ‘flamboyant’ in her appearance. She fell head over heels in love with foreign men and their exotic language. She was even suspected of wanting to give up her own nationality because of her ecstasy for the foreign culture, as Jóhanna Knudsen indicated.

Mary Louise Roberts, who has studied the construction of the “modern woman” in postwar France, has demonstrated that this particular female identity offered “provocative, familiar symbols between old and new worlds,” by quoting a Frenchman, who in 1925, described the new image in the following words:

The innocent young thing (*l’oie blanche*) of yesterday has given way to the *garconne* of today. In this way as well, the war, like a devastating wind, has had an influence. Add to this sports, movies, dancing, cars, the unhealthy need to be always on the move – this entire Americanization of the old Europe ...¹⁴²

The police records documented by the Juvenile Correction Office in Reykjavík at the beginning of the 1940s indicate the same anxiety towards Americanization, as reflected in the appearance and behavior of the Situation Girl. The majority of these girls were 15 and 16-years-old. There were few exceptions, however, of younger girls whose behavior disturbed the juvenile authorities. A police record concern about the 13-year-old Anna reflects a typical example of the new female image that was emerging: “The girl is tall, but does not appear particularly developed in other ways. The lips are heavily painted with lipstick, and she carries a box of facial powder in her pocket. She dresses rather carelessly.” The policewoman who interrogated Anna as a suspect of sexual relationships with the servicemen and petty theft documented this description.

¹⁴² Roberts, Mary Louise. *Civilization Without Sexes. Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917 – 1927*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, 9.

After a lot of fuss and heartbreaking crying, she admitted having stolen money in a public swimming hall. She had spent the loot on socks, silk stockings, sweets, and movie tickets. She pleaded innocent, however, to the charges of having any relationship with foreign troops. During the interrogation, a visitor interrupted the policewoman and the suspect was asked to step out of the office for a moment. She used the opportunity to sneak out and go home. The same evening, the policewoman went to pick Anna up again at her house. She reported that when facing Anna again, “she did not seem worried at all, having painted her lips even more red than they were earlier that day.” Anna’s neighbor, a female schoolteacher was then asked by the Juvenile Correction Office to give information about the suspect. She stated having “seen the girl outside after dinnertime, wearing a lot of make up.” She also recalled one evening meeting the suspect on the street after nine o’clock accompanied by another girl. According to the neighbor, Anna “had put on a great deal of make up, and wore remarkably high heels.” However, she had never seen the suspect with soldiers, in spite of rumors thereof that circulated in the neighborhood.¹⁴³

Another girl of thirteen, María, also testified that she had been engaged to a soldier for a short period, but she had already broken up with him, when apprehended. She symbolized the sexual and cultural anxieties that represented the image of the new Hollywood version of Icelandic femininity. Her potential juvenile delinquency was closely connected to her flamboyant appearance

The girl is very developed physically, and could from appearance look to be 17-18 years old. Her lips are painted,

¹⁴³ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómarara í Reykjavík: Mál nr. 49/1942. Ungmennaeftirlitið nr. 21/1942. Lögregluskýrsla ónr., 16.júlí 1942, 1.

flaming red, nails are long and sharp, and she walks on high heels. Her attitude is also very mature. She is very polite, responds intelligently, but her self-confidence seems to be overly excessive.¹⁴⁴

As an example of the girl's self-confidence, Knudsen added to the report that she had mentioned to the girl that she considered her far too young for marriage engagement. The girl replied: "First of all, you must consider that in America, people are much more liberal towards age, than here."¹⁴⁵ A similar description was given of the 15-year-old Erla, who admitted during interrogation that she was engaged to a soldier: "She is upset and makes one attempt to get out . . . she is ridiculously made up, with excessive lipstick, colored eyebrows, and nail polish, carrying a flaming red handbag, gloves and a ribbon in her hair."¹⁴⁶

The age of innocence was coming to an end in Iceland. The Americanization of the Old World had stretched its arm to the westernmost corner of Europe. Changes were taking place as a new female identity was being constructed; the Icelandic woman as a sexual being.¹⁴⁷ She was not necessarily considered as a potential wife and a mother.

The Situation Girl expressed everything foreign in her flamboyant appearance and behavior. During interrogations, several delinquents admitted their passion for cigarettes. A girl of 17, admitted that she had just begun to smoke: "It is awesome. I inhale the smoke, usually half a pack per day, and even more when I get it from the

¹⁴⁴ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík: Ungmennaeftirlitið, nr. 24/1942. Lögregluskýrsla nr.1 , 16. júlí 1942, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 3 - 4.

¹⁴⁶ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík: Mál nr. 1090/1942. Lögregluskýrsla 6. júlí 1943.

¹⁴⁷ Þorvaldsdóttir, Þorgerður. "Af fegurðardísum, ástandskonum og fjallkonum. Lesið í táknmyndir hins kvenlega í íslensku menningarumhverfi." Unpublished article, 2000, 4.

servicemen.”¹⁴⁸ Another girl of 15 expressed a similar weakness for cigarettes: “It is terrifically good to smoke, but I just smoke three or four cigarettes per day. I inhale, and I would not dream of giving it up.” She also admitted her passion for “riding in fancy cars.”¹⁴⁹

Cigarettes and fancy cars seem to have appealed to the female juvenile delinquent. Her silk stockings and fiery red lips and nails, the embodiment of female sexual attractiveness, signified the Situation Woman. The redder the lips, the deeper she had fallen. As Þorvaldsdóttir pointed out: “The feminine, gendered body of the Situation Woman blurred the boundaries between what was Icelandic and foreign.”¹⁵⁰

Marilyn Lake has argued that in Australia “a new understanding of femininity” emerged, revolving around “sexuality, sexual attractiveness and youthfulness” in the 1930s.

The prize for female consumers was “sex-appeal”. Femininity as an attribute of class distinction (emphasizing white hands, soft skin, refinement, daintiness, and other ladylike qualities) was succeeded by a sexualized femininity, democratically available.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík: Mál nr. 1181/1942.

¹⁴⁹ ÞÍ. Skjalasafn sakadómara í Reykjavík: Mál nr. 1420/1942.

¹⁵⁰ Þorvaldsdóttir, Þorgerður. “Af fegurðardísum, ástandskonum og fjallkonum”, 4.

¹⁵¹ Lake, Marilyn. “Female Desires”, 430, 433.

She has demonstrated how the “conduct of the war sexualized the Australian female population . . .” pointing to “the significance of age” as the “main differentiator of women in these processes, as opposed to class as often is argued.”¹⁵²

According to my study this was also the case in wartime Iceland, as the sexualized femininity seem to have been the trademark of the young from all layers of the society, although the authorities concentrated their attention on working-class girls.

The adventurous Situation Girl represented the new image of femininity. She was depicted as flamboyant, uncivilized, self-confident, sexually available, and working class. Her constitution as a sex object connected her directly to the image of the prostitute. However, she indulged in the sexual act for pleasure, not to gain any cash reward. She did not belong in the prevailing discourse, nor did the Australian “Amateur”.

Hollywood’s popular culture and American consumer society seem to have created the new sexual being. Icelandic girls identified with the female heroines in Hollywood movies that were so immensely popular in the country at that time. They themselves were the objects of desire and admiration.¹⁵³

Their sexual agency was deeply feared, as they were depicted as sexually aggressive creatures, painting their faces like warriors before sneaking out in the dark to catch soldiers on street corners. Sexual agency was no longer attributed to men only, which threatened Icelandic manhood. Nancy F. Cott has pointed out that consumerism played a big role in the making of the modern woman in the 1920s in America, by

¹⁵² Lake, Marilyn. “Female Desires.” 431.

¹⁵³ Þorvaldsdóttir Þorgerður. “Af fegurðardísnum, ástandskonum og fjallkonum.” 4.

superimposing modern emblems on women's traditional priorities. No longer diffident, delicate, and submissive, the ideal woman was portrayed as vigorous and gregarious. She liked to have fun, liked men, and was attractive of them. Of course, sex appeal was big business.¹⁵⁴

The appearance of the Icelandic Situation Girl divided the Icelandic community into "us" and "them". By stepping over the line from traditional womanhood to the modern image of Americanized femininity, she came to be regarded as the threatening "other," who had to be marginalized and cut off from civil society, until she converted. This starts to make sense in the light of Yuval-Davis' argument that women, in their "proper" behavior, and their "proper" clothes" embody the line, which signifies the collectivity's boundaries.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Cott, Nancy F. "The Modern Woman of the 1920s, American Style." In Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot. *A History of Women in the West. Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Francoise Thébaud. Cambridge, London: The Belknap Press, 1989, 89.

¹⁵⁵ Yuval-Davies, Nira. *Gender and Nation*, 46.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined events, perspectives and contemporary discourses that led to the criminalization of adolescent female sexuality in Iceland during World War II. Emphasizing Joan Scott's argument that "gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power," I have sought to demonstrate the usefulness of gender as an analytical tool, which became the primary pole of power relations concerning the problem of sexual relationships between adolescent girls and foreign servicemen. In spite of opposite political discourses, the dominant discourse was generally characterized by the ideology that female sexuality should be regarded as a biological resource, and had to be protected against other "races" that could pollute the nation's gene pool and wipe out Icelandic culture altogether.

This racial ideology was not just about skin color, rather it was directed against the outsiders - the foreign blood. The Icelandic men's threatened manhood took on a patriotic coloration, blaming women for moral weakness when facing the troops, depicting them as primitive and uncivilized beings with the appearance of prostitutes. Icelandic women, who dated foreign troops, stepped over the line that signified the nation's boundaries. Their flamboyant appearance and fascination with Anglo-Saxon men and their culture was considered a threat to Icelandic nationalism. World War II led to the Americanization of Icelandic female identity, which was mirrored in romantic fascination among women with American movies, the 'exotic' English language, flashy clothes, and make up. Yuval-Davis's theory is revealed quite clearly in the Icelandic national discourse, as the Situation Women failed to become the bearers of the collectivity's identity and honor. Because of their promiscuity, Iceland was losing its

place among “cultural” nations and was becoming “a training center for harlots.” The Situation Women’s lack of Icelandicness fabricated them into the threatening ‘other’. They were marginalized, as harsh legal actions were taken to protect and police their sexuality.

The Icelandic men, usually, did not blame the soldiers for their womanizing, regarding it as a natural phenomenon that was unavoidable in a wartime situation. It was even suggested that the military authorities should import foreign prostitutes like any other war supply for the troops. As a member of the executive power, the director of the Juvenile Correction Office, Jóhanna Knudsen supported the masculine view, as she participated in shaping the public policy, which was constructed through the dominant masculine discourse. The executive power was consequently masculine.

Icelandic women generally represented a totally different perspective, as they looked for a social and an environmental rationalization when discussing the Situation. The most outspoken even touched on the theme of sexual liberation. It was indicated that the ‘social evil’ was not a novelty in Iceland, but had been a well known problem in the capital city long before the foreign servicemen put their feet on Icelandic ground. Men were blamed for manufacturing the Situation with shocking headlines in the media, following the Situation Report. Women on the other hand, commonly reflected on the need for a social crusade to help the unfortunate females through the difficulties of puberty. The masculine voices recommended, however, that the “prostitutes” should be punished by shaving their heads, and collectively removed from civilized society.

Both parties agreed that a legal action was needed to solve the problem. Two leading discourses presented solutions to the problem. On the one hand, there was the

judicial view, which was commonly favored by women. On the other hand was the medical opinion that depicted sexual promiscuity as a contagious and dangerous disease. This view was mainly represented by the prevalent discourse that was dominantly masculine, and became the official policy leading to the criminalization of adolescent female sexuality. After the Situation Report was made official, Provisionary law was passed that became the foundation to submit under-aged girls to the mercy of the Juvenile Court, which tried the girls for real or suspected sexual behavior, and sentenced them to rural homes or to a reformatory.

Governmental interference in private lives of adolescent girls was often met with hostility by parents and the victims themselves, as the suspects were often treated as precarious criminals. Some stubborn and frustrated juveniles resorted to physical violence to escape their destiny. Parents expressed their shame and humiliation as uniformed police officers picked up their daughters at crowded workplaces. Some even refused to hand over their daughters to the juvenile authorities, while others cursed the harsh tactics and threatened to seek protection for their families through legal actions. It was also a common view among the parents, that the juvenile authority's interference only made matters worse.

Harsh criticism on behalf of Children's Welfare apparently encouraged a newly elected Minister of Justice, a former Supreme Court judge to shut down the Juvenile Court and related institutions, after they had operated for a year and a half. All former decisions of the court were then annulled. Although the unfortunate female delinquents were set free, they were marked for life by their reputation as the infamous Situation

Girls. Sixty years have past from the occupation, but the negative concept “the Situation” is still somewhat a taboo in Iceland, especially among the older generation.

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