

# Recommendation from the assessment committee on the application on promotion to professor in sexology from Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad and Elsa Almås.



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In accordance with letter from the HR-department of the University of Agder 1<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 the following committee was set:

- Professor Osmo Kontula, Population Research Institute, Family Federation of Finland
- Professor Soley Bender, University of Iceland
- Professor Eli Coleman, University of Minnesota

Head of department Tor-Ivar Karlsen, University of Agder acted as secretary, leaded and co-ordinated the meetings.

The committee thanks the University of Agder for the assignment and will hereby give the following report:

### **Assessment criteria**

- The committee have based the assessment on “Forskrift om ansettelse og opprykk i undervisnings- og forskerstillinger” (Regulations concerning appointment and promotion to positions in teaching and research) (FOR-2006-02-09-129) where it is stated that the basis for qualification as professor is an academic level in accordance with established international or national standards within the discipline at hand, here sexology. In addition the committee have based the assessment on the document “Expert assessment of applicants to academic positions” from the Human Resources Office at the University of Agder.
- The committee has interpreted the requirements for promotion to professor as follows:
  - The applicant must be qualified as “førsteamanuensis” (research associate professor) which is equivalent to PhD.
  - It is expected scientific publications at high level and theoretical depth, generally regarded as three doctoral dissertations or ten to fifteen scientific works. In addition, the applicants must provide a complete list of all publications and other documentable activities invoked as basis for assessment.
  - The requirements for international publication suggest that a substantial proportion of the works should be published in an international language and in internationally recognized publication channels.
  - Co-authorship is to be regarded as positive and demonstrates ability to cooperation and contribution in professional networks. Joint works, however, do not count in relation to the work of equivalent level and scope in which the applicant is the sole author. This applies particularly where there are several authors and where the responsibility and distribution of tasks is not clarified.
  - Pedagogical qualifications are emphasized.

## About the applicants

The applicants are:

- Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad
- Elsa Almås

According to the document “Expert assessment of applicants to academic positions” from the University of Agder, the assessment committee have assessed each applicant. Missing qualifications are discussed separately in the overall assessment of each applicant.

The review of the applicants follows the template specified by the University of Agder:

- Assessment of educational background and degrees
- Assessment of academic qualifications
- Assessment of teaching qualifications
- Assessment of other professional qualifications
- Assessment of work experience and other relevant activity

## Assessment of each applicant

### Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad

The applicant is currently holding a 30% position as associate professor (førstelektor) at the Sexology section at the Department of Psychosocial Health, Faculty of Health and Sports sciences at the University of Agder. The position is scheduled to be increased to 50%. The applicant is also working as GP and sexologist at Grimstad MPAT-institute in Grimstad in addition to work as a clinical sexologist at “Sexologisenteret NB22” in Oslo.

#### Assessment of educational background and degrees

The applicant was authorized as a medical doctor in 1979 and as a specialist in clinical sexology (NACS) in 2001. The applicant has also followed 85 courses and congresses in psychology and sexology from 1982 to 2010 in addition to individual supervision with specialist in psychiatry from 1972 to 1976 and with specialist in clinical psychology and sexology from 1986 – 2011, in addition to 120 hours of group supervision in family therapy, group supervision concerning sexological problems with therapists from the Family advise office in Kristiansand. The educational line is consistent and related to the field of sexology.

1. *The committee finds the applicants educational backgrounds and degrees relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicants educational backgrounds and degrees relevant for the position of professor.*



### Assessment of academic qualifications

The applicant have in the application listed 118 lectures, talks and/or presentations. Out of these 58 in high academic level (18 at universities, university colleges or equivalent institutions outside Norway). In addition, the applicant have listed 69 presentations at scientific congresses thereof 13 as invited speaker. The CV lists further 32 scientific publications where 23 of these are peer reviewed, 6 books where 4 of these are peer reviewed, 8 book chapters where 6 are peer reviewed.

The applicant has put forward 15 scientific works for evaluation where 7 are published in in Norwegian peer reviewed journals and 8 in an English language in international peer reviewed journals. The applicant is first author or sole author of 7 publications and equal co-author with Elsa Almås in 8 publications.

The applicant has over the years been contributing substantially to the theoretical development in the field but contribution to empirical research, either quantitative or qualitative studies, is very limited.

### Work 1

Benestad ,Esben; Grünfeldt, Berthold; Krøvel, Bernt: Heterofil transvestisme. English title: Heterosexual Tranvestism. The Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association Vol. 106, 1986, 2069-2071.

#### Description

Heterosexual transvestism was scarcely described in professional literature, and if described the descriptions were based on case reports concerning transvestites that have been treated by psychologists or psychiatrist for different personality problems and sufferings.

These authors have performed interviews and sent fifty questionnaires to Norwegian transvestites belonging to an interest organization for this group (FPE-NE). The letters are derived from the original English: Free Personality Expression-Northern Europe. Both internally and externally the association only uses the acronym. 31 out of 50 answered the questionnaire. The respondents represent a resourceful group, but must nevertheless be seen as representative for the phenomenon heterosexual transvestism. The organization uses only the acronym both internally and externally. 31 Out of 50 answered the questionnaire.

On the background of interviews, questionnaire and available literature, the authors will inform and clarify some of the conceptions concerning this sexual minority group..

#### Comments

This is a small-scale empirical survey among heterosexual transvestites. Analyze of the survey is solely descriptive and without literature review. The merit of this study is that this target population is very difficult to reach for any survey and the results provide interesting insights to the private world of respondents.

### Work 2

Benestad, Esben: "Transvestisme" English title: "Transvestism", *Nordisk sexologi/Nordic Sexology*, 1993;11(4):195-208

#### Description

This article is based upon a lecture given by the author at the Nordic Conference of Sexology at Oerenaes Castle in Sweden the 27th of September – 93. The article gives a combined professional and personal insight to the issue of transvestism. Basic concepts in the article are those of gender



belonging which may be male, female or both male and female and that gender belonging is perceived as an inherent property of the individual. This or these properties may be weak or strong, but only those strong enough to be expressed are worth attention. Transvestism is viewed as a condition where an individual experiences both a male and a female identity system strong enough to be expressed.

On the personal side, the author presents a constructed transvestic lifespan and illustrates with his/her own experiences as an individual with a double gender belonging. There is also included two poems describing some of the emotions and options of an individual whose gender belonging is incoherent with the gender concepts of the culture

### Comments

This can be classified as a qualitative case-study where the author presents him-/herself as an exemplary case. By doing this he/her is taking an anthropological methodological approach, even though the methodology itself is not described. The paper adds a unique description of gender identity crisis that adds to the building of new perspectives.

### Work 3

Benestad, Esben & Almås, Elsa: Bekreftelsesmodel for kjønnsstilhørighet.” English title: “Model of affirmation for gender belonging”, *Nordisk Sexologi/Nordic sexology*, 1993;11(4):209-216

### Description

The public, the clients and professionals are through cultural beliefs, textbooks, papers and clinical experiences met with a multitude of words and concepts concerning aspects of sexuality and gender belonging. For the authors as therapists and counselors, it became necessary to create order in the often contradictory and chaotic world of belief systems and descriptions.

The authors had also experienced a gap between the professional descriptions and the clients' own perceptions of self. There was a need for an open, descriptive model for gender belonging with room for everybody. The reference is primarily clinical and research work among male transvestites. We have, however, also sought insights from a variety of individuals, problems and disorders.

The model is based upon the concept of belonging instead of identity. Belonging is a changing or stable sense of experiencing oneself as like or different from individuals or groups of individuals. Belonging is thus related both to an inner experience of self and to an other experience of resemblance or disparity. The model has seven levels with four differentiations on each level, except for the level of sexual turn-on patterns. The levels are: Somatic sex, gender identity, body consciousness, body picture, gender role, erotic preference, and sexual turn-on patterns. The differentiations are: Male/ manly/ masculine/ men; female/ womanly/ feminine/ woman; hermaphroditic/ male and female/ intermediary/ androgynous/ men and women, undifferentiated. The differentiations for sexual turn-on patterns are multiple.

The authors find a continuous blending between the differentiations on each level. There are no automatic links between the levels. The authors experience gender belonging as changeable over time, and we differentiate between somatic and cultural descriptions.

### Comments

In this 8 pages long article, which is published to Nordic scientific and professional community, authors present interesting sexual model that has six levels and four differentiations. This is a theoretical and conceptual model that has no references to previous literature. Authors are able to provide an interesting framework while analyzing valuable dimensions in gender belonging. They are successful in theorizing how complicating issue the experience in gender belonging can be.



## Work 4

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben: "Behandling av problemer i kaos" English title: "Addressing problems in chaos", *Fokus på familien/Focus on the Family*, 1993;4:211-232

### Description

This article presents a Prothagorean perspective of family systems, based on experiences from general medical and psychological practice. Families are seen as systems within systems, and as systems containing subsystems. In studying families, therapeutic perspective has to be dynamic and changing in system levels, as well as in focus on what is figure and what is background. The principle of changing perspective is called "versatility".

In present society, families are "systems in crisis, in systems in crisis, containing systems in crisis". If, in this context, chaos expresses basic and comprehensive change in systems, the therapist's task is to watch processes developing instead of trying to bring clients back to former states of equilibrium. The therapeutic potential is in detecting order and coherence, without necessarily explaining or being able to replicate them. An important part of this ideology is to take account of both linear and circular methods, and of both diagnostic and prognostic considerations.

### Comments

This is a theoretical paper of therapeutic perspectives in family systems. It provides also practical information of therapy methods and techniques. Paper has 14 references in its literature review. A specific contribution of this paper is how to utilize chaos therapeutically.

## Work 5

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben: Væren i systemer. English title: Being in systems. *Fokus på familien/ Focus on the family*, 1997;3-4:207-22

### Description

Questions of being are central in human life down from issues of individual self-perception to persistent philosophical works on the state of being human. It is a question as deep as implied by William Shakespeare some hundred years ago, when Prince Hamlet, skull in hand, expresses: To be or not to be, that is the question.

The individual's goal is the state of belonging with and within interactive systems in a room of inter-subjectivity. The state of belonging is a dynamic state of being perceived by the surroundings systems in the same appraising way as one perceives oneself. This state constitutes the feeling of belonging in the system, contrary to the feeling of not belonging. The latter is a state known for instance too many with unusual gender identities and sexual orientations.

Therapists are in an outstanding position to perceive human qualities. Embedded within the multiple therapist experiences lie a multitude of human expressions and still many are yet to be sensed and comprehended. As an ideal, therapeutic system should at any time be capable of grasping the total human diversity. The therapeutic insight has in its turn power to influence and to change other systems and models of thinking of for instance religious or scientific character. We may all contribute positively to our own or to other humans' experience of belonging, an experience so basic to our being that William Shakespeare just as well could have put the following word in Prince hamlet's mouth: "To belong or not to belong, that is the question".

### Comments

In this paper authors provide information how system theory can be adopted while analyzing gender identities and sexual orientations. Important concept is a state of belonging within interactive systems. It is about how individuals may feel their belonging or not belonging in the social system. This conceptual work is useful for therapists.



## Work 6

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben: Skandinavisk sexologisk curriculum og utdanning i sexologi.  
English title: Scandinavian sexological curriculum and sexological education. *Nordisk Sexologi/Nordic sexology*, 1996;14(2):103-118

### Description

Sexology is presented as an inter-disciplinary enterprise with traditions dating back to the turn of the 20th century. Due to political difficulties during the nazi-regime, sexological activity in Europe practically came to an end. And was non-existent until 1974, when the 2nd International Congress for Medical Sexology was held in Paris. One result of this congress was WHO's definition of sexual health. Sexology has re-entered the professional map. The Nordic Association for Clinical Sexology was founded in 1978 and today, almost 20 years later, the time is ripe to describe a sexological curriculum as a basis for sexological education and clinical training. This paper proposes a curriculum, which is organized as a three level educational program:

I: Basic sexology; II: Clinical sexology; III: Clinical specializations. The program is based on interdisciplinary training both pre- and postgraduate.

### Comments

This paper gives a historical perspective of the development of sexology within Europe. It then proceeds to present the arguments for the development of a Scandinavian curriculum in sexology. It outlines the essential issues to be covered. Although the main categories of the issues in the curriculum could have been described and the curriculum is not placed within the context of other educational programs in the western world at the time it provides an important structure to the development of knowledge in the field and is built on extensive experience.

## Work 7

Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Teaching in Genderland: Therapy, performance, conveyance of knowledge and self-disclosure. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 2002; 4:59-62

### Description

In the experience of a bigendered individual who teaches in and teaches about sexuality and gender, teaching has four major contents:

Therapy, performance, conveyance of knowledge and self-disclosure.

This paper discusses these four contents both on an general and a special basis. The sense of nervousness and risk taking linked to this kind of teaching is described and discussed. Likewise the experience of what driving forces may be in action.

### Comments

This is a self-reflective essay which usefully teaches the concept of using self in teaching. It conveys the meaning of self disclosure for the teacher as well as from the student's perspective. This paper is published in an international journal on narrative therapy and community therapy.

## Work 8

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Expired and inspired concepts of sexuality.  
*SEXOLOGIES: European Journal of Sexual Health*, 2001;11(39):11-18

### Description

Gender and expressions of gender are generally being diversified. The professional and lay world is slowly nuancing their concepts of gender and their offers to those in gender anguish. Increased gender diversity has references both to gender identity, to bodily issues and to gendered expressions as such. Still there is a persisting chasm between professional and queer understanding of gender, the chasm is, however, being filled in by trans- bi gendered and androgynous professionals. The lay world is to an increasing degree accepting unusual gender expressions. There are nevertheless important shortcomings within those words and concepts that are being used to describe phenomena in Gender land. We need to look closer for possible expiration dates on concepts within the realm of gender, and perhaps we need new inspiration dates for apt descriptions.

#### Comments

This is an interesting essay regarding concepts in sexuality. The authors review outdated constructs and discussed those which are being questioned. The trans and bigendered professionals and queer theories have been challenging existing constructs. The article usefully teaches about the current discourse on concepts of sexuality and gender. This article is published in the European Federation of Sexology's journal – which is well respected within European circles.

#### Work 9

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli.: *NORWAY*. In: Robert Franceur (ed.): *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, Continuum, New York, London, 2004:781-794. ISBN 0-8264-1488-5

#### Description

Sexuality is a powerful human force that manifest itself within the context of human culture. In compiling information for this overview of Norwegian sexology, it has become obvious that the most important body of knowledge which teaches us how to be comfortable with our sexuality - remains incomplete. We have observed that the male dominance complex was an inevitable outcome of the institution of warfare. Now that Norway is committed to peaceful co-existence with its neighbours, indeed has evolved into a catalyst for international accord, the barbaric anachronism of sexual inequality has lost its raison d'être. The liberation of sexual minorities, homosexuals, transgendered people and fetishists, has kept pace with the nascent equality of women; we view these developments with grateful optimism.

There are several volatile foci that require all of our professional acumen and personal courage if we are to accurately deal with them. One such area is the sexual molestation of children; the other is a scrupulous inquiry into the differences between male and female sexuality. If our goal involves defusing repressive taboos, child molesters, who stand in the shadow of a long tradition of dark deeds, shall benefit the most. If we can combine open mindedness and willingness to address this highly interactive malady with more professional approach, we shall be more able to bring this fearful issue into balance.

The women's liberation movement has immensely improved the status of women in our society, and made it unacceptable to discriminate against women on basis of gender. In the justifiable efforts toward equality, the unique aspects of women's sexuality have frequently been overlooked. In our opinion, the full equality of women awaits the full awareness of her uniqueness.

As a result of the enormous changes brought about by the sexual revolution, sex education and the advances made in sex therapy, we may occasionally feel like acceding to the temptation to become lax in our efforts. An antidote to this kind of thinking is to remind ourselves that centuries of repression and limited access to educational resources have caused many people to fear and conceal their sexual feelings. Only yesterday, the notion of social equality for women, acceptance of homosexual behaviour as a form of normal sexual expression, ecological activism and system



theory was unthinkable. They became realities as a result of the unremitting efforts of many dedicated individuals. There is still a great deal of work to do, and many people in grave need of help. In reality, the history of sexology in Norway has only just begun.

#### Comments

This chapter is very good historical overview of the development of sexology in Norway. It also provides information of the historical developments in the world. It gives a critical view of the developments and has a broad perspective on the social, relational and individual niveau. Furthermore it highlights issues which are important to stress in the near future.

#### Work 10

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Seksuelle problemer hos personer som har opplevd seksuelle traumer. English title: Sexual problems in people who have survived sexual trauma.

Del/part 1: Teoretisk bakgrunn/Theoretical background. *Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening/Journal of the Norwegian Psychology Association*, 2004;41:2-9

#### Description

Traumatized persons often experience no ownership to their sexuality. Without adequate treatment, many have difficulties in establishing their own sexuality on their own premises with a new partner, even long time after the traumatic experiences. This article focuses on how sexological experience and trauma theory can be helpful in understanding these problems. In addition the authors describe how sexuality can be affected by dissociation on different levels: cognitive, emotional and bodily; and how sexual problems can be result of sexual traumatization.

#### Comments

This article is a valuable contribution to therapy development of those who have survived sexual trauma. It provides insight into the trauma theory but especially describes the sexual problems resulting from the trauma which they classify i.a. into emotional, physical and cognitive. The classification of the trauma is clinically based. It does however not compare the sexual problems to the results of other studies or provide how many patients have presented the problems.

#### Work 11

Almås, Elsa & Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Behandling av seksuelle problemer hos personer som har opplevd seksuelle traumer. English title: Treatin sexual problem in people who have survived sexual trauma. Del/Part 2: terapeutisk tilnærming/Therapeutical approach. *Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening/ Journal of the Norwegian Psychology Association*, 2004;41:188-194

#### Description

Victims of sexual abuse have been in therapists' focus for several decades. Over the years couples have made countless adjustments to get around feelings of shame and pain caused by sexual trauma. In the wake of the therapeutic skills that have emerged through the many therapeutic meetings with victims of sexual offences, new challenges are coming up: How do we help couples where one or both have been victims of sexual abuse to establish a sexual relationship on their own terms, without the interference of the perpetrator? Even though one or both have undergone therapy focusing the individuals' traumatic sexual history, the sexual interactions within the couple are still marked and influenced by the same history of sexual offence. This article will focus on therapeutic work with such couples and how to interact with them in their efforts to establish satisfying sexual relationships based on sexological experiences modified by understanding of complex traumas.



### Comments

It is a clinically based article and does mostly stress the importance of treatment for the couple but is less focused on the individual. It is a valuable contribution to therapy development of those who have survived sexual trauma. It is to some degree based on previous work. The originality of the work is embedded in the rich descriptions of the cases and how the authors have developed their therapy.

### Work 12

Almås, Elsa; Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Lystproblem og "lystproblem", fru Blom! Første og annen ordens forståelser av manglende seksuell lyst hos kvinner. English title: Problem of desire or no problem of desire. First and second order of comprehending lack of sexual desire in women. Tidsskrift for norsk psykologforening/ Journal of the Norwegian Psychology Association, 2008;45:757-763

### Description

The article describes human sexuality in first and second order. First order takes in all that we have in common as human beings, and also what we have in common with other mammals. Second order takes in the unique and individual sexuality, which is interacting with our very complex systems of comprehension

### Comments

This is brief (6 pages) paper that includes case studies that are related to personal and cultural experiences of female sexual desire in social systems. Paper has 14 references. These case studies have been placed into theoretical perspective. It provides practical information for therapists.

### Work 13

Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: "Gender belonging: Children, adolescents, adults and the role of therapists and A reflection from a transgender perspective." I: David Denborough (Red.) *Queer Counseling and Narrative Practice*, Dulwich Centre Publications, Adelaide, South Australia, 2002:204-206,234-240

### Comments and description

This is a very well written chapter on the issues of gender variance among children. The paper reviews concepts and ones that have been developed by the author. It is a synthesis of existing knowledge along with unique contributions that the author has made to the understanding of gender. This chapter is current, and usefully teaches and is published in an international publication. The paper is quite scholarly written.

### Work 14

Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: Addressing the disturbed, like ripples in water: intervention with the social networks of children who transe. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 2009;24(2):207-216

### Description

Children who "transe" (i.e. children who perform gender different from their assigned sex) are a group deserving of attention. The majority of these children grow up to be either lesbian, gay bisexual and/or transe and, as a result of the attached social stigma, are at increased risk for grave psychological consequences. When brought to professional attention, children who transe will

often be brought to designated specialty clinics. This is especially true for somatic boys, since boys in girls' attire and performance evoke more anxiety in their environment than boyish girls. Centralized clinics can only to a certain degree meet these children's special needs concerning how to cope with the challenges they face, because those challenges are found in their immediate and extended networks, located far away from the specialist consulting rooms. The clinical work described here has been collected over a period of 10-15 years. The work focus has been with those who are or might be disturbed by the children. Like ripples in water, the children's networks are educated to achieve a more nuanced understanding of sex and gender. This work has proved to be very effective in relieving the anxieties in the networks of children who transe.

#### Comments

This is a very well written article describing the author's approach to treating children who "transe." This is a unique approach that has challenged existing paradigms of treatment. The therapy work is described quite well in principles and case illustration. The article usefully teaches. It is published in a very well respected peer-reviewed sex therapy journal.

#### Work 15

Benestad, Esben Esther Pirelli: From gender dysphoria to gender euphoria: An assisted journey/ De la dysphorie de genre à l'euphorie de genre: un voyage d'accompagnement, *Sexologies: revue européenne de sante sexuelle - european journal of sexual health*, 2010;19(4):225-231

#### Description

The author is an open transperson, a medical doctor, a family therapist and a sexologist, who has worked personally and professionally with issues of gender identity for decades. Through media exposures insights have been shared with the public. The quality of being an open transperson has inspired clients to include information they otherwise would have believed contrary to their goals in therapy. Clients' frankness has influenced the insights of this paper. Gender therapy does not aim at changing the clients' perception of self, but at changing the clients' surroundings perception of the client. This is accomplished both through a strengthening of the individual's self-confidence, and through education of significant people in the individuals' networks. Gender therapy is seen as an assisted process where one moves from an unsatisfying to a more satisfying state of living. The optimal endpoint does not have to lie within the gender majorities. Since culture and society have a foul tendency to sanction negatively gendered expressions that do not conform to the binary, all therapeutic work focused only on the individual may be futile, because the individual will not be gender affirmed by the surroundings. The optimal therapeutic approach to individuals of unusual gendered or non-gendered talents must address and assist both the inner and the outer world in order for the individual to be able to present an egosyntonic perception of self to society, and for society to be able to affirm. When congruence exists between the individual's sense of gendered or non-gendered self, and the surroundings perception of it, the state of gender or non-gender belonging arises. The combined individual and cultural endeavor will reach different endpoints as both the client's and the networks needs and capacities are different. This paper offers some clues as to how positive gender belonging can be established.

#### Comments

This article rather completely describes the authors approach to treatment of gender dysphoria. This approach is unique and well described. It is a unique and novel approach that has become more of the mainstream of current approaches to treatment of gender dysphoria. It illustrates how pioneering the author has been in not following the dominant paradigm but taking a very gender affirming approach. This article useful teaches and is well written. It is published in a well recognized sexological journal.



### ***Assessment of academic qualifications***

- 1. The committee finds the applicants academic qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
- 2. The committee finds the applicants academic qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*

### ***Assessment of teaching qualifications***

The applicant built, together with Elsa Almås, the curriculum and sexological education at the University of Agder in 2001 as the only university based study in Norway. More than 150 advisors in sexology have graduated on the basis of this course. Most of these advisors are accredited by the Nordic Association of Sexology. In this regard the applicant has performed many lectures in the past 10 years. In addition to these lectures the applicant has listed 58 lectures on high academic level, and out of those again 18 took place on universities, colleges or equivalent outside Norway.

- 1. The committee finds the applicants teaching qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
- 2. The committee finds the applicants teaching qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*

### ***Assessment of other professional qualifications***

The applicant has a basic medical education together with a comprehensive continuing education in psychology, sexology and family therapy.

- 1. The committee finds the applicants other professional qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
- 2. The committee finds the applicants other professional qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*

### ***Assessment of work experience and other relevant activity***

The applicants work experience as a general medical practitioner (since 1979), family therapist (since 1993), and sexologist (since 2001) has generally been focusing on treatment of sexual problems in individuals and couples. The work as assistant professor (førstelektor) at the University of Agder has also focused on sexology.

The applicant has been a member of and in the period from 1984 – 1987, the leader of the The union of trans people in Norway - FTP. In the period 2002 – 2004 the applicant was member of the board of the transsexuals union (LFTS) in Norway, now called: HBRIS; a member of the Norwegian association for Clinical Sexology (NFKS) since 1986 and served for some years on the board of that organization. For many years the applicant served on the authorization committee of that organization and the authorization committee of the Nordic Association for Clinical Sexology (NACS). The fall of 2010 the applicant took part in establishing a Nordic network on ethics and sexual rights.

- 1. The committee finds the applicants work experience and other relevant activity relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
- 2. The committee finds the applicants work experience and other relevant activity relevant for the position of professor.*



### **Overall assessment of Benestads qualifications**

The assessment committee find Benestads assessed qualifications relevant for both the positions of associate professor (førsteamanuensis) and professor. Benestad is a pioneer in Norwegian sexology. Some papers however have methodological limitations and his contribution to empirical research, either quantitative or qualitative studies, is very limited. This does to some degree reflect the state of sexology in Norway. Benestad has nevertheless presented unique perspectives in the field of sexology, built partly on clinical experience and on existent concepts of sexuality and gender. Benestad has academically, educationally, and in clinical practice, nationally and internationally, as shown in the assessed papers, developed and implemented new concepts and therapeutic understanding especially in the field of gender identity.

### **Conclusion**

1. The assessment committee find Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad qualified as førsteamanuensis.
2. The assessment committee find Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad qualified as professor.

## Elsa Almås

The applicant is currently holding a 50% position as associate professor (førstelektor) at the Sexology section at the Department of Psychosocial Health, Faculty of Health and Sports sciences at the University of Agder. The applicant is also working as clinical psychologist and sexologist at Grimstad MPAT-institute in Grimstad in addition to work as a clinical sexologist at “Sexologisenteret NB22” in Oslo.

### Assessment of educational background and degrees

The applicant was authorized as a psychologist in 1981, specialist in clinical psychology in 1988, family therapist in 1991, and as a specialist in clinical sexology (NACS) in 2002. The applicant has also followed 80 courses and congresses in psychology and sexology from 1980 to 2010 in addition to individual supervision with specialist in psychiatry from 1972 to 1976 and with specialist in clinical psychology and sexology from 1986 – 2011, in addition to 344 hours of supervision in family therapy, supervision in clinical psychology and group supervision. The educational line is consistent and related to the field of sexology.

1. *The committee finds the applicant's educational background and degrees relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicant's educational background and degrees relevant for the position of professor.*

### Assessment of academic qualifications

The applicant has in the application listed 114 lectures, talks and/or presentations. Out of these 73 in high academic level (19 at universities, university colleges or equivalent institutions outside Norway). In addition, the applicant have listed 68 presentations at scientific congresses thereof 14 as invited speaker. The CV lists further 33 peer reviewed scientific publications, 5 books, and 8 book chapters.

The applicant has put forward 15 scientific works for evaluation where 8 are published in in Norwegian peer reviewed journals and 7 in an English language in international peer reviewed journals. The applicant is first author or sole author of 7 publications and equal co-author with Esben Esther Benestad in 8 publications.

The applicant has over the years been contributing substantially to the theoretical development in the field but contribution to empirical research, either quantitative or qualitative studies, is very limited.

### Work 1

Almås, E. & Jensen, S.B.: 6 aspekter av seksualitet/Six Aspects of Sexuality, Nordisk Sexologi/Journal of Nordic Sexology, 1, 1983. 104-117.

#### Description

Six Aspects of sexuality. A common sense model to illustrate child sexual development. In this article, the authors suggest possibilities for the integration of knowledge from different scientific disciplines: medicine, biology, sociology, psychology – by means of a “common sense” model of human sexuality.

1) Social influences and interaction; 2) Organic growth and maturation, somatic and physiological factors; 3) Emotional factors; 4) Cognitive factors; 5) Sexual behaviour; 6) Communication and human interaction.

The model suggests a holistic understanding of human sexuality, whereby research in different fields may be integrated within this framework. The model, as such, can be applied to such different areas of human sexuality as development, sexual function or dysfunction.

The model is used to illustrate child sexual development, arguing for instance, that identification and differentiation are key-words in the description of emotional development as well as of human interaction and that to fully understand these aspects, the social, somatic, cognitive and behavioural aspects must be fully understood.

#### Comments

This is an interesting theoretical attempt to create a model for human sexuality. This article was written for Nordic professional audience and has 19 references. The model has six aspects and it could be adopted for child sexual development but also to sexual function and dysfunction. The authors call it a common sense model to illustrate child sexual development. This model was a valuable addition to international literature.

#### Work 2

Almås, E.: Alexithymibegrepet/The Concept of Alexithymia. Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening/Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association, 12, 1986, 775-784.

#### Description

Alexithymia is a concept originating in psychoanalytic theory, where it has played an important part in the understanding of psychosomatic disease. Empirical research has yielded little support for the hypotheses underlying alexithymia. In addition, inventories measuring "alexithymia" have been criticized for their methodological weaknesses, like lack of face validity and questionable reliability. The purpose of these inventories has been to uncover underlying psychopathology in psychosomatic diseases. From a scientific point of view, the concept, inventories and theoretical clinical implications should be abandoned, unless future research proves otherwise.

#### Comments

This paper is a comprehensive review of critique concerning the concept of alexithymia. This concept is a hypothesis concerning psychosomatic disease. A meritorious review, including empirical tests of this hypothesis, has 50 references. This is an welcome attempt to validate or criticize psychoanalytic theory.

#### Work 3

Almås, E.: Psykologiske faktorer ved kroniske smertetilstander/Psychological Factors in Chronic Pain Conditions. Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening/ Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association, 3, 1990

#### Description

Pain patients would profit from a closer cooperation between the medical practitioner and the clinical psychologist. This should include both diagnosis and treatment of chronic pain patients. Patients would benefit from psychological knowledge, which strengthens the effect of medical treatment.

Practitioners from both professions must take this challenge and cooperate in developing service systems that will encourage such cooperation, for the maximum progress of already existing knowledge in both disciplines.

#### Comments



This is a brief (3 pages) paper that calls for co-operation among medical and psychological professions while treating psychological factors in pain. Paper has 10 references. This work has practical implications for professionals working with pain disorders.

#### Work 4

Almås, E.: Betraktninger angående noen aktuelle teorier om kjønnsstilhørighet/Considerations concerning current theories on gender belonging. Nordisk Sexologi/Journal of Nordic Sexology, 4, 1993. 181-194.

#### Description

This paper presents tentative definitions of the concept of sex and gender identity, and sex and gender belonging. In Scandinavian languages the concepts sex and gender are expressed in one word: Sex. Some central sexological, psychiatric and psychological theories on transsexualism and transvestism are commented and criticized. Finally a new problem concerning men modelling as female ideals in the haute couture industry is discussed.

#### Comments

This article is being critical about how transvestism is being diagnosed as a disease. The author finds it necessary to understand transvestism in a broader way. With the article a new understanding is provided which can have great meaning to the professional society but also for the well-being of transvestites.

#### Work 5

Benestad, E. & Almås, E.: Bekreftelsesmodell for kjønnsstilhørighet/Model of affirmation of gender belonging. Nordisk Sexologi/Journal of Nordic Sexology, 4, 1993. 209-216.

#### Description

The public, the clients and professionals are through cultural beliefs, textbooks, papers and clinical experiences met with a multitude of words and concepts concerning aspects of sexuality and gender belonging. For therapists and counsellors, it became necessary to create order in the often contradictory and chaotic world of belief systems and descriptions.

The authors also experienced a gap between the professional descriptions and the clients' own perceptions of self. There was a need for an open, descriptive model for gender belonging with room for everybody. The reference is primarily clinical and research work among male transvestites. We have, however, also sought insights from a variety of individuals, problems and disorders.

The model is based upon the concept of belonging instead of identity. Belonging is a changing or stable sense of experiencing oneself as like or different from individuals or groups of individuals. Belonging is thus related both to an inner experience of self and to another experience of resemblance or disparity. The model has seven levels with four differentiations on each level, except for the level of sexual turn-on patterns.

The levels are: Somatic sex, gender identity, body consciousness, body picture, gender role, erotic preference, and sexual turn-on patterns. The differentiations are: Male/ manly/ masculine/ men; female/ womanly/ feminine/ woman; hermaphroditic/ male and female/ intermediary/ androgynous/ men and women; undifferentiated. The differentiations for sexual turn-on patterns are multiple. The authors find a continuous blending between the differentiations on each level. There are no automatic links between the levels. The authors experience gender belonging as changeable over time, and we differentiate between somatic and cultural descriptions.

#### Comments

In this 8 pages long article, which is published to Nordic scientific and professional community, authors present interesting sexual model that has six levels and four differentiations. This is a theoretical and conceptual model that has no references to previous literature. Authors are able to provide an interesting framework while analyzing valuable dimensions in gender belonging. They are successful in theorizing how complicating issue the experience in gender belonging can be.

## Work 6

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.: Behandling av problemer i kaos/Treatment of Problems in Chaos. Fokus på familien/Fokus on the Family, 1993, 4, 211-232.

### Description

This article presents a Prothagorean perspective of family systems, based on experiences from general medical and psychological practice. Families are seen as systems within systems, and as systems containing subsystems. In studying families, the therapeutic perspective has to be dynamic and changing in system levels, as well as in focus on what is figure and what is background. The principle of changing perspective is called “versatility”.

In present society, families are “systems in crisis, in systems in crisis, containing systems in crisis”. If, in this context, chaos expresses basic and comprehensive change in systems, the therapist’s task is to watch processes developing instead of trying to bring clients back to former states of equilibrium. The therapeutic potential is in detecting order and coherence, without necessarily explaining or being able to replicate them. An important part of this ideology is to take account of both linear and circular methods, and of both diagnostic and prognostic considerations.

### Comments

This is a theoretical paper of therapeutic perspectives in family systems. It provides also practical information of therapy methods and techniques. Paper has 14 references in its literature review. A specific contribution of this paper is how to utilize chaos therapeutically.

## Work 7

Almås, E.: Sexology in Norway. Conceptualization of Sexology. Nordisk Sexologi. 2, 1994.78-95.

### Description

The history of Norwegian Sexology is a study of the means by which Nordic Culture has dealt with human sexuality through the centuries. Although this overview is drawn from a diversity of sources, its scope can provide but a cursory glance at the nature and nurture of sexuality in Norway.

Prior to the advent of literacy, the rites and mysteries regarding sexuality were nurtured within the matrix of Norwegian folk culture; numerous tales and legends bequeathing to us from this venerable tradition have been preserved in recently published collections. During the second half of 19th century, society assumed responsibility for human sexual conduct by regulating prostitution, curtailing the availability of contraceptives, and by a series of pietistic reactions which bonded the expression of human sexuality to the concept of sin.

The 20th century ushered a liberalizing trend that paved the way for the gradual acceptance of sexual minorities like homosexuals, transsexuals and transvestites. In the 1980’s Norwegian sexologists took their cue from colleagues around the world and established sexology as a profession. The founding of national organizations earned sexology the status of a distinct science. The internationally affiliated Norwegian Association for Clinically Sexology, subsequently re-named the Norwegian Association for Sexology, has focused its efforts primarily upon teaching, as well as the application of sex therapy techniques, and the development of more effective therapeutic communication.



Psychologist Thore Langfeldt's pioneering research in the field of childhood sexuality has earned him international recognition for extending the parameters of child development to include sexual behaviour. Vigorous efforts to prevent the spread of HIV, and to effectively treat people living with AIDS, continue to make enormous demands upon the clinical and emotional resources of the Norwegian therapeutic community. The depsychiatrization of behaviour related to gender belonging, and the sexual and social issues associated with prostitution are two additional areas that are currently claiming the attention of Norwegian sexologists.

#### Comments

This is an excellent review of Norwegian sexology – its history and development. It is a very useful contribution to our understanding of the development of sexology in Norway which the author has been a part of. The history is presented in an objective manner – it is very well written and usefully teaches.

#### Work 8

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.: Skandinavisk sexologisk curriculum og utdanning i sexologi/Scandinavian sexological curriculum and education in sexology. Nordisk Sexologi/Journal of Nordic Sexology, 1996, 2, 103-118.

#### Description

Sexology is presented as an interdisciplinary enterprise with traditions dating back to the turn of the 20th century. Due to political difficulties during the Nazi-regime, sexological activity in Europe practically came to an end. And was non-existent until 1974, when the 2nd International Congress for Medical Sexology was held in Paris. One result of this congress was WHO's definition of sexual health. Sexology has re-entered the professional map. The Nordic Association for Clinical Sexology was founded in 1978 and today, almost 20 years later, the time is ripe to describe a sexological curriculum as a basis for sexological education and clinical training. This paper proposes a curriculum which is organised as a three level educational programme:

I: Basic sexology; II: Clinical sexology; III: Clinical specialisations. The programme is based on interdisciplinary training both pre- and postgraduate.

#### Comments

This paper gives a historical perspective of the development of sexology within Europe. It then proceeds to present the arguments for the development of a Scandinavian curriculum in sexology. It outlines the essential issues to be covered. Although the main categories of the issues in the curriculum could have been described and the curriculum is not placed within the context of other educational programs in the western world at the time it provides an important structure to the development of knowledge in the field and is built on extensive experience.

#### Work 9

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.: Væren i systemer/Being in systems. FOKUS på familien/FOKUS on the family, 3-4, 1997, 207-220.

#### Description

Questions of being are central in human life down from issues of individual self perception to persistent philosophical works on the state of being human. It is a question as deep as implied by William Shakespeare some hundred years ago, when Prince Hamlet, skull in hand, expresses: To be or not to be, that is the question.

The individual's goal is the state of belonging with and within interactive systems in a room of intersubjectivity. The state of belonging is a dynamic state of being perceived by the surroundings



systems in the same appraising way as one perceives oneself. This state constitutes the feeling of belonging in the system, contrary to the feeling of not belonging. The latter is a state known for instance too many with unusual gender identities and sexual orientations.

Therapists are in an outstanding position to perceive human qualities. Embedded within the multiple therapist experiences lie a multitude of human expressions, and still many are yet to be sensed and comprehended. As an ideal, therapeutic system should at any time be capable of grasping the total human diversity. The therapeutic insight has in its turn power to influence and to change other systems and models of thinking of for instance religious or scientific character. We may all contribute positively to our own or to other humans' experience of belonging, an experience so basic to our being that William Shakespeare just as well could have put the following word in Prince Hamlet's mouth: "To belong or not to belong, that is the question".

### Comments

In this paper authors provide information how system theory can be adopted while analyzing gender identities and sexual orientations. Important concept is a state of belonging within interactive systems. It is about how individuals may feel their belonging or not belonging in the social system. This conceptual work is useful for therapists.

### Work 10

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.E.P.: Les concepts «expirés» et «inspirés» de la sexualité./Expired and inspired concepts of sexuality. SEXOLOGIES, Janvier-Fevrier-Mars 2002, VOL.XI- NO 39-.

### Description

Gender and expressions of gender are generally being diversified. The professional and lay world is slowly nuancing their concepts of gender and their offers to those in gender anguish. Increased gender diversity has references both to gender identity, to bodily issues and to gendered expressions as such. Still there is a persisting chasm between professional and queer understanding of gender, the chasm is, however, being filled in by trans- bi gendered and androgynous professionals. The lay world is to an increasing degree accepting unusual gender expressions. There are nevertheless important shortcomings within those words and concepts that are being used to describe phenomena in Gender land. We need to look closer for possible expiration dates on concepts within the realm of gender, and perhaps we need new inspiration dates for apt descriptions.

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#### Comments

This is an interesting essay regarding concepts in sexuality. The authors review outdated constructs and discussed those which are being questioned. The trans and bigendered professionals and queer theories have been challenging existing constructs. The article usefully teaches about the current discourse on concepts of sexuality and gender. This article is published in the European Federation of Sexology's journal – which is well respected within European circles.

#### Work 11

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.: *NORWAY*. In: Robert Franceur (ed.): *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, Continuum, New York, London, 2004. 781-794. ISBN 0-8264-1488-5

#### Description

Sexuality is a powerful human force that manifest itself within the context of human culture. In compiling information for this overview of Norwegian sexology, it has become obvious that the most important body of knowledge which teaches us how to be comfortable with our sexuality - remains incomplete. We have observed that the male dominance complex was an inevitable outcome of the institution of warfare. Now that Norway is committed to peaceful co-existence with its neighbours, indeed has evolved into a catalyst for international accord, the barbaric anachronism of sexual inequality has lost its raison d'être. The liberation of sexual minorities, homosexuals, transgendered people and fetishists, has kept pace with the nascent equality of women; we view these developments with grateful optimism.



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There are several volatile foci that require all of our professional acumen and personal courage if we are to accurately deal with them. One such area is the sexual molestation of children; the other is a scrupulous inquiry into the differences between male and female sexuality. If our goal involves defusing repressive taboos, child molesters, who stand in the shadow of a long tradition of dark deeds, shall benefit the most. If we can combine open mindedness and willingness to address this highly interactive malady with more professional approach, we shall be more able to bring this fearful issue into balance.

The women's liberation movement has immensely improved the status of women in our society, and made it unacceptable to discriminate against women on basis of gender. In the justifiable efforts toward equality, the unique aspects of women's sexuality have frequently been overlooked. In our opinion, the full equality of women awaits the full awareness of her uniqueness.

As a result of the enormous changes brought about by the sexual revolution, sex education and the advances made in sex therapy, we may occasionally feel like acceding to the temptation to become lax in our efforts. An antidote to this kind of thinking is to remind ourselves that centuries of repression and limited access to educational resources have caused many people to fear and conceal their sexual feelings. Only yesterday, the notion of social equality for women, acceptance of homosexual behaviour as a form of normal sexual expression, ecological activism and system theory was unthinkable. They became realities as a result of the unremitting efforts of many dedicated individuals. There is still a great deal of work to do, and many people in grave need of help. In reality, the history of sexology in Norway has only just begun.

#### Comments

This chapter is very good historical overview of the development of sexology in Norway. It also provides information of the historical developments in the world. It gives a critical view of the developments and has a broad perspective on the social, relational and individual niveau. Furthermore it highlights issues which are important to stress in the near future.

#### Work 12

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.E.P.: Seksuelle problemer hos personer som har opplevd seksuelle traumer. Del 1: Teoretisk bakgrunn/Sexual problems in persons who have experienced sexual trauma. Part 1: Theoretical background. Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening/Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association, 2004, 1, 2-9.

#### Description

Traumatized persons often experience no ownership to their sexuality. Without adequate treatment, many have difficulties in establishing their own sexuality on their own premises with a new partner, even long time after the traumatic experiences. This article focuses on how



sexological experience and trauma theory can be helpful in understanding these problems. In addition the authors describe how sexuality can be affected by dissociation on different levels: cognitive, emotional and bodily; and how sexual problems can be result of sexual traumatising.

#### Comments

This article is a valuable contribution to therapy development of those who have survived sexual trauma. It provides insight into the trauma theory but especially describes the sexual problems resulting from the trauma which they classify i.a. into emotional, physical and cognitive. The classification of the trauma is clinically based. It does however not compare the sexual problems to the results of other studies or provide how many patients have presented the problems.

#### Work 13

Almås, E. & Benestad, E.E.P.: Behandling av seksuelle problemer hos personer som har opplevd seksuelle traumer. Del 2: terapeutisk tilnærming/Sexual problems in persons who have experienced sexual trauma. Part 2: Therapeutic approach. Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening. /Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association, 2004, 3, 188-194.

#### Description

Victims of sexual abuse have been in therapists' focus for several decades. Over the years couples have made countless adjustments to get around feelings of shame and pain caused by sexual trauma. In the wake of the therapeutic skills that have emerged through the many therapeutic meetings with victims of sexual offences, new challenges are coming up: How do we help couples where one or both have been victims of sexual abuse to establish a sexual relationship on their own terms, without the interference of the perpetrator? Even though one or both have undergone therapy focusing the individuals' traumatic sexual history, the sexual interactions within the couple are still marked and influenced by the same history of sexual offence. This article will focus on therapeutic work with such couples and how to interact with them in their efforts to establish satisfying sexual relationships based on sexological experiences modified by understanding of complex traumas.

#### Comments

*It is a clinically based article and does mostly stress the importance of treatment for the couple but is less focused on the individual. It is a valuable contribution to therapy development of those who have survived sexual trauma. It is to some degree based on previous work. The originality of the work is embedded in the rich descriptions of the cases and how the authors have developed their therapy.*

#### Work 14

Almås, E. & Giami, A.: Sexology as a challenge to the health care system: The Norwegian version. SEXOLOGIES: European Journal of Sexual Health, January-March 2006, Vol 15, No 1, 35-43.

#### Description

Background. Sexology is a new profession that has evolved over the last century. New educational programs in sexology are developed throughout the world, and the field is in rapid progress. Sexological practice has mainly been organised through national and international associations. At the same time, sexology has been in a weak position in relation to official funding, and to traditional educational and clinical institutions. There hves been no systematic studies aiming at

studying sexologists in any country. The only existing data has been located in the files of the sexological organisations.

In 1999, Alain Giami and Patrick de Colomby organised a national study of French sexologists. During 2001 and 2002 studies based on the same inventory were carried out in Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Italy, Norway and Sweden. The results have been presented at the International Academy of Sex Research in Hamburg, 2002, at the 16th World Congress in Sexology in Havana in 2003 and at the 7th Congress of the European Federation of Sexology in Brighton in 2004. In this paper, the results from the Norwegian study are presented.

Results. Medical doctors and psychologist represent the largest group of professionals working with sexological problems in Norway, with one third each. The last third consists of different health and educational professionals. 43% reports that they have undergone training programs in sexology. This is the lowest educational level in all the countries studied. 71% have had individual supervision, 49% have had group supervision in sexology. 93,2% are in clinical practice, but for most this is a minor part of their clinical work. 71% report that sexological activity represents less than 25% of their clinical work. Gender differences are minor. 3% work with sexology full time, all of these are women, and none are medical doctors.

Not surprisingly, problems with orgasm (42,9) and sexual desire (60,7%) are among the most frequent problems reported among female clients, while erectile dysfunctions (47,3%) are among the most frequent problems among male clients. Emotional problems in the couple relationship is the most frequent problem reported, 35,% among male and 63,% among female clients. The respondents also report problems after sexual violence or abuse, 18,1% among male and 42,9% among female clients. 30% report genital pain among their female clients.

Medical doctors represent an important part of the therapeutic field, while sexology is less than a minor part of medical education, both pre- and post-graduate.

The most important treatment methods that are reported in this study are psychotherapeutic. There is however, reason to believe that PDE-5 inhibitors represent an increasing content of the kinds of treatment. With better treatment methods for ED, more men will seek therapy, and this will in its turn convey need for more couples therapy and treatment of female sexual problems.

New education programs in sexology are constantly being established. Sexological problems needing professional treatment are reported in as many as 10% of a representative group of the Norwegian population (17). It is reason to believe that many of these problems overlap with other health problems, like depression and muscular-skeletal pain. It is a challenge to health authorities to acknowledge and support the sexological competence that has been developed and contribute to the development of relevant treatment in the future.

#### Comments

This is a very important article describing the history of sexology in Norway. It is not only a description but also presents data on the kinds of sexologists and their training. It also described the kind of work that they do. This was part of a larger study that was conducted in association with a very well known French sexologist – and compares the experience of Norway to other European countries. It is well described and analyzed.



## Work 15

Almås, E. & Landmark, B.: Non-pharmacological treatment of sexual problems – A review of research literature 1970-2008. *Sexologies – European Journal of Sexual Health*. 2010, 19 (4) 201-211.

### Description

Based on a review covering 80 research papers selected from a larger material on effect of non-pharmacological treatment of sexual problems, treatment methods and techniques for common sexual problems are presented and the treatment effects are discussed in relation to the specific problem.

Treatment methods are organised according to different groups: Psychodynamic, hypnosis, behavioural, cognitive, cognitive-behavioural, educational, marital, group therapy, sex therapy and bibliotherapy. Treatment methods and techniques within each group are described and studies within each group are presented.

The results show positive effect for most approaches, but to varying degree.

Therapy that focuses on the sexual problem is more effective than indirect treatment of underlying problems like anxiety or communication problems. The PLISSIT-model is recommended to differentiate between problems that can be solved through simple education or bibliotherapy with minimal therapist intervention, and problems that require specialist therapeutic assistance. Therapy research that focuses on linear relationships between problem and therapy method seem to give way to circular research designs that take more variables, like therapist characteristics, client characteristics, treatment format, and treatment content into account. The bio-psycho-social model is recommended as an integrative multidisciplinary approach to treatment of sexual problems.

### Comments

This is an excellent review of the literature of non-pharmacological treatment of sexual problems. This article is a very good review that analyzes and synthesizes the literature. It usefully teaches.

### *Assessment of academic qualifications*

1. *The committee finds the applicants academic qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicants academic qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*

### *Assessment of teaching qualifications*

The applicant built, together with Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, the curriculum and sexological education at the University of Agder in 2001 as the only university based study in Norway. More than 150 advisors in sexology have graduated on the basis of this course. Most of these advisors are accredited by the Nordic Association of Sexology. In this regard the applicant has performed many lectures in the past 10 years. In addition to these lectures the applicant has listed 68 lectures on congresses, and out of those again 14 as invited speaker.

1. *The committee finds the applicants teaching qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicants teaching qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*



### **Assessment of other professional qualifications**

The applicant has a basic psychology education together with a comprehensive continuing education in psychology, sexology and family therapy.

1. *The committee finds the applicants other professional qualifications relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicants other professional qualifications relevant for the position of professor.*

### **Assessment of work experience and other relevant activity**

The applicants work experience as a clinical psychologist (since 1981), family therapist (since 1991), and specialist in sexology (since 2002) has generally been focusing on treatment of sexual problems in individuals and couples. The work as assistant professor (førstelektor) at the University of Agder has also focused on sexology.

The applicant is a charter member of The Danish Association for Sexology and The Norwegian Society for Clinical Sexology. The applicant has been president for the Norwegian Society in two periods (1985-1988 and 1999-2003), and president for the Nordic Association for Clinical Sexology in the periods 1986-1988 and 2001-2003. The applicant has, together with Esben Esther P. Benestad, proposed a common Nordic Curriculum for clinical sexology. Based on this work a Nordic group was established with economic support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. This group developed the common Nordic guidelines for authorization for Specialist in Sexological Counselling (SSC) and Specialists in Clinical Sexology (SCS). The applicant was leader of the authorization group from 2003 to 2010. By that time 220 Specialists in Sexological Counselling and 104 Specialists in Clinical Sexology were authorized in the Nordic countries. In 2010 the applicant was elected as a member of the Executive Committee (EC) in the European Federation for Sexology (EFS). The applicant is also a member of the education committee (TEC) in EFS.

1. *The committee finds the applicants work experience and other relevant activity relevant for the position of associate professor (førsteamanuensis).*
2. *The committee finds the applicants work experience and other relevant activity relevant for the position of professor.*

### **Overall assessment of Almås' qualifications**

The assessment committee find Almås' assessed qualifications relevant for both the positions of associate professor (førsteamanuensis) and professor. Almås is a pioneer in Norwegian sexology and the academic work is on a high scientific level, even though a few of the papers have some methodological limitations. Also, contribution to empirical research, either quantitative or qualitative studies, is very limited. However, these limitations reflect the state of sexology in Norway. She has presented unique perspectives in the field of sexology, built partly on clinical experience and on existent concepts of sexuality and gender. She has academically, educationally, and in clinical practice, nationally and internationally, as shown in the assessed papers, developed and implemented new concepts and therapeutic understanding in the field of sexology.

### **Conclusion**

1. The assessment committee find Elsa Almås qualified as førsteamanuensis.
2. The assessment committee find Elsa Almås qualified as professor.

## Signatures

Professor Osmo Kontula  
Population Research Institute,  
Family Federation of Finland

Professor Soley Bender  
University of Iceland

Professor Eli Coleman  
University of Minnesota

Tor-Ivar Karlsen  
University of Agder  
(leader and co-ordinator)







## Signatures



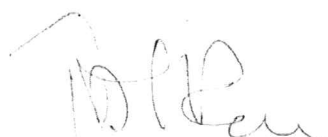
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Professor Soley Bender  
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Professor Eli Coleman  
University of Minnesota



Tor-Ivar Karlsen  
University of Agder  
(leader and co-ordinator)

