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Touko Vaahtera

CRIPPING SWIMMING

Culture, Ableism, and the Re-articulation of Able-Bodiedness

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Pre-examiners

Professor Alison Kafer, Southwestern University (USA)

PhD Donna McCormack, University of Surrey (UK)

Custos

Associate Professor (tenure track) Kristiina Brunila, University of Helsinki

Supervisors

Associate Professor (tenure track) Sirpa Lappalainen, University of Eastern Finland

Associate Professor (tenure track) Kristiina Brunila, University of Helsinki

PhD Minna Uimonen

Opponent

PhD Donna McCormack, University of Surrey (UK)

Cover

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Abstract

The approach of disability studies has politicized the mechanisms which prioritize able-bodiedness in culture and society. This dissertation, indebted to such perspectives, theorizes ableism as the multitude of assumptions which homogenize embodiment. The dissertation explores the cultural politics of the idea of swimming skills as civic skills and the cultural notion of human beings as part of the animal world in the articulations of swimming. Through the theory of articulation and through Foucauldian genealogy, this thesis mobilizes the cultural understandings of swimming to theorize ableism in new ways. It analyzes both historical and contemporary cultural texts about swimming, asking how the understandings available in these texts can be theorized in ways that reveal the specific cultural mechanisms of ableism and enable a conceptual critique of ableist imaginaries.

From an interdisciplinary perspective which is, in particular, connected to the shared aims of disability and queer studies to politicize conventional embodiment, this dissertation offers an approach that challenges the idealization of able-bodiedness not only in culture but also in theory. It intervenes in ideas that presume that bodies which defy ableist ideals are less valuable. Furthermore, the perspective offered by this thesis enables the consideration of analytic attachments to conventional embodiment in contemporary cultural critique.

By putting forward the concept of *able-bodied belonging*, the analysis considers cultural mechanisms which reinforce ableism while providing ostensibly inclusive modes of belonging. The dissertation offers a biopolitical analysis of articulations of physical skills introducing an approach to thinking about how our personal relationships to the qualities of our bodies are byproducts of biopolitics/thanatopolitics. The concept of *the repressive hypothesis of the body*, introduced in the thesis, enables a consideration of how the assumption of repression normalizes embodiment and prioritizes conventional able-bodiedness. Finally, the formulation of *bodies of latent potential* helps to pay attention to how notions of bodies as moldable and connected to cultural factors have emerged in the intersections of colonialist, ableist and eugenicist understandings.

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Tiivistelmä

Vammaistutkimuksessa on politisoitu se, miten kulttuurissa ja yhteiskunnassa vammattomuus ensisijaistetaan eri tavoin. Näihin näkökulmiin kiinnittyen väitöskirja teoretisoi ableismia moninaisena joukkona oletuksia, jotka homogenisoivat kehollisuutta. Väitöskirja tutkii kulttuurista politiikkaa ideassa uimataidosta kansalaistaitona ja uimiseen liittyviä artikulaatioita ihmisistä osana eläinkuntaa. Artikulaation teorian ja foucault'laisen genealogian kautta väitöskirja valjastaa uimiseen liittyvät kulttuuriset ideat ableismin teoretisointiin. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan historiallisia ja nykyisiä uimiseen liittyviä kulttuurisia tekstejä kysyen, kuinka näissä teksteissä olevien ymmärrysten kautta voidaan paikantaa erityisiä ableismin kulttuurisia mekanismeja ja kehittää käsitteellisiä tapoja haastaa niitä.

Poikkitieteellisestä näkökulmasta, joka on erityisesti yhteydessä vammais- ja queer-tutkimuksen yhteisiin tavoitteisiin politisoida konventionaalinen kehollisuus, tutkimus esittelee näkökulman, joka haastaa vammattomuuden ideaalin kulttuurisissa ja teoreettisissa näkökulmissa. Tutkimus tekee intervention ideoihin, jotka olettavat kyvykkyyshanteita uhmaavien kehojen olevan vähempiarvoisia. Tutkimuksessa esiteltävä näkökulma mahdollistaa myös huomion kiinnittämisen siihen, kuinka sitoumukset konventionaaliseen kehollisuuteen tulevat esiin kulttuurikritiikin joissakin analyttisissä tarkastelutavoissa.

Esittelemällä käsitteen *able-bodied belonging* väitöskirja tuo huomion kulttuurisiin mekanismeihin, jotka kiinnittyvät ableismin ideaaleihin samalla kun ne tarjoavat näennäisen inklusiivisia kuulumisen muotoja. Ottamalla liikunnallisten taitojen artikulaatiot biopoliittisen analyysin kohteeksi tutkimus myös esittelee tavan hahmottaa, kuinka kokemukset oman kehon ominaisuuksien vaalittavuudesta ovat yhteydessä biopoliittikan ja thanatopoliittikan ulottuvuuksiin. Väitöskirjan toinen keskeinen käsite *the repressive hypothesis of the body* tuo puolestaan huomion siihen, kuinka oletukset repressiosta normalisoivat kehollisuutta ja ensisijaistavat konventionaalista vammattomuutta. Lopuksi esittelemällä käsitteen *bodies of latent potential* työ tarjoaa näkökulman ymmärtää, kuinka oletukset kehoista muokkautuvina ja kytkeytyvinä kulttuurisiin elementteihin ovat tarjonneet väyliä ymmärryksille, jotka esiintyvät kolonialismin, ableismin ja eugeniikan risteävissä kehyksissä.

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II Vaahtera 2016: Biopolitics and the repressive hypothesis of the body: The case of swimming training in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 18(2): 142–153.

III Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018: Bodies of latent potential: Abled imaginary and national belonging in Finnish cultural texts about swimming. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 26(4): 593–607.

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1. Introduction

On February 4, 2017, members of the far-right wing organization Finland First! (*Suomi Ensini!*) monitored how assumed immigrants behaved in one public swimming pool in Helsinki. A few days later, *Helsingin Sanomat*, the largest newspaper in Finland, reported on the incident, noting that “an anti-immigration group patrolled in the swimming hall” and the group observed that immigrants follow the swimming pool etiquette. One member of the patrol gave a reason for these actions, saying that “it is after all a question about hygiene, which is important” (Moilanen 2017).

How anti-immigration activists have taken swimming as a place to articulate their views strangely echoes the historical meanings of swimming in the context of Finland. Historically, swimming has had civilizational connotations in Finland, with the ability to swim being deemed a civic skill and associated with “proper” citizenship. In the current Finnish national curriculum, the ability to swim is considered a pivotal skill. At the present moment, the articulation of swimming skills as civic skills emerges in different arenas through different kinds of agents. In the 1910s, when eugenic fears framed the bodies of Finns and associated Finns with “inferior” races, the ability to swim was articulated as a quality that would link Finns with Western culture and civilization. During that time, the ability to swim was rather rare. The belief that everyone is capable of swimming did not dominate those times, but there was a sense of hope for a future where everyone would swim and, as such, Finland would appear more civilized. Before the Second World War, the ability to swim was politicized in a manner that connected the desire to mold bodies so that they could swim with the attempt to civilize Finns and improve Finnish culture. After the Second World War, these notions that swimming lessons should be incorporated into schools began to appear in the texts of the curriculum committees that plan teaching in primary schools. Still, curriculum committee texts of that time do not demand that the teaching of swimming be organized as part of basic education, nor do they deem the ability to swim as a civic skill.

Turning to past and present articulations about swimming, this dissertation opens a space for considering how ideas about capable bodies are historical and thus indeterminate. From the approach of the Foucauldian genealogy (Foucault 1977, 1991, 2003), which—according to Johanna Oksala (2007, 53)—is skeptical of “what is held most revered and noble,” I

investigate what kinds of cultural values frame the understanding that the ability to swim is a central skill. Even though many people enjoy swimming, it should not lead us to have a normalizing goal that everyone can swim. Still, the associations that link the ability to swim with proper citizenship construe the ability to swim in this way. Furthermore, even though being unable to swim opens a body to situations that are associated with risks in the contemporary imagination, risks are part of embodied living in many ways. Many people live in ways that can be seen as risky when that is consistent with what they need or want in their embodied living.¹ For example, living openly as queer or trans in an environment that is hostile to sexual or gender nonconformity, the use of legal and illegal drugs or hormones, and BDSM practices can involve risks but can also be hugely necessary for well-being. In this respect, rather than seeking to save people from risky situations, a more helpful approach would consider how the aims to increase safety in the context of embodied living homogenize embodiment and the imaginary around it.

When this work explores what kinds of ideas and assumptions have been attached to the ability to swim, it re-articulates conventional imaginaries that frame bodies and abilities. This dissertation probes how ableist imaginaries that prioritize and idealize bodily enhancement produce certain kinds of abilities without asking what forms of embodiment they simultaneously erase. My perspective draws from disability studies, which approaches able-bodiedness as not self-evident or natural. By focusing on articulations about bodies in the context of swimming, I show some specific mechanisms of ableist culture. *Ableist* is an adjective form of the term *ableism*, which was defined by Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009, 5) as a “network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human.”² There is a horizon of perfection both in ableism and culture. According to Raymond Williams (1976), the multivalent term *culture* has denoted processes of *cultivating* lands, minds, bodies, ideas, and other sites associated with the actions of human beings. These processes have also been linked with the idea of civilization (*ibid.*). Civilization as a highly developed form of human activity often frames the understanding of culture and hence connects culture with improvement and betterment (*ibid.*). However, if we perceive culture as a mode of processing

¹ See Irni (2017) for how the notion of risks functions in the context of embodiment.

² My understanding of ableism is indebted to the work of Reinikainen (2007), whose research introduced me to Campbell’s ideas.

understandings, culture is not so easily connected with betterment and indeed can appear as a place in which ableist ideals are not only cultivated but challenged.

This research discusses with the fields of disability studies, crip theory, feminist science studies, queer theory, critical animal studies, cultural studies of education, post-colonial studies, and feminist theories of the body. In line with the theory of articulation (Grossberg 1996; Slack 1996), this dissertation analyzes assumptions about bodies and at the same time aims to shape the understandings of bodies by theorizing them. This kind of methodological approach frames the whole dissertation. The theory of articulation recognizes that current articulations are meaningful but not necessary. The term *re-articulation* highlights the unnecessary character of articulations (Slack 1996). In this respect, this dissertation views re-articulation as a result of research; re-articulation means articulating specific cultural meanings in such a way that these meanings then appear less stable and more open to change. The methodological perspective of my work joins cultural studies' focus on new kinds of articulations with the ability of Michel Foucault's ([1981]1991, 121) genealogy to "produce something that doesn't yet exist."

In this work, I use the term *culture* in three senses. In my general approach, I view culture as an activity that shapes understandings through language and practices and that regularly takes different forms. Culture is not a coherent arrangement of meanings. It is heterogeneous and constantly changing. The second sense of culture denotes cultural products (e.g., Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg 1992). In this research, cultural texts enable me to trace articulations. By using the term *cultural text*, I emphasize how various kinds of products articulate how it is possible to make sense of the world. The third sense of culture in my approach means how culture is also an idea that has been used in struggles about meanings; that is, there are politics around culture. Here, I explore how culture functions in the articulations about bodies—for example, how the idea of a Finnish national culture relates to specific assumptions about embodiment.

This article-based dissertation consists of three articles and a summary. Each article offers a new theoretical concept that supports a more nuanced investigation of the cultural mechanisms of ableism. The dissertation contributes to understanding how the cultural mechanisms operating in the specific contexts where multivalent and seemingly universalizing assumptions about bodies emerge can construct hierarchies in complex ways. Another

contribution of the research is a specific cultural analysis of how ableism frames cultural values.

My research questions are connected in part to the specific cultural texts of swimming that I explore and in part to the cultural problem that prioritizes able-bodiedness. In the articles, I offer answers to both kinds of questions, reading cultural texts about swimming and at the same time theorizing ableism. In all three articles, I focus on the following: 1) How do the articulations on swimming make it possible to investigate specific mechanisms of ableism and form concepts that would intervene in the cultural logic of ableism? 2) What kinds of understandings about bodies frame the articulations on swimming? More specifically, in article I (“We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked”), I consider the question: 3) How does the idea of human beings as part of the animal world function in the articulations of swimming? In articles II (“Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body”) and III (“Bodies of Latent Potential”), I explore: 4) How has the idea of swimming skills as civic skills appeared in Finland during the twentieth and early twenty-first century?

The perspective of this research is indebted to the histories of disability activism and scholarship that have intervened in ableist culture. Scholars and activists have shown how bodies and minds deemed unproductive, disabled, sick, challenged, incapable, or deviant have appeared less often as valuable and worthy and more often as being in need of social and medical interventions (Snyder and Mitchell 2006; Price 2011; Kafer 2013; Mietola 2014). The term *intervention* has both medical and behavioral connotations, and teachers and professionals who work with “special” children have used intervention to signify a process meant to normalize these children (e.g., Lipsey and Wilson 1993). However, intervention can also be used to suggest an attitude that challenges knowledge that appears to be legitimate and nonpolitical in a particular context (Pulkkinen 2015). Intervention thus politicizes perspectives taken for granted and in this way shapes culture (ibid.). Both disability studies and gender studies share this kind of methodological attitude; hence, it is not surprising that gender studies has offered many disability studies scholars fruitful approaches for analyzing bodies (Wendell 1996; Garland-Thomson 2005; McRuer 2006a; Kafer 2013; Samuels 2014). The philosopher Tuija Pulkkinen (2015) connects the idea of intervention with the work of gender studies, noting that gender studies scholars do not aim to investigate what gender is—rather, they question the assumptions about gender—and in this way they intervene in the beliefs about gender to change them. Similarly, instead of trying to

describe what disability is, disability studies intervenes in articulations about disability. Thus, intervention also signals an act of interfering with perceptions and, more broadly, in culture—without the aim of producing idealized bodies and minds.

This kind of reading of culture as a place where different understandings of bodies emerge is the perspective of cultural disability studies, which provides key approaches to my research. By cultural disability studies, I mean disability studies research that draws from cultural studies approaches—in contrast to such perspectives on disability that are situated, for example, in social sciences.³ Despite the different approaches, disability studies generally challenges and politicizes the dominant medical and individualizing articulations of disability. However, cultural disability studies focuses particularly on the varied perceptions about disability, and cultural texts usually provide a way to investigate such understandings. In the context of cultural disability studies, scholars have investigated, for example, how the cultural understandings of disability are connected to specific historical circumstances and the articulations of race, gender, and sexuality (Garland-Thomson 1997; Mitchell and Snyder 2000; Snyder and Mitchell 2006; Kafer 2013; McRuer 2006a, 2018; Samuels 2014; Clare 2017; Donaldson 2011; Kolářová 2014; Chen 2014). My perspective also draws from the area in which it has been shown that citizenship has been articulated in a way that connects conventional embodiment with it (Oliver 1990; Hughes 2001; Wendell 1996; Snyder and Mitchell 2006; Kauppila and Lappalainen 2015; Niemi 2015). The situatedness of the dissertation is not, however, conventional, because though I investigate the assumptions about bodies from the viewpoint of disability studies, I do not focus only on the articulations of disability. Rather, I read the cultural texts on swimming as a disability studies scholar who wants to intervene in ableist culture. I analyze how ableism occurs as an unchallenged viewpoint in the cultural texts about swimming and in the articulations of “dis/abled bodies” (see Goodley 2014), racialized and gendered bodies, and “non/human” bodies (Giffney and Hird 2008; Henriksen and Radomska 2015). In this way, ableist culture can be viewed as intertwined with notions that do not explicitly concern disability. Simultaneously, it is also possible to show how ableism is challenged in unexpected locations.

The feminist philosopher and disability studies scholar, Susan Wendell (1989, 1996) emphasizes that ableism shapes everyone’s understanding of

³ See, for example, Snyder and Mitchell (2006) on how disability studies has emerged in the context of cultural studies; (see also my text, Vaahtera 2016c).

their body. For Wendell, disabled people and nondisabled people are situated in ableist culture. Furthermore, an American disability studies scholar and activist Simi Linton (2005) has stated that disability theories lack an approach that can analytically amalgamate disabled and nondisabled people in the discussions about ableism. I situate my research in these discussions of disability studies about how ableist imaginaries intersect with assumptions about various kinds of bodies.

Scholars who use the term *crip* have explored bodies and ableism in a way that challenges the clear distinction between disability and nondisability. They have, for example, investigated marginalized and stigmatized forms of bodies/minds whose connection to the category of disability is less obvious (McRuer 2006a; Kafer 2013; Chen 2014; Baril 2016). Carrie Sandahl (2003) notes how some disability activists have adopted *crip*, which has been used as an insult to physically disabled people in particular. By using the term, the activists have tried to transform the power relations in which disability is typically articulated and reject attachments to normality (Sandahl 2003). In these contexts, *crip* has become a word that does not just denote disabled people. Sandahl (2003, 27) writes: “Though I have never heard a nondisabled person seriously claim to *be crip* (as heterosexuals have claimed to *be queer*), I would not be surprised by this practice.” Sandahl’s (2003) observations about *crip* articulate it as a word that can be connected to nondisability. In a similar vein, some queer studies scholars (Thomas 1999; Rossi 2003) have claimed that heterosexuality can also be queer if it is articulated in a way that does not naturalize heterosexuality but actively resists its emergence as a primary and self-evident sexuality. In this sense, Sandahl’s (2003) idea of nondisabled *crips* could be taken as a challenge to investigate nondisability critically.⁴ Indeed, in the context of cultural disability studies, some scholars have started to call their work *crip theory*, and these scholars have also taken nondisability or able-bodiedness as their object of research.

In particular, Robert McRuer’s (2006a) book, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, articulates many of the functions of the term *crip*. McRuer (2006a, 71–72) connects *crip theory* in this seminal work with an attempt to theorize bodies and bodily identities in open-ended ways to resist ableist articulations of bodies in different contexts. He also examines able-bodiedness and introduces the term *compulsory able-bodiedness* to challenge

⁴ It is important to consider how use of the term *crip* by nondisabled people obscures the fact that nondisabled people are not called this word, in contrast to (visibly) disabled people. See McRuer (2006a) on these problems; see also Butler (1997) on the use of the term *queer* as an insult.

able-bodiedness as ahistorical and a “nonidentity” (McRuer 2006a, 1). I use crip theory to explore and understand cultural attempts to homogenize embodiment and create fit bodies. I situate these attempts in their specific contexts so that the cultural position of able-bodiedness as central and primary is less self-evident. My title, “Crippling Swimming,” denotes an approach to investigating the cultural meanings of swimming in a way that connects my analysis to the objectives of disability and crip critiques that explore how able-bodiedness usually emerges as ahistorical. The verb *cripping* has been used by crip theorists to describe an analytic perspective that investigates specific cultural contexts by reading them from an approach that focuses on questions about disability, ableism, and the cultural meanings of less conventional bodies/minds (Sandahl 2003; McRuer 2006a, 2018).

Cultural problems around the ability to swim are not connected to disability as such. Hence, to analyze the cultural meanings of swimming in the context of disability studies can lead to problematic interpretations about ableism which turn the focus away from the lives of disabled people. To conceive how various kinds of bodies emerge in ableist culture, research needs to be nuanced so that it does not trivialize social differences and specific forms of oppression. While it is my claim that questions about ableism should still primarily focus on the experiences of disabled people, the way in which ableism also intertwines with culture in unexpected sites needs more attention.

To connect together such themes, whose linkage is far from self-evident, is risky, but I take the risk in order to avoid another one, which I find more dangerous. As I focus on cultural ideals of bodies, ignorance about disability studies would imply an approach that distances cultural mechanisms engendering socially accepted bodies from the questions concerning the articulations of disability in culture. It could perhaps allow non-disabled readers of my work to view themselves as totally distinct from the cultural meanings of disability—and furthermore it could allow a view of “normal” life separated from complex processes in which dangerous assumptions about bodies become a way of life.

This study centers on the cultural mechanisms that allow able-bodiedness to emerge culturally as a prioritized perspective to bodies. The research intervenes in the cultural understandings of such bodily states that usually have negative connotations—bodily states that appear to precede a full and properly developed form. I trace specific articulations in which a capable embodiment is viewed as a latent quality that expresses bodies’ “real” qualities. I will explore how this assumption emerges in specific contexts,

and in this way, I aim to refrain from accepting it as a determinate notion. When I explore how this kind of notion appears in specific articulations, it becomes possible to see how the assumptions that prioritize able-bodiedness are connected to specific cultural sites. Moreover, the conceptual approach that I give to these assumptions makes it possible to intervene in them. I introduce three concepts: *able-bodied belonging* (article I), the *repressive hypothesis of the body* (article II), and *bodies of latent potential* (article III). They help bring attention to the view in which negatively framed bodies are understood culturally as less legitimate. In this respect, the concepts aim to provide some more precise methods of crippling (Sandahl 2003; McRuer 2006a, 2018).

Able-bodied belonging is introduced in the article “We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked.” In the article, I focus on the cultural texts of evolutionary biology and investigate how ableism frames the idea that human beings belong to the animal world. The concept of able-bodied belonging captures an assumption in evolutionary biological accounts that accepts ableist hierarchies while understanding how evolutionary ideas mean that prevailing forms of embodiment are not determinate. The repressive hypothesis of the body introduced in article II explores how capable embodiment appears as a bodily state that is connected to freedom in cultural texts. In the article, I consider how learning new physical skills sometimes means that bodies cannot return to their former states. For example, being able to swim can mean that it is impossible to be in deep water without swimming. While this condition will prevent bodies from drowning, it also means that learning to swim requires accepting the notion that the state of being unable to swim can be eliminated. However, we do not usually view such bodily changes in this way. As I will elaborate on in section 4.2, some bodily states are viewed from the start as the destroyable bodily states of properly developed able-bodied human beings. The conceptual contribution of article III, bodies of latent potential, facilitates analysis of how a viewpoint that stresses the relational qualities of bodies does not necessarily offer anti-hierarchical understandings. Rather, I explore how latent potential emerges in orientalist styles and how it homogenizes embodiment.

As introductory chapters have traditionally been spaces for authors to describe their connection with their research topic, I want to use this convention to write about my relationship to the cultural meanings of swimming. It must have been against all odds that I did not learn how to swim during my childhood and youth, despite receiving swimming lessons and living in an area where the ability to swim is considered a civic skill. While I

knew I was expected to enjoy being in the water to the extent that I could learn to propel myself in that environment, my reluctance to be in the water prevented me from learning to swim. In this way, I started to understand myself as a nonswimmer. Stephen Fry (1997) writes in his autobiographical work *Moab Is My Washpot* of having to wear red swimming trunks throughout his school years during swimming lessons because red trunks marked those who were not able to swim properly. Wearing the distinctive swimming trunks highlighted his difference from swimmers and established his inability to swim as a specific and marked quality of his body. Fry's memoir shows how the ostensible inconsequentiality of the inability to swim has meaningfulness on a cultural level and how it materializes as an identity through social practices.

As time went by, I was not so much worried or ashamed about not being able to survive in the water. Other kinds of notions about swimming also started to feel intriguing. I was particularly fascinated with the rationale for deeming the ability to swim a civic skill in Finland. Considering that citizenship is always an exclusive framework, why would those who are already privileged by the legal definitions of citizenship want to acquire qualities that make them more developed citizens? Indeed, how has the context of swimming become a place in which citizenship is articulated? What kinds of cultural problems are at stake in the conjunction between swimming and citizenship? As my research progressed, I also became interested in how the idea of nature emerges in complex ways in the perceptions of swimming. I started to explore how beliefs about nature and human bodies as belonging to the animal world emerge from this context. In my approach to the cultural perceptions of swimming, I wanted to show the heterogeneous articulations about swimming and the continuities of cultural associations.

I think that my embodied position allows me to discern something swimmers cannot. However, I have also wondered how to write about a theme that I have only viewed from a distance and what aspects of swimming I cannot see. Still, I am hardly the only one who has researched a subject with which they have a distant relationship. In a conventional approach, this distance can even be preferable. However, this is not a God's view that sees "everything from nowhere" (Haraway 1988, 581). My approach is indebted to researchers who have studied the relationships between conventional embodiment and citizenship articulations; queer, trans, and crip narratives that articulate embodiment in open-ended ways, emphasizing how traditional narratives cannot limit how people experience their bodies; the queer theoretician Eve Sedgwick's ([1990] 2008, 22; 2011) insistent view that

“people are different from each other;” and the histories of political communities in which the cultural norms of bodies are analyzed, connecting them to the intersections of anti-fascism and queer, trans, and crip world makings.⁵

The sections in chapter 2, “Conceptual Starting Points,” offer theoretical contexts to my research; chapter 3, “Approach and Methods,” describes how I have read and explored the cultural texts on swimming; chapter 4, “Re-articulating Able-Bodiedness,” provides the conceptual formulations that emerged during the research process; and chapter 5, “Conclusions,” summarizes the main insights of the research. Throughout the dissertation, I interrogate ideas about culture, ableism, and embodiment, and disability studies and cultural studies approaches infiltrate all the chapters. Readers whose backgrounds are in queer and transgender studies will likely be most interested in sections 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, and 4.2. Those who are interested in questions about citizenship and national belonging can find from sections 2.3, 3.5, and 4.3 a path for reading this work. Finally, sections 3.3 and 4.1 will resonate with the readers who are involved in affect studies.

⁵ A seminal crip theoretical text on how activism and theory can work together for a new, more just world, see McRuer and Wilkerson 2003.

2. Conceptual Starting Points

In the following sections, I situate my research in the discussions about able-bodiedness as a cultural norm and embodied dimensions of citizenship.

2.1. Interrogating Able-Bodiedness

“Idealizing the body prevents everyone, able-bodied and disabled, from identifying with and loving her/his real body. ... People learn to identify with their own strengths (by cultural standards) and to hate, fear and neglect their own weaknesses.” (Wendell 1989, 112–113)

The above quotation is from Susan Wendell’s article “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability” from 1989. In the article, Wendell emphasizes how ableism shapes everyone’s understanding of their body. Wendell (1989) considers how bodies that appear to be distant from disability are still effects of ableism because in an ableist culture some qualities of the body have been demarcated outside the area of identification. Hence, Wendell articulates ableism as a restricting cultural mechanism which also impacts on able-bodied people. In this section, I offer a short genealogy of how able-bodiedness has appeared in disability studies. At the same time, I provide, through this genealogy, some observations about a cultural bond to able-bodiedness in order to re-articulate some dimensions of ableist culture.

Wendell (1989) interrogates able-bodied identification as self-evident and politicizes identifications with capability. She notes how disabled people’s knowledges about ableism as a social experience and intimate knowledges about unconventional bodies offer ways to re-articulate cultural ideas about bodies. Furthermore, she also situates non-disabled people in the critical project of challenging ableist culture. Wendell’s (1989, 112) idea that “idealizing the body prevents everyone, able-bodied and disabled, from identifying with and loving her/his real body” highlights how ableist culture affects everyone.

Even though Wendell (1989) pays attention to how an ableist culture does not recognize different qualities of bodies and different embodied knowledges as legitimate, she uses the expression “real body” in a way that appears to connect it with a conventional idea of the “natural” ignoring how

bodies associated with the “natural” are also products of complex “somatechnic” (Sullivan and Murray 2009) processes. The term “somatechnics” joins different meanings of “technics” to bodies (“soma”), and thus denotes how bodies are connected as tools and effects to specific political processes, technological practices and other sites which appear to be far-flung from organic bodies (ibid., Stryker and Sullivan 2009). When this dissertation explores how the ability to swim is related to specific social and cultural elements, it simultaneously shows a particular somatechnic process. My perspective interrogates the self-evident status of the ability to swim by showing how the understandings of swimming are not ahistorical, how the notion of the ability to swim as an essential skill is used in the cultural politics of forms of belonging, and how its articulations manifest specific cultural fears and wishes. Although my perspective, similarly to Wendell’s, interrogates an ableist ideal of capability, I focus on how the “reality” of a capable body is connected to specific social and cultural processes.

Alexandre Baril (2015, 40) notes that Wendell’s assumption of the “real body” necessitates a cisnormative assumption which ignores transgender experiences in which one does not identify with the body which is usually read as “natural.” Furthermore, I would suggest that it might be worth considering how ableism functions through the assumption of “reality,” associating “real” with conventional able-bodiedness (Vaahtera 2016a). Consider for example how skillfulness or physical capability can be seen as qualities which have been hidden or whose actualization is articulated as developing into the person one really is. For example, cultural narratives that stress how important it is to consider oneself as a capable person who is able to succeed in life can necessitate an idea of a “real body,” a body which has been repressed but which eventually comes into existence through the right kinds of actions. In the next section 2.3 “Compulsory able-bodiedness and ‘real bodies’” I consider how the notion of “reality” can reinforce ableist assumptions about bodies.

In this section, I next turn to Fiona Kumari Campbell’s work which argues that disability studies should interrogate the ideals of abledness. I then introduce Robert McRuer’s and Alison Kafer’s approaches which offer, from the perspectives of cultural studies and queer studies, nuanced analyses of the articulations of bodies. In particular, I focus on the concept of “compulsory able-bodiedness” (McRuer 2006a).

Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009, 198) notes how “there is an ethos in critical disability studies whereby people with disability are both subject and object of the process of theorisation.” Campbell (2009, 197) emphasizes the

importance of this attitude while at the same time, perhaps paradoxically, suggesting that disability studies could interrogate “the production of abledness” and the ways that ableism frames the understandings of various kinds of bodies. In the book *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Aabledness*, Campbell (2009) argues that studying ableism should not only focus on questions about the place of disability in culture and society. Rather, she suggests that it should lead to “reconsidering the way we think about all bodies and mentalities” (Campbell 2009, 198).

In the suggested approach, disability as a specific administrative and cultural category is not the only object of analysis. However, such a perspective can lead to concerns about how disability studies which explores bodies and mentalities deemed non-disabled would then reiterate a dominant perspective in which disability operates in culture as a tool for articulating bodies distanced from it. Indeed, as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder (2000) remark, disability has often functioned in various kinds of narratives as a component which turns the focus of narration away from disability. For example, there is a long history of how disabled figures in cultural narratives have illuminated evilness, cheating and other undesirable characteristics, as well as specific social problems. Mitchell and Snyder (2000) stress that there is a paradox in how disability as a symbol in cultural narratives offers a way to articulate specific social and cultural concerns and yet is itself rarely taken to be a social and cultural category but rather assumed to be an ahistorical notion. Furthermore, historically non-disabled perspectives on disability have often produced an impression of being in a position which enables ostensibly value-free articulations of disability. However, when Campbell (2009, 198) calls for disability studies to interrogate “the way we think about all bodies and mentalities,” her approach suggests a nuanced counter-move to narratives which use disability only symbolically in narratives whose function is not to intervene in ableist understandings.

According to Campbell (2009, 5–6, 19–20), to turn the focus on ableism means a perspective which asks how the ideal of abledness is produced in various contexts. Furthermore, Campbell’s focus is to explore how idealized conventional bodies function as norms for corporeality and for practices and understandings which frame various cultural sites. Her viewpoint pays attention to the manifold ways that bodies deemed disabled experience the world in a way that could challenge taken for granted knowledges about embodiment (Campbell 2009, 14–15). In addition, Campbell observes how cultural notions of abledness constitute embodied practices and subjectivities

in such a way that able-bodiedness is presented as self-evidently desirable.⁶ Able-bodiedness appears in this light as a norm which homogenizes the articulations of bodies.

Robert McRuer's (2006a) concept of "compulsory able-bodiedness" articulates able-bodiedness as an unrecognized cultural norm which naturalizes able-bodied perspectives in different contexts.⁷ Thus, "compulsory able-bodiedness" intervenes in ableist culture. McRuer (2006b, 304) (who uses the term "able-bodied culture") situates his project in a cultural studies context where cultural understandings are assumed to be debatable. "Compulsory able-bodiedness" challenges the idea that everyone agrees with an ableism that assumes disabled bodies to be inferior or poorer versions of the able-bodied. McRuer's concept draws on Adrienne Rich's (1980) term "compulsory heterosexuality." Rich's (1980) analysis of "compulsory heterosexuality" also emphasized how heterosexuality as a prioritized cultural perspective is contestable. However, McRuer does not only suggest that able-bodiedness could be analyzed drawing on the interrogation of heterosexuality done by lesbian, gay and queer theorists. He also suggests that "compulsory able-bodiedness" and "compulsory heterosexuality" emerge in culture in such a way that the assumptions of these two frameworks often overlap with each other. For example, both able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are often articulated in the framework of normalcy and seen as normal states (McRuer 2006a). Indeed, McRuer's specific context of *crip theory* can be associated with a perspective that analyzes the intersections of queerness and disability; the ways in which queerness and disability agree and disagree with each other and the ways in which queer theory and disability studies interrogate the normalization of bodies (McRuer 2006a, 2011; Rydström 2012; see also McRuer and Wilkerson 2003; Sandahl 2003; Sherry 2004; Kafer 2013; Toriseva 2017).

McRuer's (2006a) perspective aims to connect able-bodiedness to specific historical contexts. He contextualizes able-bodied identity through linking it, for instance, to industrial and neo-liberal capitalism, to the emergence of "home" within the public/private distinction and to the understandings of heterosexuality as normal and healthy, paying attention to the historical specificity of these contexts (McRuer 2006a). McRuer (2006a, 40, 192–193, 244n16) notes how the specific understandings of bodies and sexuality are

⁶ Campbell (2009) mentions, for example, rehabilitation practices which prioritize the norm of mobility over the lessening of pain, passing, and sexual politics which cannot imagine disability to be desirable.

⁷ McRuer introduced the concept at the Modern Language Association Convention in 1999.

momentary rather than determinate. From this, it follows that McRuer's articulation of the intertwining of "compulsory able-bodiedness" and "compulsory heterosexuality" does not mean that disability and queerness would never be in a conflictual relationship with each other in some contexts.

Questions about how historical stigma, which associates queerness with illness, can frame contemporary articulations of queerness, and thus sometimes put queerness and disability in a conflictual relationship with each other, have been considered in the context of "gay shame" (Halperin and Traub 2009). This exploration of "gay shame" has aimed to ask how the notion of shame could productively enable an investigation of topics usually appearing too marginal or odd (*ibid.*). For McRuer (2006a), a cultural bond to able-bodiedness can be an unrecognized cultural framework of some gay marriage articulations, which emphasize normalcy (see also Halperin and Traub 2009). Furthermore, historical associations which connect queerness with illness or abnormal-appearing bodies (Somerville 1994) can make it difficult for non-heterosexual people to articulate the relationship between "compulsory able-bodiedness" and "compulsory heterosexuality" when this kind of historical stigma conflicts with the aims of presenting non-heterosexuality as normal (McRuer 2006a; Halperin and Traub 2009).

According to McRuer (2006a, 8) compulsory able-bodiedness "emanates from everywhere and nowhere" in such a way that able-bodiedness simply appears normal and self-evident. Different ideas about bodies and cultural contexts which seem to be distant from the articulations of disability and able-bodiedness can reinforce attachments to able-bodiedness. In this sense, my approach views able-bodiedness as a cluster of manifold articulations. The aim is to explore how a cultural bond to able-bodiedness is reinforced in particular contexts and how particular assumptions about bodies enable able-bodiedness to appear a prioritized quality of a body.

McRuer's (2018) recent work focuses on austerity and neoliberal capitalism. In this context, McRuer (2018, 216) suggests that the term "crip" "forges (or dares to conjure up) a coalition of 'left-behinds' who may or may not *identify* as disabled but who can be comprehended as connected somehow through a crip analytic committed to theorizing vulnerability, precarity, and resistance expansively." This sense of "crip" as an analytical term which helps to articulate how various kinds of bodies are articulated in the framework of ableism is central to my approach.

In this study, the coalitional approach of crip theory (McRuer 2018) means exploring cultural understandings of swimming in a way that connects these understandings to the ideals of perfect bodies. It also means that even though

I intervene in the assumption that understands the inability to swim as an undeveloped quality of the body, I contextualize this cultural problem in a way which also re-articulates bodies whose marginalization is very different from that of non-swimmers' bodies. The article "We swam before we breathed or walked': Able-bodied belonging in popular stories of evolutionary biology" inquires into the mechanisms of dehumanization of racialized bodies. It also explores anthropocentric ideas and interrogates the divide human/non-human. The perspectives offered by articles "Biopolitics and the repressive hypothesis of the body: The case of swimming training in Finland" and "Bodies of Latent Potential: Abled Imaginary and National Belonging in Finnish Cultural Texts about Swimming" intervene in the cultural understandings of transgender and racialized bodies. Moreover, in this dissertation, disabled bodies, fat bodies, children's bodies and women's bodies are shown as bodies whose articulations are related to broader cultural meanings. Though sexual practices are not the focus of this research, queer theoretical approaches, which defamiliarize the meanings which are entwined in "sexuality," is not unrelated to my reading of cultural meanings of repression and pleasure (see "Biopolitics and the repressive hypothesis of the body" and "Bodies of Latent Potential") and nature (see "We swam before we breathed or walked"). It is possible to consider how the understandings of repression, pleasure and nature, which have sexual connotations, also operate in non-sexual contexts of embodiment. Ableist culture emerges in this dissertation as a cluster of different articulations, which function in different contexts and which draw on various understandings.

In an early reflection and development of the concept of "compulsory able-bodiedness," Alison Kafer (2003, 77n5) points out that "nondisabled feminist theorists have not begun the self-reflective process of examining their own able-bodied privilege." The approach of this dissertation is indebted to this remark by Kafer. This research is a case study of a specific context of able-bodied identity and it traces how the prioritizing of capability emerges through specific articulations of bodies. However, more than aiming to reflect on my own able-bodied privilege, the central idea of this research resonates with the notion Kafer (2013, 9) develops in her book *Feminist, Queer, Crip* of how ableism thoroughly intertwines with culture and also emerges in sites which appear to be distant from disability. This dissertation, which turns to a specific articulation of ability, approaches ability through paying attention to the specific mechanisms which prioritize ability in cultural imaginaries.

Foucault's genealogy offers me a way to interrogate mechanisms that naturalize ability, and helps me to show how everyday life seemingly outside of cultural hierarchies and politics is saturated with specific historical and contemporary forms of attachment to problematic civilizational fantasies of culture. In this work, genealogy is also a perspective on the work of other scholars. It is possible to describe it as a form of exploration which enables us to think in new ways and also reconsider our analytic attachments when we turn to specific ideas of contemporary cultural critics. (On genealogy, see section 3.2.) By reading the works of disability theorists who have interrogated able-bodiedness and queer studies' articulations that politicize conventional embodiment, I aim to build an approach which shows how these traditions of thought provide previously unrecognized perspectives for the dismantling of idealized able-bodiedness—both in cultural and analytical spheres.

2.2. Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and “Real Bodies”

In this section, I elaborate on how Judith Butler's theory operates in McRuer's idea of “compulsory able-bodiedness.” I then offer a different kind of perspective to “compulsory able-bodiedness” drawing on Butler's (1999) notion of how compulsory heterosexuality reinforces specific articulations around the idea of gender as “real.” Butler (1999) stated that to link “reality” with particular bodies is ultimately political even when it is presented as natural. In this way, I approach “compulsory able-bodiedness” as an assemblage of various articulations that enable conventional able-bodiedness to appear a real condition of bodies.

When introducing the idea of “compulsory able-bodiedness” McRuer (2006a) articulates able-bodiedness as an identity which is not unconnected to specific social circumstances but constituted in processes of repetitions which engender the effect of able-bodiedness as a self-evident viewpoint on bodies. He cites Butler's (1991, 21) text “Imitation and Gender Insubordination“: “The ‘reality’ of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations. In other words, heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself—and failing.” (McRuer 2006a, 9) After noting how able-bodiedness is an idealized state which is impossible to fully achieve (McRuer 2006a, 9), McRuer (2006a, 10) turns to Butler's *Gender Trouble* re-placing “heterosexuality” with “able-bodiedness” and in this way re-articulating

conventional understandings of able-bodiedness: “the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals [able-bodiedness] itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an inevitable comedy.” Furthermore, through introducing the formulation of “ability trouble” to highlight how idealized able-bodiedness cannot be maintained as a coherent system and even if it aimed to do so the attempt cannot succeed, his approach highlights resistance to ableist culture (McRuer 2006a, 10). McRuer (2006a) pays attention to how ableism has been challenged in different locations, and how “able-bodied identity” assumed to be “organized into a seamless and univocal whole” (McRuer 2006a, 156) is contingent on changing ideals of bodies. For example, the assumptions about productivity, what constitutes working capacity in a particular society and what kinds of embodiment and forms of behavior are possible for a proper human being and citizen can be considered in the framework of cultural norms which constitute the disability/able-bodiedness divide. This approach to ableism highlights resistance and is in line with Butler’s (1999) notion of how cultural interventions into seemingly foundational identities simultaneously redefine and enable identities.⁸

Whereas McRuer (2006a) emphasizes the impossibility of maintaining ableist ideals, I foreground mechanisms which maintain compulsory able-bodiedness in complex ways. These differences in our approaches can be viewed as different (though not oppositional) ways to read Butler. As Anu Koivunen (2004) remarks, Butler’s (early) work can be read in two ways—either stressing how performativity enables transformations or turning to processes through which the effect of realness endures. Though McRuer’s (2006a) *Crip Theory* does not consider the conjunction of able-bodiedness and realness, the way in which “realness” functions in the cultural assumptions of heterosexuality was crucial for Butler’s theorizing.⁹ Butler’s (1991) text “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” which helps McRuer theorize the cultural compulsion of able-bodiedness, contains a touching section, in which Butler describes how she as a young lesbian witnessed the idea that heterosexuality is connected with “realness.” “As a young person, I suffered

⁸ Don Kulick and Jens Rydstrom (2015) have criticized McRuer for this emphasis and for the focus on cultural texts. McRuer (2018) responds to these views in his latest book, in which “resistance,” indeed, appears in the title: *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance*. See Karhu (2017) on the notion of resistance in Butler’s work.

⁹ My intention is not to claim that McRuer’s work does not consider at all the aspect my work emphasizes or that my work would not share the interest in looking at how ableism gets challenged. Rather, we emphasize different aspects when exploring ableist culture.

for a long time, and I suspect many people have, from being told, explicitly or implicitly, that what I ‘am’ is a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real. Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic...” (Butler 1991, 20).

The way in which changing ideals of bodies function to make some bodies shadows of the real does not only concern lesbians and queers. When I was reading Butler’s “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” I was thinking about how “realness” operates with regard to transgender bodies; how cis men and cis women can appear more “real” men and women, and how transgender people are even accused of being dishonest if not explicitly expressing being trans (e.g. Bettcher 2007; Vähäpassi 2019). I was also thinking about how the cultural norms of ability associate able-bodiedness with a properly developed body, and how disability, in contrast, is understood as a state which is always framed by the hope of a cure (e.g. Kafer 2013, 27–28). Furthermore, I was thinking about how capability as a horizon of all bodies frames imaginaries about embodiment and “normal” ways of life. Butler’s ideas excited my associations to travel to categories Butler did not consider.

According to the disability studies scholar Ellen Samuels (2002), Butler’s work has inspired many scholars’ theorizing about disability even though Butler herself bypasses questions concerning disability and illness when theorizing bodies. In Samuels’ (2002) essay, McRuer’s then newly introduced concept of “compulsory able-bodiedness” is given as one example of work in which Butler’s ideas are used to theorize bodies in a different context than that originally intended by Butler. Samuels (2002, 60) points out that even though Butler’s work which approaches bodies by asking “which physical and discursive conditions render bodies legible or livable” could enable the theorizing of cultural meanings of disability in productive ways, disability studies scholars who use Butler’s ideas should not forget that Butler’s theory does not concern disability. Hence, according to Samuels (2002), it can be problematic to simply replace “sex/gender” or “gay/lesbian” with “disability” in an approach which draws on Butler. However, my general approach leaves Butler’s ideas to a rather marginal role. This has less to do with the fact that Butler was not in *Gender Trouble* theorizing questions which interest me than my cultural studies’ approach, which explores how the cultural understandings of bodies are situated in specific contexts. My approach explores cultural texts assuming that theoretical texts are also cultural texts, which can be interrogated and not simply applied. A precise investigation of cultural contexts and different analytic ideas enables me to

intervene in cultural understandings of bodies. In chapter 3, I elaborate on my methodological approach.

The focus of my work is on specific contexts in which various and seemingly unrelated ideas and assumptions engender “abledness” (Campbell 2009) as primary and self-evident. How the assumption of “realness” functions in the articulations of ability is a central theme in section 4.2. One association about “realness” with regard to bodies connects “realness” with something fixed and determinately connected to the body. “Realness” can also be associated with a quality of the body in such a way that the “real” quality is contrasted with the current state of the body. “Realness” can thus temporarily operate in the domain of not-now. My approach pays attention to this kind of temporality of realness and takes it as an assumption which functions in multivalent ways with respect to the cultural norms of bodies.

Indeed, it is important to note that my approach does not suggest that viewing one’s body as a real body in the sense of “this kind of body is really my body whereas another kind of body would not be my body” would be suspicious from the perspective which politicizes the articulations of reality. Rather, I argue that it is possible to inquire into what kinds of bodies can appear as real and which statements about the reality of bodies are affirmed and which challenged. When considering the question of “realness,” “compulsory able-bodiedness” could appear as a mechanism which constitutes certain bodies as more “real” in accordance with cultural norms of ability. Hence, it could be possible to inquire into what kinds of specific cultural mechanisms constitute an idealized able-bodiedness as real in a way that at the same time deems certain bodies less real. This dissertation aims to develop this kind of approach to able-bodiedness and ableist culture. Furthermore, this approach focuses on mechanisms through which the effect of “abledness” (Campbell 2009) as natural and self-evident endures in culture in order to make this effect less inescapable.

2.3. Belonging, Bodies and Citizenship

This research pays attention to the cultural mechanisms that reinforce homogenizing assumptions about bodies. I interrogate how specific ideals about bodies are connected, in cultural fantasies, to a sense of belonging to “imagined communities” (Anderson [1983] 2006). The approach of this work arises from Campbell’s (2009) interrogation of how ableism frames understandings of communal values. I explore how ideas about swimming have offered understandings of bodies and abilities in two forms of belonging:

belonging to the nation and belonging to the animal world. I am interested in how the ideas which constitute visions of a specific national culture emerge through articulations of bodies, and how specific bodily ideals can frame the understandings of human beings as part of the animal world.

Questions about the role of disability and ableist ideals in the articulations of national belonging and belonging to the animal world have been part of disability critiques about ableist culture. For example, disability studies scholar Bill Hughes (2001) argues that citizenship is conventionally connected with seemingly self-reliant bodies. Other disability studies scholars have inquired into how disability has appeared in complex ways around the understandings of animality. Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell (2006) have investigated how disability has functioned in scientific understandings which have argued that animality is a quality of human bodies. More recently, Sunaura Taylor (2012) and Mel Chen (2012) have shown how ideas about animality can both dehumanize disabled bodies and offer fractures in cultural understandings of human bodies. Furthermore, Donna McCormack (2015) has interrogated how notions about national homogeneity, humanness and ableist ideals can interweave in complex ways.

I approach different modes of belonging in a way that assumes them to be contestable formations. Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) uses the concept of “politics of belonging” when denoting changing cultural definitions of what belonging means in specific sites. Methodologically, my aim is not to explore how people experience forms of belonging but how belonging is articulated in cultural texts (see Oikkonen 2018).

I understand citizenship as a historically specific category of denoting how people belong to the state (Helén 2016). However, according to Yuval-Davis (2011), citizenship entails both formal and informal aspects; citizenship is not only a juridical category but also a cultural idea. Hence the idea of citizenship can frame sites which are not in any simple way connected to the juridical category of citizenship. This dissertation approaches citizenship through exploring how the assumptions about citizenship emerge from the cultural texts of swimming. That is, I am interested in how the idea of citizenship has functioned in the context of swimming.

When this work explores the idea of swimming skills as civic skills, it understands power to function without one center which always determines its effects. Rather, as Michel Foucault (1980) emphasizes in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* and as for example Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (2008) have elaborated, power emerges from various sites, and different agents and cultural locations participate in constituting knowledges (see also Foucault

2003). It is important to note that even though the state is not in this approach a center of all forms of power, different sites, which are not in any simple or determinate way connected to the state, can participate in constituting ideas about what belonging to the state and the assumed national community means (see e.g. Shah 2001). This research shows how the idea of swimming skills as civic skills, which connects the ability to swim with proper citizenship, has been articulated by different agents, such as sports associations and journalists. Though they are not officially connected to the state, they still articulate citizenship.

Cultural studies of education has shown how the practices of education both in their formal and less formal and even quotidian ways have constituted ideas about assumed national culture (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma 2000; Komulainen 2001; Tuomaala 2004; Lappalainen 2006; Aydarova, Millei, Piattoeva and Silova 2016). It is even possible to claim that education has often functioned as an authorized vehicle for the transmission of cultural heritage and “civilizational” norms (Hyttén 1999; Slater, Jones and Procter 2017). My re-articulation of the civilizational associations of swimming is connected to these approaches which interrogate the position of education as an activity that teaches identification with the nation.

For example, the concept of “national pedagogy” by Saara Tuomaala (2000, 2004; see also Lappalainen 2006) emphasizes how pedagogical practices have functioned as tools for national belonging and how educational aims have been articulated in the framework of “nation.” Tuomaala (2004) has pointed out how, in the Finnish context, the aims of specific educational practices were in 1920s’ and 1930s’ educational understandings connected to the building of a homogeneous nation which is capable of defending itself. However, “national pedagogy” can also emerge in less explicit ways. The assumptions of national homogeneity and nation as a self-evident context of belonging can be reinforced in educational settings through mundane practices (Lappalainen 2006). Sirpa Lappalainen has analyzed how in the preschool context the forms of time-space order are articulated in a way that associates the ability to follow timetables with Finnishness, and connects the lack of life control with immigrants. These assumptions produce a specific vision of Finnishness and these mundane forms of “national pedagogy” aim to rationalize the molding of bodily practices.

School ethnographers have articulated school as an embodied space, which is organized in a way that assumes that people in the school space adjust their everyday bodily needs to the time-space order of the school (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma 2000; Gordon, Hynninen, Lahelma, Metso, Palmu and

Tolonen 2007). Daily life at school consists of practices in the time-space order of the school which define, for example, times for eating, using restrooms, moving and being seated (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma 2000; Gordon, Hynninen, Lahelma, Metso, Palmu and Tolonen 2007; Vaahtera, Niemi, Lappalainen and Beach 2017). Furthermore, many contemporary sociologists of education have argued that educational policies, cultures and practices are saturated by ideals of conventional types of bodies and minds as well as nationalism targeting not just children but also young people and adults (Fejes 2010; Saari 2011; Ball 2012; Brunila 2012; Brunila and Siivonen 2016). At the same time, scholars who have analyzed education from a critical perspective have argued that the official aims of education are constantly challenged in the everyday context of education and have showed conflicts in the seemingly homogeneous school culture (Paakkari 2015; Hohti 2016; Ikävalko 2016; Taavetti 2017; Karlsson 2017). Scholars who have focused on embodiment and the cultural meanings of bodies in the context of PE lessons have further shown that bodies do not experience the practices of education in homogeneous ways, and that the bodily experiences of pupils show that the official aims of schooling can be evidenced in embodied reactions which manifest dislike (Kosonen 1998; Berg 2010)¹⁰. My perspective draws on these critical approaches to education, and while I trace the civilizational connotations of the ability to swim, I also show how bodies cough and freeze during swimming lessons, feel uncomfortable or unnatural when trying to move in the water or use the swimming hall for something else than swimming (Vaahtera 2016a; Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018). In this way I aim to show that a culture where conventional embodiment is prioritized and naturalized is in fact heterogeneous.

If we understand citizenship as a category which expresses people's relationship to the state, it is also important to consider how this relationship can be framed by conflicts. To have a relationship to the state is a rather unavoidable situation because the state regulates many aspects of everyday life. Furthermore, many formal aspects which are connected to citizenship are not chosen but assumed as duties (such as voting or paying taxes) or as rights (for instance living in a particular area, often regarded as "home" if a legal citizen). In this way, the state hails some people as its own, who are assumed to identify with the interests of the state and feel that they are entitled to specific rights simply due to their birthplace. For different people such a mandatory form of belonging takes different forms in accordance with

¹⁰ For bodily reactions as resistance, see McCormack 2014.

specific juridical, social, political and cultural aspects which frame their lives. For example, for people who live without the juridical status of citizenship inside a specific state, citizenship is an exclusive category which justifies the fact that these people are less protected from violence than other people. In addition, people who are official citizens of a particular state can be situated in the framework of belonging to the state through various contradictions. For example, official citizens can distance their political affinities from a state's official opinions. Official citizens can also challenge the assumption that they should feel a special affinity to their "homeland." For instance, in Finland some people have resisted the nationalistic celebration of Independence Day by announcing on social media that they don't celebrate Independence Day or that Finland does not mean anything to them. Thus, citizenship as a mode of belonging can include forms of "disidentification." José Esteban Muñoz (1999, 7) defines "disidentification" as "a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere." Indeed, disidentification can frame belonging to the state and to the assumed national culture. Thus, if the ability to swim is deemed a civic skill in Finland, the body of the non-swimmer shows an embodied conflict (though not necessarily an intentional one) inside the national culture, and in this way it can mark disidentification with national bodily ideals.

3. Approach and Methods

3.1. Articulation and the Methodology of Cultural Studies

Articulation is my primary methodological approach in this dissertation. I turn my focus on ableist assumptions which emerge around swimming, and trace how these assumptions are connected to various kinds of understandings of bodies. As I analyze cultural texts, I investigate bodies which are expressed in language, in other words articulated (Grossberg 1996, 141). Stuart Hall, the cultural studies theoretician, formulated a definition of “articulation” in an interview given in 1985: “the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time” (Grossberg 1996, 141). Hall explains the idea of articulation through noting that it is possible to talk about a vehicle called an “articulated lorry,” which means by definition a truck “where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another” (ibid.). The way in which Hall elaborates the concept illuminates what kind of work a cultural study is, and as Jennifer Daryl Slack (1996) notes, the concept of “articulation” enables a specific methodological approach. Indeed, articulation is, in cultural studies, a “theory and method” (Slack 1996, 112).

In a line with Hall, who emphasizes articulation as a non-necessary linkage, my approach traces how ableist assumptions emerge in very particular ways in the assumptions about swimming and how they need specific connective elements in their functioning. In particular, I trace how ableist culture emerges in such a way that assumptions about bodily heterogeneity intertwine with forms of hierarchization. In this investigation, I focus on linkages and conjunctions. Indeed, the notion of “conjunction” is closely related to the perspective of articulation (Grossberg 2010; Clarke 2015, 276). According to Lawrence Grossberg (2010), specific conjunctures have been engendered by many cultural and social processes, and cultural studies as a research practice narrates conjunctures. In this respect, through focusing on the multivalent articulations which emerge from the conjunctions it is also possible to specify the heterogeneous forms of ableist culture. From this perspective, I analyze the understandings of bodies from the viewpoints of disability and crip critiques in particular. In this way, I focus on theorizing how the notions of ability, embodiment and the question of progress intersect in the cultural texts on swimming in order to articulate these intersections in

new ways. Thus, I aim to “re-articulate” (Slack 1996, 125) how swimming appears and is used in culture and, through this, to “re-articulate” ableism. For me, “re-articulation” is a way of *intervening* in cultural understandings (for the term “intervention” see chapter 1).

For Hall, culture should not be understood as a coherent system or as a homogeneous way of life. Rather, for him culture always consists of struggles and, importantly, struggles about culture should not be condensed into a polarized vision of culture, in which the subordinated and the dominant emerge as internally coherent formations (Clarke 2015). In this sense, my approach pays attention to the complex connections between different ideas about bodies, and explores how ostensibly similar assumptions function in different ways in specific connections and how the priority of capability can be reinforced in complex ways.

According to the cultural studies scholar John Clarke (2015), Hall adopts from Antonio Gramsci the understanding that in the analysis of class relations there should not be an assumption of internally homogeneous interests and ideas. Furthermore, Hall emphasizes that Gramsci understood “common sense” as “form of popular thinking” which is always heterogeneous, consisting of various modes of thinking, and which continuously changes and emerges in specific variations (Hall 1996, 43). Hall paid attention to how Gramsci notes that struggles about cultural meanings, that is ideological struggles, do not happen in such a way that one homogeneous mode of thinking is replaced by another homogeneous model. Rather, Hall’s perception of ideological struggles turns the focus to the ways in which ideas function in incoherent ways and are in a relationship with each other in complex and non-determined ways (Hall 1996; Clarke 2015). What is more to the point, a cultural analysis, in this respect, focuses on very specific fractures in cultural understandings rather than grand transformations, and it maps the heterogeneous variations of “common sense”.

According to Clarke (2015), these approaches to culture imply that cultural analysis should be open to paying attention to nuanced transformations in articulations. A methodological approach from this respect implies “paying attention to what circulates, to what matters, to what connections are already being forged, to what threads are being forgotten and to what apparently natural and normal alignments of things are coming apart” (Clarke 2015, 284). Clarke (2015, 284) emphasizes that a cultural analysis listens to various cultural sites in which new linkages emerge and it traces the variations of meaningful cultural connections. Furthermore, “the theory and practice of articulation” (Clarke 2015) connects different analytic levels with

each other without ignoring the specificity of these levels and the effects of particular articulations which can be recognized in the current society. In other words, articulation enables the work of “connecting the micro to the macro, the everyday to the abstract” (Puwar 2014, quoted in Clarke 2015, 284).

What is pivotal in a cultural study is its political attentiveness and meaningfulness so that a piece of research does not “rediscover what we already know” (Grossberg 2010, 25). Hence, theory and method are primarily routes¹¹ to intervene in cultural problems in such a way that the present emerges in a new light (ibid.). Jack Halberstam (2011), who draws from Stuart Hall’s and Antonio Gramsci’s methodological approaches, foregrounds the idea that theoretical work can analyze political and social conditions in a more detailed way when it does not take theories as doctrine. With respect to the concept of “articulation” this also means asking what kinds of conditions or conjunctions particular theoretical understandings are able to articulate, what kinds of conditions they cannot address and how we could form articulations which would analyze specific political conditions in more productive ways. In this respect, articulation is closely linked to theorizing. The notion of theorizing, in this approach, means capturing specific operations of articulations (Slack 1996). It is an ongoing process and theories are understood to be always open to revision (ibid.). Indeed, as Clarke (2015, 276, 282) points out, the concept of articulation enables theoretical work which does not limit its own perspective to any of the current frameworks of thought.

Methodologically I combine the theory of articulation with Foucauldian approaches to genealogy, and thus my methodological approach itself resonates with the idea of articulation. Though genealogy and articulation as methodological theories draw on different traditions of thinking, they both share the idea that interrogating present understandings opens visions of different kinds of futures. They offer ways of challenging taken for granted understandings. The next section focuses on genealogy.

All in all, the concept of articulation emphasizes connections and provides a method which traces the relationships between specific connections. Furthermore, a method of articulation focuses on a context “as a conjuncture” (Grossberg 2010, 40) and, importantly, a context does not appear in this light as something which precedes the work of theorizing (Slack 1996, 125).

¹¹ The etymology of the term “method” refers to going along the road, which is the meaning of the Greek word “methodos” (“Method”). I am thankful to Tuija Saesma for this.

In contrast, a context emerges through the work of contextualization (ibid.) or as Grossberg (2010, 41) puts it “a conjuncture has to be constructed, narrated.” Robert McRuer (2006b, 301) notes that “the Latin root for contextualize denotes the act of weaving together, interweaving, joining together, or composing.” Contextualization is in this respect a practice which articulates specific cultural problems as particular kinds of compositions. It necessitates the view that the same kinds of relations “are not always represented by the same categories of thought” (Hall 1996, 36) and insists that contextualization is also political work that matters. Indeed, when a capable body is connected with cultural ideas about civilization and progress rather than just taken as a normal condition, this contextualization sheds light on the aspects of capability which are not recognized in the thinking that links capability with normalcy.

3.2. Genealogy

3.2.1. Genealogy, Cultural Studies, Temporality

In this section, I explain genealogy and its connection to the methodology of cultural studies and my research methods. I note how temporality functions in a genealogical method. Genealogy, which connects past understandings with the present, supports contemplating how the future could be different from the present. Though I use the term *genealogy* in only one article (“Bodies of Latent Potential”), the notion of genealogy frames my general approach. Genealogy, which Foucault (1977) elaborates in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” emphasizes that the objects of knowledge (whatever these objects are in particular contexts) cannot be comprehended in a way that their inner, essential nature can be viewed (Pulkkinen 2003). From a genealogical viewpoint, there is not an assumption of an inner, stable, essential core at all (ibid.). Foucault (1977, 142) suggests that genealogy is distinct from exploration that aims to remove masks to “ultimately disclose an original identity.” Here, an investigation focuses on the heterogeneous forms of understanding that operate in conjunction with meaningful and ostensibly stable cultural elements. Thus, genealogy does not trace origins. Rather, it explores the layers and nuances around specific objects of knowledge.

It is important to note that genealogy as a methodological approach is not one coherent theoretical doctrine but rather enables different kinds of approaches (Foucault 2003, 12; Pulkkinen 2003; Oksala 2007, 46–47). Pulkkinen (2003) points out that genealogy can be considered a different kind historical examination on one hand, and on the other hand, it is an approach

that challenges foundational assumptions. This second sense of a genealogical method appears, for example, in Butler's ([1990] 1999) work that approaches gender without the assumption of origin or foundation.

Genealogy seeks to observe how coherent-looking formations are heterogeneous (Foucault 1977; Pulkkinen 2003, 95). This approach is pivotal to my research, which investigates the way that specific ideas about bodies have been connected with a particular locality. I consider how the ability to swim is articulated as an embodied practice that is connected with the "national." My research shows how the present articulation of the ability to swim as a civic skill does not take into account how the connection between the ability to swim and the geographical and political formation of Finland was far from obvious in the early twentieth century. When I explore history, I do not intend to produce totalizing accounts or all-explanatory history—approaches foreign to genealogy (Foucault [1981] 1991, 129).

With this kind of research method, the results are not meant to unify and theoretically simplify complex situations (Gupta 1998, 30). Since a genealogical inquiry does not aim to unmask one essential component that always constitutes a specific object of knowledge, this kind of method exposes the specific articulations that allow us to view the particular object of knowledge as a kind of constellation of truths. It also enables us to encounter less-familiar truths around the specific objects of knowledge. With this kind of method, particular objects of knowledge appear to us without an essential identity.

Gilles Deleuze ([1986] 2006, 8, 16–18) notes that Foucault's methods did not constrain the scope of various genres, and when Foucault introduced the notion of discursive formation, he made it possible to situate different kinds of texts in an "anonymous murmur" of statements. The concept of anonymous murmur implies that even though texts associated with science and the texts of literature or popular journalism are not equivalent in culture, they all constitute the forms of understanding that shape how it is possible to think and to relate to particular objects of knowledge (Deleuze [1986] 2006; Oksala 2007). As my aim in this research is to trace the articulations of bodies from the cultural texts that constitute cultural understandings of swimming, my approach does not demand the focus be on specific cultural texts only (for example, texts that appear to be more important or produced by more established agents). Foucault's idea of discourses¹² can be taken as "collective

¹² It is important to note that Foucault's (1980, 100) understanding about "discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable" emphasizes an approach which refrains from simplifying conclusions.

and anonymous practices” (Alhanen 2007, 61) that frame the way particular objects of knowledge emerge in thinking and in various kinds of material practices.

Both genealogy and feminist science studies assume that science is a part of culture, noting the various forms of scientific knowledge and practices (see Haraway 1997; Irni, Meskus, and Oikkonen 2014 on feminist science studies; see Foucault 2003, 9–10 on science). This brings us to how a genealogical inquiry remains an open process. This openness is not its weakness but rather a necessity. In the same vein as Haraway’s (1988) idea of situated knowledge, when Emily Martin (1994), who bases her methodology on genealogy, expounds in her research on the role of immunity in American culture about how she understands her methods, she states that she does not attempt to see a whole picture of something. Martin (1994, 4) explains her genealogical approach in this way: “Understanding the genealogy of the immune system, a task too large to be completed in any single book, led me to place the recent eminence of the immune system in the context of how our notions about health, the body, and disease have changed since the 1940s and 1950s.” In addition, Martin (1994, 4) considers her intentions when noting how she wants to “defamiliarize present practices.” Indeed, a genealogical inquiry does not attempt to be politically neutral.¹³ Rather, it unveils how specific assumptions frame the ideas that appear to belong nowhere or everywhere. The focus of this research in particular is on how the cultural texts about swimming carry with them compulsory able-bodiedness as a system that “emanates from everywhere and nowhere” (McRuer 2006a, 8).

A genealogical perspective that pays attention to diverse forms of seemingly plain understandings can also frame an attitude to conceptual and theoretical formulations. This dissertation draws in this sense from a genealogical method when asking how feminist theories that enable less conventional perspectives on bodies can still share ableist assumptions. In chapter 4, I consider these contradictions in feminist theories.

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, the queer theoretician Eve Sedgwick ([1990] 2008) suggests that methodologically distant-looking models of understanding sexuality (by which she means the constructivism/essentialism binary) can function in different ways in different contexts, and hence a nuanced approach focusing on specific analytic notions is a productive starting point. Ross Chambers (2002) notes that Sedgwick’s point can be read as

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche ([1887] 1969), whose ideas inspired Foucault in the developing of *genealogy*, criticized such philosophy that presents itself objective and without having any perspective.

advice not to essentialize theoretical models—not even those that share constructive assumptions. That is to say, to distance oneself from essentialism means not presupposing the effects of the assumptions one works with (Chambers 2002). Thus, according to Sedgwick ([1990] 2008, 90), “the more promising project would seem to be a study of the incoherent dispensation itself, the indis severable girdle of incongruities under whose discomfiting span, for most of a century, have unfolded both the most generative and the most murderous plots of our culture.” This complex sentence by Sedgwick echoes my examination of conventional understandings of swimming and capability and cultural hopes about moldability and change.

The approach of genealogy supports viewing the present as unnecessary. For example, Martin (1994) emphasizes that genealogy aims to challenge practices and ideas that currently appear purely self-evident. For Martin (1994, 4), this happens through “juxtaposing the present and the recent past.” A genealogical method is temporally oriented to both the past and the present in a way that they emerge at the same time; further, genealogy seeks to produce transformations so that the future is something else than the present.

Although Foucault’s analysis on madness, criminality, and sexuality focused on historical texts, in his lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 2004), he also considered the present neoliberal forms of government and connected them with historical modes of government, noting the differences in these mechanisms. He mentioned in an interview with Duccio Trombadori ([1981] 1991, 37) that contemporary experiences framed his historical analysis. Foucault’s historical research functioned as an avenue for investigating the present. He highlighted in his lectures, published under the title *Society Must Be Defended*, that a genealogical approach facilitates an analysis of present conditions when it explores how history consists of struggles of meanings (Foucault 2003, 7–8): Both the past and the present can be viewed in this light as more heterogeneous constellations. My approach draws from this sense of a genealogical method of connecting the past with the present. I have chosen to analyze in each article historical and contemporary cultural texts, and in this way, I aim to concretize the intermingling temporality of genealogy.

In his interview with Trombadori ([1981] 1991, 33–34) Foucault describes how the past, present, and future intertwine in his approach: “I aim at having an experience myself—by passing through a determinate historical content—an experience of what we are today, of what is not only our past but also our present. [...] at the conclusion of the book [*The History of Madness*]

we can establish new relationships with what was at issue.” Furthermore, distancing his approach from the perspectives that assume a foundation (such as theories indebted to psychoanalysis), Foucault stated that “we must produce something that doesn’t yet exist and about which we cannot know how and what it will be” (Foucault [1981] 1991, 121).

Halperin (1995, 105) notes that Foucault considered genealogy a method for affecting a scholar and a reader; it provides an experience to start to view oneself differently than before. For Halperin (1995, 105), genealogy is a “spiritual exercise” in itself. Quoting from Foucault’s “What is Enlightenment?,” Halperin (1995, 105) emphasizes that genealogy changes “being, doing, or thinking.” It aspires to “give new impetus to the undefined work of freedom” (Halperin 1995, 106). Thus, there is an assumption of influence in a genealogical method.¹⁴

Overall, I wish to highlight the role of genealogical investigations in the cultural struggles that endeavor to challenge existing notions. For me, writing a genealogy is an active process that forms new connections when it challenges assumptions.¹⁵ Thus, genealogy can be hopeful, because it allows one to imagine something that is almost impossible to think at the present moment. Foucault’s ([1981] 1991, 121) idea of genealogy as enabling “something that doesn’t yet exist” is a future-oriented statement. Still, a genealogical perspective does not define what the future should be. Rather, the hope of a different future becomes possible when a genealogical method shakes the certainty around particular objects of knowledge. As Halperin (1995, 105) puts it, in this kind of investigation, “we appear different from ourselves, or from what we thought we were, and so we recover a sense of ourselves as sites of difference—hence, sites of possible transformations.”¹⁶ This dissertation aims to open up how we can “appear different from ourselves, or from what we thought we were” (Halperin 1995, 105). It seeks to re-articulate conventional embodiment in a way that makes its position as primary—and its connection with the elements that solidify and homogenize cultural formations and communities—less easy to maintain.

¹⁴ See also Blencowe (2012, 27).

¹⁵ Verbs such as *trace* or *unpack* are often used when writing about genealogy, and I use those verbs too. They imply a process that releases an object from a composition. However, for me, genealogy engenders new articulations, and this process permits us to experience a particular object of knowledge as a new kind of package.

¹⁶ According to Foucault (1977, 154), genealogy “introduces discontinuity into our very being.”

3.2.2. Genealogy and Biopolitics

Foucault (1977, 148) states in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” that “genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is [...] situated within the articulation of the body and history.” I would position this view of a genealogical method in the argument of his distinctly genealogical work *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*. In it, Foucault suggested that the notion of sexuality as something that needs to be freed from repression fosters a perception of the Victorian era as a period of repression, whereas his time appeared to be a period of liberation. This kind of distinction obscures how power relations frame a period that is connected with liberation.¹⁷ Thus, when Foucault states that genealogy explores the “articulation of the body and history,” he suggests that the focus of a genealogical inquiry is on the assumptions that make it possible to interpret historical changes in particular ways. Also, from the perspective of cultural studies, which is my main viewpoint in this research, narrating history is not a neutral deed (Hall 1996). We must always ask what happened to whom and what kinds of effects intertwined ostensibly neutral changes. From this viewpoint, we can consider how the assumptions about bodies produce a specific articulation of how history shapes bodies.

The History of Sexuality, Vol. I was an inquiry into how a form of biopower operating through an assumption about population and the idea that people can govern themselves played a part in establishing a contemporary idea of what is considered sexuality. Thus, he explored what kinds of assumptions and historical processes constitute an ahistorical phenomenon. In this respect, the political aims around the ability to swim could also be considered biopolitical aims that connect being able to swim with intervention in the bodies of the population. Moreover, from the perspective of genealogy, one can ask what kinds of views about bodies shape how particular biopolitical aims appear to us.

The article “Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body” traces how the identification of capability emerges as a primary but repressed quality of the body. In the article, I read cultural texts on swimming to theorize the context of learning physical skills. Methodologically, I use the concepts of genealogy in this work and emphasize a form of analysis that understands power as biopower—that is, a form of productive power that intervenes in

¹⁷ For example, Puar’s (2007) work on homonationalism is an excellent example of genealogical research. Puar shows how the assumption of liberated U.S.-based queers (contrasted with repressed Muslims) makes it possible, in conjunction with other elements, to articulate American imperialism as liberation.

life from the perspective of specific political aims.¹⁸ The concrete research process of the article entailed investigations in two archives, the National Library of Finland and the Archive of Parliament in Finland. I traced the moment when the importance of the ability to swim was articulated in the context of parliamentary politics in Finland. In 1938, politicians raised the question of the ability to swim and connected it with safety. However, during that time the notion of the ability to swim was articulated in mixed ways. While the ability to swim was connected with safety and the idea of Finland as the Land of a Thousand Lakes, it was also recognized that the climate of Finland makes it less hospitable to swimmers. I then turned my attention to how cultural texts about swimming schools in the context of Finland articulate the process of learning to swim. I focused on how ideas about the process of learning to swim assume that some bodily experiences (such as fearfulness in the water) hinder a person from being who they really are. Though safety appears to be a fundamental motivation for swimming instruction, there is also an attempt to change how bodies react and feel. With respect to genealogy, which is concerned with the various forms of understandings, I was interested in how the ability to swim has been articulated in multivalent ways both in contemporary and historical texts. Furthermore, I wanted to know how articulations about the body play a part in the understandings that perceive the ability to swim to be necessary, progressive, important for safety, and something that belongs to the embodied norms of citizenship.

A genealogical investigation offers a viewpoint that challenges homogenizing assumptions concerning specific periods and shows fractures in the presumptions that connect a specific embodiment with a locality. As Ilpo Helén (2016, 40–41) remarks, Foucault's term *biopolitics* denotes mechanisms in which "life" and "vital potential" are debatable, contestable, and open to public discussion. Biopolitics emphasizes how specific aims that focus on life necessitate a conflict about how to intervene in life. Therefore, my approach traces how the ability to swim becomes a public topic in Finland. In 1938, a year before the Second World War, the conversation about the ability to swim begins in the parliament of Finland. Parliament members from the right to the left discuss how teaching swimming could prevent drowning accidents. In a written proposition by the right-wing members of the parliament, the need to arrange swimming teaching is

¹⁸ Foucault's (2007) lectures in *Security, Territory, Population* offer an investigation on the forms of biopolitics and biopower as specific modes of pastoral power. See also Helén (2016, 40–41) on the notion of biopower and its connection with the biopolitics.

articulated as “a question concerning the population” (Moilanen et al. 1938). Furthermore, they state that the ability to swim should be central to every citizen and connect the aim to improve the ability to swim among the population with the knowledge that as Finns have strong aptitudes for sports, their good swimming skills would be beneficial for them (ibid.).

According to Helén (2016, 303–304), a specific biopolitical tendency to develop and strengthen bodies and in this way to “actualize the belonging of the individual to the nation” was an issue in Europe and in particular in the Nordic countries between two world wars. In this respect, it is perhaps unsurprising that during this era the ability to swim arose as a political question in Finland. My approach emphasizes how the ability to swim has been connected with the civilization of the nation and how it frames the understandings of Finnish culture and what is considered “Finnish” in the cultural and embodied sense.

My approach resonates with Blencowe’s (2012, 144–145) notions of how biopolitics can enable specific cultural experiences. At stake are assumptions of developed or undeveloped cultures and “mundane, multiple, positive processes of production, embodiment and experience” (Blencowe 2012, 197), which are tools at the level of culture for biopolitical power. Blencowe (2012) also suggests that the historical processes of biopolitics frame everyday experiences, and genealogy à la Foucault offers a route to make these experiences less self-evident. She highlights, for example, the mundane forms of cultural racism and the assumptions that cultural elements of specific locations are moldable and can be seen as either developed or undeveloped. Even though I would not associate cultural racism solely with the contemporary moment as Blencowe’s (2012) analysis appears to,¹⁹ I agree with Blencowe (2012, 144) that the practices of “educating, encouraging cultural change, capacity building and eliminating problematic culture” can intersect with creating embodied self-understandings that are associated with progress. In this way, the forms of biopolitics intertwine with the supposedly innocent notions of “our culture” and its affective formations.

It is telling that many people have said to me that my research topic is positive. Still, my aim has been the loosening of the linkage between the ability to swim and positivity. The point is not that there is no such linkage but rather that there is much more than that in the framework of positive. The articles “We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked” and “Bodies of Latent Potential” focus on mechanisms which connect specific cultural conditions with progress. “Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the

¹⁹ See Balibar (1991).

Body” turns, on the other hand, to the question of how biopolitical projects frame mundane bodily experiences.

3.3. Affect in Cultural Texts

When exploring ableist assumptions, consideration of how affects play a part in the articulations of bodies provides a nuanced way of investigating the cultural mechanisms of ableism. Paying attention to how affects emerge in the articulations of bodies enables noting contradictions in ostensibly rational perspectives—as well as considering how specific affects intertwine with cultural mechanisms through which bodies are articulated. Though many contemporary theorists have started to explore affects as capacities of bodies in order to enable new kinds of ontological perspectives on bodies (Massumi 1995; Braidotti 2006; Colebrook 2010), Lawrence Grossberg (2014) has pointed out that this is not the only possible way to understand affects.²⁰ Rather, exploring how affects emerge in cultural products à la Raymond Williams highlights cultural conflicts and heterogeneous ways of experiencing specific social and historical situations (Grossberg 2014; see also Berlant 2011). Furthermore, cultural studies as a context of affects can enable us to explore conflicting cultural affects and challenge viewpoints which associate particular kinds of affects in an ahistorical and determinate way with particular bodies, spaces or environments (Berlant 2011; Ahmed 2010, 2014).

It is common to associate capable embodiment with “positive” affects such as joy or happiness and unconventional forms of embodiment with “negative”

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze (1988) developed the idea of affect by Baruch Spinoza, and associated affects with dynamics between bodies. Deleuze (1988) was interested in how in these dynamics it remains open what kinds of capacities bodies have and what bodies are able to do. Importantly for Deleuze (1988, 124), the notion about “capacities for affecting and being affected” is a way of approaching bodies as radically open modes of being that are defined by their open-ended capacities rather than their role in specific systems. Deleuze’s approach to bodies becomes particularly evident in the concept “body without organs.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari ([1987] 2016, 184) emphasize that the concept of “body without organs” is meant to distance its perspective from the understandings which take as their starting point functions and higher principles rather than a specific body. Their perspective resists aims to understand bodies (as well as bodily parts) as part of organizations (Chen 2012, 151–152). Disability critiques of ableism resonate with these attempts to understand bodies without typifying them as components of organizations in which they need to function in accordance with the aims of the organization.

affects.²¹ However, drawing from Sara Ahmed's (2010, 2014) work, these connections can be viewed as historical and thus non-determinate. When particular kinds of affective reactions are connected with particular kinds of bodies in cultural texts, these affective reactions can appear to show the truth about these bodies because affects are associated with non-intentionality. They appear to emerge without evaluation and interpretation, and hence they appear to be outside of politics and non-conflictual. Indeed, Ahmed (2014) remarks on how "affect" has, in contemporary thinking, emerged as non-intentional, and freer from social and cultural understandings than "emotion" or "feeling." Still, according to Ahmed (2014), particular objects repetitively emerge together with particular kinds of affective reactions. Particular objects emerge in culture ostensibly instantly together with specific reactions, and eventually these reactions start to tell about these objects—rather than culture, Ahmed (2014) points out.

In the afterword to the second edition of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Ahmed (2014, 204) states that she turned to emotions because she was actually interested in social norms. She wanted to explore how norms emerge in instant affective reactions and what kinds of complex historical processes frame everyday affects towards particular objects (ibid.). Ahmed (2014, 214) links her approach to Foucault's genealogical method. She notes that tracing how specific objects become associated with specific feelings resonates with Foucault's (1977, 139) idea of a genealogical inquiry tracing that which "we tend to feel is without history" (ibid.).

The perspective of this dissertation draws on Ahmed's work on how affective reactions to specific objects relate to the specific histories of these objects. Ahmed's (2014) idea pays attention to how particular bodies do not invoke particular reactions just accidentally, but rather because these bodies—or rather bodies that resemble them—have been used over and over again in powerful cultural stories where particular affects have been connected to these bodies. When viewing affective reactions in this way it is possible to note how affective attachments to conventional bodies also reflect cultural norms.

Ahmed (2014) understands affects as social and related to cultural norms. An understanding of affect as social rather than merely personal also emerges in the work of Raymond Williams ([1958] 1983). His seminal work *Culture and Society* from 1958 explored how industrial novels described the conflicting affective senses between working-class people and the middle

²¹ Ahmed's (2010) work *The Promise of Happiness* offers a more complex reading of the distinction positive/negative in regard to affects.

class. Williams ([1958] 1983, [1977] 2009) introduced the term “structures of feeling” to describe how a particular affect emerges in cultural texts and how this affect captures, in Lauren Berlant’s (2011, 15) words, “shared historical time.” The word “structure” in the concept “structures of feeling” denotes how cultural analysis shows that personal appearing reactions can emerge extensively in cultural products—and in that sense they are structural (Williams 1979, 159).²² Importantly, though Williams situates affective experiences in social situations, he does not assume that everyone experiences the same period in the same way (Williams 2009, 134; 1979, 158). Rather, his viewpoint highlights heterogeneous experiences in social environments.

My approach traces how capable embodiment emerges in cultural texts intertwined with “positive affects.” At the same time, my analysis re-articulates these affects through showing affective reactions of bodies which do not fit into cultural norms of ability. For example, I show how cultural texts of swimming show us bodies for whom water is an unpleasant environment. Exploring ableism means being open to the heterogeneity of bodies and interrogating what kinds of cultural mechanisms direct the articulations of marginalized embodied experiences.

A specific kind of “structure of feeling” in this work is “repression” as related to physical incapability. I investigate how this conventionally personal appearing experience emerges in cultural texts as a quality of bodies which do not fulfill cultural norms of ability and what kinds of social questions are related to the idea of repression.²³ Repression is discussed in the article “Biopolitics and the repressive hypothesis of the body” as related to ableist understandings of bodies and in “Bodies of Latent Potential” as related to orientalist views. In “‘We swam before we breathed or walked’,” I explore affective ties to ableism from the perspective of Ahmed’s work (2014).

3.4. Scientific Accounts in Culture

Scientific accounts about bodies appear in various ways in cultural products outside of contexts which are conventionally associated with scientific work (such as laboratories and peer-reviewed channels for reports written by

²² According to Sean Matthews (2001), “structures of feeling” is a concept that can be used to analyze how cultural items witness such experiences, which are not yet generally analyzed as social experiences—that is, they are not yet politicized. On “structure of feeling,” see also Probyn (1993).

²³ My approach to the cultural and political dimensions of “repression” has benefited from my discussions with Valo Vähäpassi.

scientists). They also appear for example in newspapers, fashion, TV programs, YouTube, Facebook and popular literature. In this respect, science has a role in the sites that are associated with culture. Hence, it is important to consider how the understandings of bodies and abilities framed by scientific ideas emerge in various cultural items. The article “We swam before we breathed or walked” turns to these kinds of items which popularize scientific ideas. Popular versions of science have been produced for a long time, already in the nineteenth century, by both writers who are not scientists as well as scientists themselves (Castañeda 2001; Oikkonen 2013). Even though it is easy to ignore popular scientific texts as “quasi-science,” popular scientific works are also used by scientists, and they thus play a part in scientific works (Oikkonen 2013). How the distinction science/culture has been blurred in scientific writing as well shows that science and culture are not two totally separate realms. Furthermore, when we approach culture as a heterogeneous collection of ideas, practices and products that appear meaningful (see Haraway 1997, 66), it becomes important to pay attention to what kinds of ideas are articulated in popular science. Popular science can be approached by asking what it tells us about the attachments, aspirations and fears which frame people’s lives in the current moment—that is, what it tells us about culture.

It is important to note that by “science” I refer to the site of biosciences (Irni, Meskus and Oikkonen 2014). Biosciences explores that which is often associated with nature through methods which utilize mathematics and quantitative perspectives. Despite these quantitative methods, scientists also use in their research expressions and metaphors, which are related to larger cultural assumptions and values (Fox Keller [1985] 1995; Haraway 1989, 1997; Hall 2012). Furthermore, social circumstances often frame the conditions which make certain scientific inquiries possible (Fox Keller [1985] 1995; Haraway 1989, 1997; Irni, Meskus and Oikkonen 2014). For example, questions about what kind of research needs to be funded and what kinds of topics should be explored show how society and culture participate in the processes of science (*ibid.*). At the same time, it is equally relevant to note that specific scientific technologies shape social relationships—from contraception methods and hormones to surveillance and military technologies (Preciado 2013; Irni 2016; Puar 2007).

Furthermore, the understandings of scientific ideas provide ways to approach cultural problems. The article “We swam before we breathed or walked” traces how the understandings provided by evolutionary biology offer ways to articulate how human beings relate to non-human animals in

complex and contradictory ways. As the article shows, the understandings of evolutionary biology can emerge in the articulations of rather specific cultural ideas and in the context of everyday ideas about bodies—such as the ability to swim. Thus, scientific ideas can frame the way in which people make sense of their selves as embodied beings and how they understand their relationship to non-human animals.

When I explore how scientific accounts appear in culture, I pay attention to fractures in cultural understandings and consider how scientific ideas function in culture in heterogeneous ways. My approach is also framed by an intersectional perspective on bodies²⁴: I consider how the human being who is assumed to belong to the animal world is framed by ableist and racist understandings in complex ways. Venla Oikkonen (2015, 2018) has investigated how the cultural appeal of science operates through heterogeneous understandings of gendered and racialized bodies. Her viewpoint highlights how scientific accounts and practices around genetics provide forms of belonging in a way that understands gendered and racialized bodies in multivalent—while still normative—ways. According to Oikkonen (2015, 766), genetics provides ways to articulate human beings as “a global human family” (Oikkonen 2015, 766) while its material and metaphorical work naturalizes cultural norms of race and gender. I am interested in exploring how ableism frames cultural hopes about inclusive communities.

3.5. Local-Global Articulations of Swimming

In cultural imaginaries, water has often been connected with the “global”: the globe with its waterways has been used to emphasize what is common to all. Even though the earth’s plants and animals all need water, access to water is anything but equally distributed. The idea that water is common to all uncovers, for example, the ways in which access to water is saturated with global neo-liberal politics and how this produces specific effects in particular locations.²⁵ In this research, however, the concern is not the politics of access to water. Rather, my viewpoint emphasizes how the articulations of swimming can be at the same time local and global.

The term local connotes particularity. In conventional usage, a local situation is a situation that concerns a particular place (“local”). A local situation does not concern everyone. It is a limited situation. The term global, on the other hand, connotes generality and even universality. The

²⁴ For intersectionality, see Crenshaw (1989) and Yuval-Davis (2011).

²⁵ See, for example, Andrijasevic and Khalili (2013).

Oxford English Dictionary states that the term was first used in 1637 to describe how the world is circular and hence there is “no East, West, North, or South” (“global”). Later, the term was used to describe how political and economic situations have a worldwide effect. Global situations appear to concern everyone, even though these situations are always witnessed locally. As Akhil Gubta (1998, 24–25) notes, “the local” has usually been associated with that which is inside the borders of the nation-state. If the idea of the nation-state functions in the distinction local/global as an unrecognized but self-evident frame, how could the distinction local/global be re-articulated?

Claudia Castañeda’s (2002) formulation of “local-global” pays attention to how it can be difficult to fully separate what is considered local from what is considered global. Castañeda emphasizes how globally circulated texts can have very particular effects and how what is considered merely local can emerge out of larger situations. What Castañeda’s (2002) formulation of local-global presumes is an understanding of knowledge that supposes situatedness. Donna Haraway’s (1988) idea of situated knowledge emphasizes that knowledges are always partial and limited—even when they are claimed to be all-embracing. Yet this partiality does not obscure the significance of these knowledges. Following Haraway’s (1988) notion it is possible to re-articulate the distinction local/global in this way: A local perspective which is limited and partial is not, however, more limited or partial than a global one. Global is not general but rather a particular perspective that appears to concern more than a very particular space. A totally global view would be “the god trick” (Haraway 1988, 581) that would claim that it is possible to “[see] everything from nowhere” (*ibid.*). Since this research aims to avoid “god tricks” of any kind, my approach is framed by Foucauldian genealogy which is openly political and partial (see section 3.2). In this sense, while I read various cultural texts which are produced in various places, I do not suppose my readings to give a global view (in the conventional sense of the term) on the articulations of swimming. Of course, that would be impossible. On the contrary, the aim is to show the heterogeneous forms and situatedness of these articulations.

The idea of global is a powerful cultural notion which has performative effects. This dissertation approaches the idea of global from a perspective that pays attention to how “global” functions. It is important to note how the notion of global has historically been an idea which has justified specific local situations. Finnish political historian Pauli Kettunen (2008) notes that nationalism as an ideology emerged in the nineteenth century in different locations and it became a powerful ideology because it represented itself as

an international phenomenon that different “imagined nations” (Anderson [1983] 2006) could use in particular ways in specific locations. Kettunen (2008) points out that even though the term globalization has often been used in a way that assumes it to describe this historical moment, Kettunen claims that the past has also been a period where that which is associated with the “global” has helped to formulate ideas which can be connected to the “local.” I offer this historical reminder about the idea of global as a background to conversations about methodological nationalism.

The term “methodological nationalism” defines a presumption that assumes the nation-state to be always a self-evident context in research (Roche 1992; Beck 2007; Kettunen 2008; Vuolajärvi 2014). On the one hand, the term “methodological nationalism” highlights how transnational politics can frame the level of the nation-state and for these reasons some scholars, such as Maurice Roche (1992), have suggested that accurate social sciences should not always assume the nation-state to be a suitable context for all kinds of investigations. On the other hand, the term also has more critical aims that challenge “the gaze of the state”²⁶ and pay attention to how the aims of the social sciences have been intertwined with biopolitics. In particular, as Niina Vuolajärvi (2014) observes, historically the social sciences aimed to collect information about the population in order to control it and this aim necessitated methodological nationalism.

My viewpoint emphasizes the second sense of the term “methodological nationalism.” My crip theoretical (on crip theory, see “Introduction”) analysis which interrogates the normalizing techniques of power challenges the assumption that scholars should echo the gaze of the state and formulate their research questions in accordance with the logic of national borders. Consequently, I decided to collect my data in a way that did not limit it to Finnish cultural texts.

I was first interested in how national belonging emerges in Finnish cultural texts on swimming. However, it appeared that without considering how swimming is associated with nature in a way that connects human beings who swim with other animals who are able to travel in water, a crucial cultural understanding around swimming would be bypassed. This turned my attention to the popular idea that swimming illuminates that human beings

²⁶ The formulation “the gaze of the state” has been used for example by Marjorie Snipes (1995) in her article “The ‘Gaze’ of the State: School as Contested Territory in the Argentine Andes.” Snipes (1995) analyzes how the practices of schooling reinforce national belonging in Argentina.

descended from animals who lived in water. I started to explore this idea and investigate what kinds of human beings appear in cultural texts which articulate that swimming illuminates how human beings belong to the animal world. In such accounts of evolutionary biology, local and global intertwined with each other can also emerge in intriguing ways: while the popular stories of evolutionary biology rest on the assumption that they describe something which concerns everyone, these stories use very particular metaphors and regions when they narrate “our” origins (Oikkonen 2015; Vaahtera 2016).

It appeared that unpacking the idea of swimming made it possible to investigate two powerful forms of belonging: belonging to the nation and belonging to the animal world. Hence, I started to read cultural texts produced outside of Finland and to explore how popular ideas of evolutionary biology frame the understandings of swimming in complex ways. Edward Said (1993, xxviii) notes that orientalism, which emphasizes the difference between “us” and “them,” assumes that national borders always define our belonging and attachments to particular cultural products. For Said (1993, xxviii), a critical perspective towards orientalist assumptions should lead us to challenge the way in which particular cultural texts are connected in a self-evident way to particular groups of people. Thus, even though this research started as an inquiry into the articulation of swimming skills as civic skills in Finland, I also ended up exploring cultural texts of swimming which are not produced in Finland. Drawing from Said’s (1993) observations it is possible to ask why we should assume that forms of embodiment which emerge from transnational cultural texts are unrelated to embodiment which is articulated as Finnish.

Furthermore, when I track the understandings of bodies in Finnish cultural texts, I also pay attention to how the notion of international has functioned as a tool to produce that which is associated with the “national.” In the third article “Bodies of Latent Potential” I pay attention to how swimming teaching was promoted in Finland in the early twentieth century through mechanisms which could be deemed part of international history politics. Some writers emphasized that since swimming was practiced in Ancient Greece and Rome, Finns should also cultivate it if they wanted to be civilized, and in this way the notion of swimming skills as civic skills for Finns was reinforced. Here the view that a more global perspective is valuable and brings knowledge which educates and civilizes eventually enables national belonging. Indeed, my research, which craps swimming, observes various forms of nationalism in the articulations on swimming. Rogers Brubaker (2004) has claimed that the critique of methodological nationalism should not ignore how, in spite of

the intertwining of the local and the global, ideas which take “national” as their central context emerge in ways which require critical interventions. In this sense, without naturalizing the nation-state as an analytic context of the research, I investigate how Finnishness and the ability to swim have been associated with each other in order to denaturalize this connection. My viewpoint explores how the nation-state operates around the cultural texts about swimming. My perspective “maps”²⁷ the ways in which Finnishness and the ability to swim have been associated with each other. It emphasizes the contingency of this proximity.

3.6. Collection and Analysis of the Cultural Texts about Swimming

In 2011, I started to collect the cultural texts about swimming. I gathered texts in archives, libraries, and web bookstores and used Google searches and the database provided by the University of Helsinki. I read different kinds of texts that were in some way related to the topic of swimming. I read, for instance, academic journal articles that approached swimming training from the perspective of physical education or that aimed to find reasons for aquaphobia, as well as articles that explored the genetic connections between human beings and fish. I did searches in the digital collections of the National Library of Finland to ascertain how the ability to swim was articulated in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Finnish newspapers and journals. I also searched with ProQuest Historical Newspapers and looked at the archives of the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*. I read popular books about baby swimming and the history of swimming. I explored how the ability to swim was articulated in the parliamentary politics of Finland, what kinds of agents have promoted steps to make swimming training compulsory in the Finnish school system, how swimming training was approached in TV entertainment, and how journalists wrote about swimming hall etiquette. From 2011–2017, I also followed the media discussion around swimming. During that time, I read everything I could about the topic. Many people also informed me of new media texts and sent me links to articles or advised me to check out particular internet sites.

My data was potentially endless. I could conceivably include new texts to it continually. Hadn't I read how Williams (1983, x) described the process of writing *Culture & Society 1780–1950* I must have thought that my limitless data reflected my inability to restrict the scope of my attention. Williams

²⁷ For the term “map” in the context of methodology, see Slack (1996).

(1983, x) writes: “My actual preparation for the book was in fact a continually extending reading, without prepared lists or any real signposts. Indeed, I remember several moments of something like panic when I discovered bodies of writing that I had not previously connected with the inquiry, but which were obviously relevant.” I can certainly relate to Williams’ experience of gathering interesting texts all the time.

However now retrospectively, it seems that reading extensively and in such a way that is open to finding intriguing new ideas is a tool for exploring nuances in complex ideas and discovering articulations that would not necessarily have been available if a predetermined plan had controlled the data. Ahmed (2010) notes that a methodology that interrogates cultural meanings and ideas does not prioritize the exact route that a writer takes to read certain texts but rather the way in which the writer connects things in their writing. This view resonates with the idea of articulation (see section 3.1) in the sense that articulation means how things are connected with each other. Moreover, a research process could, in this respect, be evaluated by how it has been able to consider meaningful and powerful cultural connections and how it articulates its own work as connected to existing articulations. Indeed, as Paula Saukko (2003) explains, the validity of cultural studies research on the conditions that enable truths about particular objects of knowledge is assessed by how meticulously the research unpacks cultural understandings. In this respect, I approached the cultural understandings of swimming in a way that allowed me to elaborate how specific kinds of understandings are related to something else, and this required me to consult texts I did not initially research.

Even though I read extensively various kinds of cultural texts about swimming, this reading can only be recognized partially in the finished research. Of course, I was not able to write about everything I had been in contact with in the process of gathering the cultural texts. However, these missed dimensions also frame my research, as they are places I have been in the process of approaching a perspective that can re-articulate specific mechanisms of an ableist culture.

The time span of my focus extends from the early twentieth century to the present day. However, I ended up focusing on the 1910s and the 1930s and then on the recent past, from the 1970s to the present moment. I was not initially interested in a specific historical period but instead wanted to look at past moments as a way to re-articulate the present understandings. The point in exploring the understandings of the early twentieth century was to investigate the moment when the ability to swim emerged as a political

question in Finland and to look at how it was articulated then. The recent past, on the other hand, functions as an approach for viewing the present moment as a cluster of miscellaneous and conflicting understandings. Perhaps the most intriguing example of this is a popular TV show, *Velipuolikuu*, from 1984. The show made fun of swimming schools and linked their objectives with the superman fantasies of culture that admires development.

The writing process of each article ended up being a small archival work of its own. I did new searches on the internet and in the archives, wanting to trace specific ideas in more detail, even though I also used the material that I had explored in the very early phases of my research in the articles. Writing the summary also compelled me to read new works of research. In sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, which primarily elaborate the conceptual ideas introduced in the articles, I have connected my ideas with frameworks I was not yet able to connect them when writing the articles or whose inclusion in the articles would have been impossible because of the style and genre demands of the article format. These new ways of connecting ideas (or theorizing ideas) became possible when I read new works of research. Moreover, my general approach in analyzing cultural texts about swimming was to link cultural ideas in specific texts to some other texts. That is, I read cultural texts about swimming along with the literature of disability studies, crip theory, post-colonial studies, and feminist theories and observed how the understandings in texts about swimming were connected in diverse ways to the understandings available in these fields. In this way—being open to connecting various ideas with other kinds of ideas and, at the same time, considering the specific contexts of the ideas—that I carried on writing about cultural bonds to abledness. In the finished research, some works by feminist scholars surface not only as a perspective through which the cultural texts about swimming have been analyzed but also as research objects themselves.

The notion of a cultural text brings focus to how various texts communicate cultural notions and values. *A cultural text* does not make a crucial distinction between low, high, popular, or scientific cultural products, because it understands all these forms as part of culture. Indeed, the works written by disability studies and feminist studies scholars are also cultural texts. This understanding aligns with Foucault's methodology in the sense that Foucault's discursive approach to ideas emphasizes that various kinds of sites create knowledges about specific cultural problems (see section 3.2).

As Haraway (1997, 66) remarks, "culture denotes not the irrational but the meaningful." My approach assumes that the "meaningful" is produced in

various cultural sites and genres. While a cultural text takes various products to be meaningful, its approach also draws attention to the specificity of particular items. It is important to note that some forms of cultural texts are more available and accessible than others and specific texts are received differently. These are also questions about what sells, what is produced, what kinds of technologies enable specific forms, what becomes popular and how existing genres frame how stories are told. In addition, what is expected from specific types of writing, and what kinds of contents, styles and aims are associated with them are historically contingent (Williams 2009). These kinds of complex mechanisms cannot be ignored when considering what kinds of notions about embodiment are available in culture.²⁸ Still, in this research I have been more interested in ideas and assumptions than genres or forms. My focus has been on heterogeneous understandings which emerge from various sites.

Archival research

My research in archives (National Library of Finland, Archive of Parliament in Finland) was genealogically oriented and positioned to appreciate present concerns by exploring historical understandings. The work focused on investigating what kinds of assumptions about bodies and belonging to the nation were available historically in articulations on the ability to swim in order to understand the present deeming of the ability to swim as a civic skill. In the spirit of the genealogical approach, my search was not framed by an aim to find one or the most significant vector that constituted the idea of the ability to swim. Rather, I was interested in the various forms of articulations concerning the ability to swim (on genealogy, see section 3.2).

I searched records in the Archive of Parliament in Finland for when the ability to swim became a topic in the talks of politicians and how it was articulated in this context in different decades. I searched index books and electronic sources using the terms “ability to swim” (*uimataito*), “swimming” (*uinti*), “swimming teaching” (*uimaopetus*), “swimming teachers” (*uimaopettajat*), and “swimming halls” (*uimahallit*). I also did searches in the National Library of Finland, focusing on Finnish journals, periodicals, and newspapers. I did archival searches in 2011, 2012, and 2013 and returned to examine the digital collections of the National Library in 2016 when I was writing the third article (“Bodies of Latent Potential”).

²⁸ For perspectives about genre and form, see Williams ([1979] 2009), Jameson (2007) and Berlant (2011).

In the National Library's digital collections on journals, I did searches for "ability to swim" and "swimming." I was interested in how swimming was articulated in the journals around the time when the ability to swim became a public topic in Finland. I explored journals that discussed swimming during the first four decades of the twentieth century. I decided to focus on the journals where the search terms showed up the most. These journals were: *Opettajain Lehti* (*Teacher's Journal*, founded in 1905), *Kisakenttä* (*Playground*, founded in 1910), *Suomen Terveystieteiden lehti* (*Finnish Health Care Review*, founded in 1889), *Suomen Urheilulehti* (*Finnish Sports Magazine*, founded in 1898), *Yhteishyvä* (*Common Good*, founded in 1905), and *Varokeino* (*Safeguard*, founded in 1936). I searched all the volumes that were available in a digital format and was able to access these journals from their first volumes to the 1940s in the most cases. In the National Library's archives, my searches were able to reach all Finnish journals that were in a digital format. To focus more on how the idea of swimming was articulated in a Finnish context, I also included *Uintilehti* (the *Review of the Finnish Swimming Association*, founded in 1957) in my inquiry. These journals introduced popular ideas about well-being, health, home economics, and safety. Some of the journals still exist (*Teacher's Journal*, *Finnish Sports Magazine*, and *Common Good*), while the rest are no longer published.

Various media items

Besides archival research, I was also regularly reading various cultural texts that I ran across in a less controlled way. Though my investigation on the notion of the ability to swim as a civic skill framed my approach so that I first read about how this idea developed in administrative texts (such as in the National Core Curriculum), I also wanted to explore how the idea emerges as a cultural notion that articulates the idea of swimming in different contexts. Hence, I started to trace what forms swimming's civilizational nuances take. This exploration was also framed by a genealogical approach as I surveyed the varied modes of this association without aiming to find a core explanation for it and without giving precedence to administrative sites.

The genealogical inquiry of swimming's civilizational associations led me to analyze how the inability to swim has been articulated as a personal problem that contrasts with the picture of Finland as a Land of a Thousand Lakes. This analysis can be found in the article "Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body." I was interested in such associations as cultural notions. In the article, I analyzed how these kinds of connections surface with three Finnish TV programs and how they also appear in more administrative

contexts. My exploration also involved contemporary media coverage of the behavior of racialized people and assumed immigrants in the public swimming pools of Finland (in “Bodies of Latent Potential”). I concentrated on investigating how notions of embodiment articulate the idea of Finnish culture. My genealogical approach to this entanglement focused on both the contemporary moment and the historical understandings that have linked the ability to swim with a particular idea of Finnish culture.

Concerning culture as a collection of outwardly meaningful articulations, I did not merely want to focus on unpacking the naturalized link between the ability to swim and proper citizenship. I was also interested in how the notion of *natural* intertwines with the assumption that everyone should be able to swim. There is a cultural narrative around the meanings of swimming that does not connect the human being who swims with a nation-state but with the history of humankind: the evolutionary idea that animals that preceded human beings lived in the water. I wanted to explore in detail how this idea surfaces in cultural products and what kinds of understandings about bodies are put forward through this idea. When exploring the idea, my interest was especially captured by books authored by evolutionary biologist Neil Shubin (*Your Inner Fish: The Amazing Discovery of Our 375-Million-Year-Old Ancestor*) and journalist Lynn Sherr (*Swim: Why We Love the Water*). Shubin’s and Sherr’s works popularize the ideas of evolutionary biology through the notions of “inner fish” and a “love” for the water. When unpacking the beliefs emphasizing that it is natural for a human being to swim, I connected the texts that embrace the ability to swim as a human ability with such cultural texts that pathologize and depreciate the ability of a human being to walk on all fours. In this way, I investigated how ableism intertwines with the cultural articulations of human abilities. I also explored the media attention given to Shubin’s work, wanting to consider its cultural significance, and Shubin’s research articles (published in *Nature*), which preceded his popular scientific book (on popular science, see section 3.4).

This exploration of how the popular ideas of evolutionary biology frame understandings of swimming in complex ways led me to research texts produced outside of Finland. Interestingly, when I included texts from the U.S. and the U.K., my data started to reflect the global power relations around cultural production. Though these texts were easily available to me because I understand English (as most people who live in Nordic Europe do), this availability reflects how English dominates culture. My decision to explore texts not produced in Finland illustrates how national borders cannot limit what kinds of cultural products fascinate us. Still, this fascination that

encourages us to challenge *methodological nationalism* (see section 3.5) does not emerge without globalized power relations.

Bodies of cultural texts I was primarily focusing on

Archived documents
The Archive of Parliament in Finland, parliamentary documents 1907–2013
Maalaiskansakoulun opetussuunnitelma, komiteamietintö [Rural primary school curriculum, a committee report]. 1925. Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kirjapaino.
Kansakoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö I, komiteamietintö N:o 10-1946 [The Committee Report of the Primary School Curriculum I, A Committee Report 10-1946]. Helsinki.
Kansakoulukomitean mietintö, komiteamietintö N:o 2-1946 [The Committee Report of the Primary School, A Committee Report 2-1946]. Helsinki.
Kansakoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö II [The Committee Report of the Primary School Curriculum II]. 1952. Helsinki.
Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö I [The Committee Report of the Comprehensive School Curriculum I]. 1970. Helsinki.
The archived texts of the work of the curriculum committee of primary education 1945–1949
The archived texts of the state’s physical education committee 1945–1946

Journals and periodicals
<i>Kisakenttä</i> : years 1910–44
<i>Opettajain lehti</i> : years 1905–53
<i>Suomen Terveenhoito-lehti</i> : years 1889–1944
<i>Suomen Urheilulehti</i> : years 1898–1941
<i>Uintilehti</i> : years 1957–82

<i>Varokeino</i> : years 1936–43
<i>Yhteishyvä</i> : years 1905–16

Texts, books, and articles (both print and electronic forms)
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Feminist theories

In the analysis of cultural texts, I draw connections between different ideas to theorize the understandings of bodies. In this sense, articulation as a methodological approach best describes my work with cultural texts. Articulation as Slack (1996) notes, maps the nuances of the connections of ideas in such a way that it assumes that what it now maps captures a specific function which keeps particular ideas together in a particular context. With this idea in my mind, I read also such texts, whose authors have offered productive ways to analyze the forms of ableism. In the chapters that follow, I situate the understandings of Iris Marion Young, Susan Wendell and Lauren Berlant in the cultural affinities to capable bodies. I do not to suggest that their entire works are framed by ableist attachments to capable bodies. Rather, I show how Young's and Wendell's outwardly inclusive perspectives to bodies offer "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) when they challenge conventional understandings about bodies by using such assumptions that enable a cultural hope about proper and developed embodiment. Berlant, on the other hand, provides methodologically productive perspectives while articulating attachments to normative bodily ideals.

While Young's and Berlant's ideas as reinforcing ableist assumptions have been considered in disability studies (e.g. May and Ferri 2005; Hall 2011; Mollow 2015), I also chose Wendell's work in my scrutiny since I wanted to explore a form of ableism which emerges in the field of disability studies and which is more difficult to notice because it appears to rather explicitly embrace all kinds of bodies. All in all, my approach situates methodologically the texts written by scholars both in the position where they have more authority in the analysis than other kinds of cultural texts and at the same level with other texts.

4. Re-Articulating Able-Bodiedness

This interdisciplinary work introduces three concepts that can help scholars of different fields observe assumptions about bodies and the cultural mechanisms of ableism: able-bodied belonging, repressive hypothesis of the body, and bodies of latent potential (Vaahtera 2016a, 2016b; Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018). The concepts are the results of my cultural analysis on swimming. Thus, they come from a very particular context. My concepts are simultaneously connected to the theorizing of bodies that has been done in disability studies, crip theory, feminist science studies, queer theory, transgender studies, cultural studies of education, post-colonial studies, and gender studies. Even though this chapter primarily introduces how I analyzed cultural mechanisms of ableism in my three articles, I have expanded my analysis to new dimensions, hopefully exploring the cultural mechanisms of prioritizing able-bodiedness in even more precise ways. In the sections that follow, I not only summarize the articles but also offer independent analysis of a cultural bond to able-bodiedness and its re-articulation.

In section 4.1, I explore collective attachments to able-bodiedness in articulations that challenge the certainty of what a human body can be. In the following section 4.2, I focus on how cultural worries about specific qualities of bodies emerge through the idea of repression and how they are connected to questions about bodies' "realness" and eliminating improper qualities. I show how bio/thanatopolitics frames our affective experiences about our bodies. In section 4.3, I argue that assumptions that emphasize how bodies are moldable and how a body's qualities are connected to cultural factors do not eliminate the hierarchization of bodies and cultures. Furthermore, my analysis on how bodies are viewed as possessing latent capacities enables considerations on how colonialist, ableist and eugenicist assumptions intertwine.

4.1. Able-Bodied Belonging

There is an emotional aspect to the idea of belonging, which evokes a sense of affinity and closeness. However, the feeling of belonging does not necessitate a relationship that is traditionally seen as personal or close. Rather, people can belong to abstract collectives such as nation-states (see Anderson [1983] 2006). Campbell (2009, 4) uses the term *abled imaginary* to describe an "imagined shared community" that reinforces ableism by relying on seemingly neutral notions of cultural values. In this respect, we can think

about how able-bodiedness can be an object of belonging. In this section, I investigate cultural attachments to able-bodiedness by introducing the formulation of able-bodied belonging. I use able-bodied belonging to analyze how capable bodies emerge in cultural texts in a way that connects them with positive affects, and I consider how these kinds of cultural associations about bodies appear in specific contexts of belonging. This section focuses on how evolutionary biological accounts articulate the idea that human beings belong to the animal world in a way that emphasizes ableist understandings about bodies. To analyze forms of articulation in which ideas about humans' connection to the animal world develop through ableist ideas about bodies, I turn to Lauren Berlant's (2011) formulation of *cruel optimism*. Evolutionary biological accounts that emphasize how human bodies can appear in different forms and how human beings are connected to nonhuman animals through their material bodies offer cruel optimism when they rely on ableist ideas about bodies. Furthermore, I argue that while Berlant's concepts provide productive ways to analyze complex cultural mechanisms, ableist assumptions about bodies enable her argumentation. Finally, I consider how cultural affects towards particular bodies are far from determinate and how political communities have challenged ostensibly self-evident affects.

Ahmed's (2014) idea of the *cultural politics of emotion* and her methodology, which considers the political and cultural underpinnings of emotions, frames my exploration of the affective ties to ableism. For Ahmed (2014), the cultural politics of emotion highlight the politics of how certain affects have been attached to particular bodies. According to Ahmed (2014), cultural understandings about bodies can emerge in affects because specific affective reactions to specific bodies are validated in culture. In this sense, my approach to the affective attachments to ableism reflects how bodies are articulated in cultural texts in a way that attaches certain affects to certain kinds of bodies and naturalizes these connections.

In "We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked," I investigate what kinds of associations extend from cultural texts that discuss how human bodies are connected to nonhuman animals. My description intends to further inquire anthropocentric ideas from the perspective of disability studies and investigate how the idea of human beings as part of the animal world emerges in contemporary texts. The article focuses on texts that popularize evolutionary biological accounts and investigates how those accounts articulate the notion that human beings belong to the animal world.

Blencowe (2012) observes that modern biology in the nineteenth century promoted the idea that life is beyond any single body or organism. She notes

that Foucault identified how the emergence of biosciences in the early nineteenth century enabled an idea of human beings as a collective embodiment and as a living species: variations of life. This idea challenges the status of human beings as animals that are more important than other animals. However, popular imaginaries about human beings as exceptional animals have been maintained in different ways in tandem with the notion of human beings as a species that is just another form of life. When I trace how able-bodied belonging intersects with outwardly more inclusive forms of belonging, I also present nuances of the mechanisms that maintain human exceptionalism.

As it explores the affective ties to ableism, this article focuses on how specific affective reactions are connected to certain kinds of bodies in cultural texts. For example, the article shows how human quadrupedalism on dry land is framed with affective reactions such as amazement and confusion and how learning to walk upright is linked with hope. Moreover, it draws attention to how affective notions about species-typical locomotion appear intertwined with the understandings of developed or underdeveloped culture. According to Ahmed (2010, 2014), persistent affective reactions to specific objects can become attributes of these objects in cultural imaginaries. Therefore, it does matter how affects emerge in cultural texts and what kinds of attitudes affects reinforce.

The article “We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked” traces affective reactions from both media items and from texts written by scientists for the general public. It shows that scientists who write about evolutionary biology frame their statements about humans belonging to the animal world by emphasizing their affective attachments to bodies that resemble conventional human bodies. The focus on affective reactions allows us to turn to the contradictions in articulations that appear to offer inclusive frameworks for thinking about bodies and abilities.

For example, the figure of *Tiktaalik* (a fossilized creature with traits between fish and land-living animals) has arisen in popular accounts of evolutionary biology as an example of how human bodies do not differ radically from the bodies of nonhuman species. However, articulating this similarity requires ableist and speciesist ideas about bodies (Vaahtera 2016b). In my article, I point out that the way *Tiktaalik* is introduced as an ancestor of human beings highlights that a capable dexterous human hand instantly invokes a special attachment (ibid.). Here, the hope for a more inclusive perspective to bodies abates and becomes articulated in the circulation of conventional cultural attachments.

The quote in my article's title—"We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked"—resonates with the popular belief that human ancestors first lived in the water and then on land, where they became bipedal. In conventional thinking, these changes are articulated as a developmental movement in which bipedalism comes across as a more developed way of moving than swimming. Intriguingly, while the ability to swim can link human beings with the past, it is also articulated as a skill that people achieve after they have learned to walk. Thus, paradoxically, the ability to swim can relate human beings with the nonhuman animals that "preceded" them and still appear to signal a more highly developed stage in the life-span of a contemporary human being. These associations are related to questions about how human beings are supposed to be able to move and how ableism frames these assumptions.

Able-bodied belonging to the animal world can thus manifest so that humans are expected to be able to move in a way that connects them with nonhuman animals while also displaying the ability for movement that is assumed to be species-typical. That is, walking is presumed to be the primary mode of human movement, and when human beings can also swim, they are seen to be demonstrating their evolutionary links to other life forms. Moreover, being a species-typical human in cultural imaginaries also signifies the potentiality for different kinds of abilities (Vaahtera 2016b). Sherr (2012) offers a telling way of illuminating able-bodied belonging in her book *Swim: Why We Love the Water*. She writes that evolutionary biologists have emphasized how human beings can encounter different kinds of environments and how the potentiality to develop abilities that allow them to be in different environments makes humans exceptional animals (Vaahtera 2016b, 599). Sherr connects the potentiality of new abilities with humanity (ibid.). In this respect, we can consider how Sherr's account allows readers to view themselves as a species whose relationship to nonhuman animals is framed by their more diverse skills (ibid.).

In the article, my examination is framed by questions: How does the notion of human beings as animals function? How do "animate hierarchies" (Chen 2012, 12) emerge from the articulations that associate human beings with nonhuman animals? How do the understandings of race and culture frame the way in which specific abilities are tied to the evolutionary past of human beings? What kinds of figures illuminate humans' connection to nonhuman animals? How can disability and crip perspectives, which turn favorably to the relegated knowledges of stigmatized bodies, re-articulate the

idea that human beings experience themselves as exceptional in relation to other animals?

My formulation of able-bodied belonging offers a perspective that interrogates cultural hopes about belonging by asking how ableist norms function in the ideas about belonging. Able-bodied belonging is a concept that can be used effectively to analyze cultural contexts that are superficially unrelated to issues of ableism as ableist ideas can still invoke forms of belonging in these contexts (Vaahtera 2016b). Berlant's (2011) formulation of cruel optimism captures the dynamics of mechanism I research. For example, evolutionary biology—by showing that current forms of bodies are not determinate—appears to offer perspectives that potentially challenge ableism, but popular stories in evolutionary biology about capable bodies reinforce the notion of human exceptionalism. It is important to underscore that my goal is not to find understandings about bodies that are actually inclusive and alternative. Rather, my perspective facilitates consideration of how the hopes for alternative approaches to bodies can become ableist. I am interested in the articulations that attempt to offer “alternative” understandings about bodies in such a way that their aims are prevented from happening.

Berlant's (2011) work, similar to my approach, scrutinizes promises of more generative systems of thinking or living. In the context in which Berlant (2011) theorizes cruel optimism, she aims to explore a mode of theorizing bodies that articulates unconventional bodies in the registers of resistance. Berlant (2011, see in particular 107n35) seems to suggest that embodied being is connected in such complex ways to larger social circumstances that reading embodiment in the framework of resistance can be cruel optimism. She says that instead of locating forms of resistance, bodies could be viewed in a way that focuses on an “activity of maintenance” rather than a “projection toward a future” (Berlant 2011, 100, 117). According to McCormack (2014), Berlant in this way offers an approach that turns to the forms of embodiment that are not conventionally read in the registers of going forward or are even read as forms of destruction. It is possible to consider how Berlant's suggested approach resonates with disability and crip critiques of development (e.g., Kolářová and Wiedlack 2016), as she aims to challenge the logic that emphasizes progress and development. Seeing how the idea of development has been used as a justification for ableist, heteronormative, and colonialist understandings and practices, Berlant's approach could indeed help queer-disability studies scholars interrogate the ideas of progress and development in nuanced ways.

However, Berlant relies on ableist assumptions to articulate cruel optimism. Mollow (2015) notes that Berlant circulates fat-phobic expressions and assumptions when theorizing cultural fantasies about change (see also Kyrölä and Harjunen 2017). According to Anna Mollow (2015), Berlant adopts the stereotype that fat people (Berlant uses medicalized terms such as *obese*) eat too much because they want to alleviate sorrow or stress to theorize a capitalist atmosphere in which people are attached to objects that hinder actual social changes. For Berlant, food is a cruel object because it fattens while promising alleviation. Mollow (2015) observes that when Berlant (2011) associates fatness with an attachment to “injurious” objects and simplistically assumes that fatness depends on eating habits, she ironically puts forward an idea that echoes cruel optimism—now in the form of an unlikely fantasy of a world where all fat people are thin. Furthermore, I would stress that Berlant associates the feeling of sorrow with fat bodies—participating in cultural politics that make fat bodies unhappy objects (see Ahmed 2010, 2014).

Disability studies scholars have turned their attention to the ways ableism can frame articulations that seem to challenge conventional narratives while reinforcing ableism; in other words, it is possible to question conventional ideas in some areas while maintaining a conventional manner in articulating disability and unconventional bodies (McRuer 2006a; Campbell 2009; Kafer 2013), and Berlant’s theorizing reflects such cultural modes. However, cultural affects towards specific bodies are never determinate. By exploring the popular accounts of evolutionary biology together with the understandings of disability studies, I have shown the conflicting cultural affects that surround the imaginary of the capable human body. Moreover, I have highlighted ableist interpretations of bodies from a different angle in an attempt to intervene in seemingly obvious affective reactions.

My effort to demonstrate how conventional affective attachments have been challenged by dissident collectives relates to Berlant’s (2011) idea that affective attachments that often appear ordinary have been interrupted in various ways in countercultures. In this respect, critical research ought to show how making sense of the world has been continually framed by different ideologies. Furthermore, and from a more methodological viewpoint, I provide an analysis of collective affinities with able-bodiedness, considering how they emerge from sites that provide complex understandings about bodies. This approach aligns with Stuart Hall’s and Antonio Gramsci’s perspectives (see section 3.1) on culture and cultural transformations. It focuses on fractures in ableist culture and, on the other hand, those specific

points of adhesion that prevent anti-ableist articulations from emerging in specific contexts. Berlant's theorization about embodiment exemplifies that cultural articulations that provide some affirmation to unconventional bodies are internally heterogeneous, and questioning ableism is not a monolithic way of approaching cultural ideas.

The article "We Swam Before We Breathed or Walked" traces how ableism frames the way belonging to the animal world is articulated. The concept of able-bodied belonging was my tool to convey how evolutionary biological accounts create forms of belonging that emphasize humans' connections to nonhuman animals, presenting humans as exceptional animals and associating the potentiality of varied abilities with humanity. Able-bodied belonging provides an approach for considering the collective attachments to ableist ideas about bodies in the articulations that bring about hopes for more inclusive communities. It considers the specific mechanisms that rely on ableism while engendering experiences of belonging. While I have not focused on national belonging in this section, able-bodied belonging can also be used when investigating how ableism intertwines with nationalism. In the next two sections, I proceed to specific questions around national belonging and imaginaries about citizenship. I will examine the mechanisms by which bodies are viewed as potentialities and how in such mechanisms able-bodiedness emerges as primary and "real."

4.2. The Repressive Hypothesis of the Body

"I am speaking here about a *curative imaginary*, an understanding of disability that not only expects and assumes intervention but also cannot imagine or comprehend anything other than intervention." (Kafer 2013, 27.)

In the passage quoted above, Kafer offers the term *curative imaginary* to describe the cultural assumption that associates disability with an obvious need to cure it. Aabledness, on the other hand, appears in the curative imaginary as a state that can exist without being exposed to questions of how it should be cured or what kinds of conditions necessitate it. To counter such conventional presumptions, which Kafer's concept unpacks, this section explores how aabledness occurs as a primary articulation on bodies without challenges to its legitimacy. To explore this problem, I put forward the repressive hypothesis of the body. My article "Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body," which introduced this concept, demonstrates how physical capability appears in cultural texts as a primary quality of the body.

The article notes how the association that connects an unfit body with repression enables physical capability to appear to be an original quality of the body.

In this section, I first explain how the repressive hypothesis of the body is connected to Foucault's notion that investigates the distinction between repression and liberation. I then show how the assumption of repression has functioned in articulations meant to challenge conventional articulations about bodies and has emphasized emancipation. I connect these articulations with the cultural understandings about the ability to swim. I then show, drawing on Foucault's work, how specific biopolitical aims can also operate with the notion of repression and represent some bodily experiences as states whose existence hinders "real" bodily experiences. This allows us to view Kafer's (2013) idea of curative imaginary as more thoroughly connected to biopower and cultural understandings about "real bodies."

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1980) suggested that the assumption of sexuality as something that needs to be freed from repression is a specific historical idea about that which is seen as sexuality. Foucault (1980) calls this assumption the *repressive hypothesis of sexuality*. This idea was linked with specific power relations because it was developed in the field of psychoanalysis, which was necessitated by the conditions of the nineteenth-century asylum (Huffer 2010). According to Lynne Huffer (2010), Foucault showed that the idea that uninhibited talk about sexuality is a tool to cure is a fundamentally historical one that was paradoxically introduced in the context that assumed psychiatrists to be authorities who could "liberate" the mad. In other words, the understanding that there can be a repressed sexuality becomes possible through psychoanalysis, which is not possible without power relations. Considering repression as a specific historical viewpoint to the cultural understandings of sexuality, one can ask what work the idea has done, what kind of erotic practices have been presented as proper through it, and what kinds of areas of the body have been associated with sexuality through it.

The assumption of a state of repression implies a state in which a body does not express its "true" qualities. Hence, the notion that specific groups of people have repressed their sexuality constructs the assumption that they can express their real sexuality in a more developed state, one in which they no longer repress themselves. Foucault attempts to situate these ideas and concerns about repression in their historical context and show how they frame contemporary thinking. According to Foucault (2003, 40), the notion of repression can function as a mechanism to normalize bodies. In other

words, for Foucault (2003, 40), repression as a psychologized notion is a mode of productive power, and it allows us to view bodies in such a way that questions about bodies' proper qualities can be posed. Although Foucault focused on notions of sexuality when investigating repression, I analyze repression in the context of ableism.

There is a teleological assumption embedded in the repressive hypothesis of sexuality. The hypothesis presumes that the original being comes to existence when the mechanisms of repression are removed. Here, a form of being that is connected with liberation, in contrast to repression, appears as right and indisputable (Vaahtera 2016a). In different contexts, different bodies have been associated with either repression or liberation. We need a theoretical perspective that examines how the assumptions about repression solidify cultural ideals around abledness. It would explore the assumptions that treat some qualities of bodies/minds as obstacles that prevent them from emerging in their "real" form. I now aim to develop this kind of perspective by focusing on articulations about physical skills.

The feminist theoretician Iris Marion Young (1980) describes women's bodies in her seminal article "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality" in a way that corresponds with a teleological assumption of the repressive hypothesis. Young (1980, 152) claims that patriarchal society makes women "physically inhibited," by which she means that women do not behave and act in a way that illustrates capability. Young (1980) connects emancipation with physical capability. It is important to note that Young's work has also provided perspectives to question conventional notions of embodiment by exploring, for example, cultural understandings about menstruation (2005). Indeed, Young's work cannot be easily dismissed as ableist (see also Hall 2011). Moreover, Young ([1998] 2007) also reconsidered her argument in her revision of "Throwing Like a Girl" and pointed out that she had assumed seemingly common ideas about bodies in the earlier article. However, she still associates freedom with physical capability in her revision. Young ([1998] 2007, 286) compares her generation with her daughter's and states that her daughter's generation is freer. She explains this thusly: "She and her friends move and carry themselves with more openness, more reach, more active confidence" (ibid.). Young interprets the level of freedom by viewing how bodies behave, her connection of physical capability with freedom in Young's text hints at the presumption that bodies that do not use strength or appear capable do not express their true potentials (Vaahtera 2016a).

We can find resonance with Young's assumptions in different cultural articulations about bodies. Indeed, as Vivian May and Beth Ferri (2005) point out, many feminist scholars have theorized resistance in ways that eventually rely on ableist assumptions of bodies. The article "Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body" connects Young's assumption about women as "physically inhibited" with cultural understandings about the inability to swim. Although the article traces how the ability to swim has been articulated as an essential skill in different cultural texts in Finland from the 1930s to the present day, here I focus only on a 2004 documentary, *I'm Afraid of Swimming (Pelkään Uida)*, directed by Rita Trötschkes and Mats Hastrup.

The film introduces three people who have begun taking swimming lessons as adults and tells the story of how the three nonswimmers, who have been afraid of swimming, start to form a new kind of relationship with the water. In a sequence that focuses on how Sean, one of the subjects of the film, receives swimming teaching, the inability to swim is framed by a curative imaginary (Kafer 2013, 27) that assumes that incapability cannot exist without a wish that it can be cured.

Sean's swimming teacher encourages him to accept his body's capability to float as inevitable. The teacher states: "Take a deep breath. Now hold your breath. Now just relax and let your knees bend. [...] You just have to be relaxed and then succumb to the water so that you can feel and experience it. These are things you cannot fight against." The teacher's talk appears informational and intended to diminish Sean's fear. The exchange stresses that all bodies can float if they explore their potential to do it. However, Sean is not yet able to float. Sean says: "Where water is a dominant element, and I don't fully trust it, when water comes up to my neck, I may have difficulty being there; I feel uncomfortable." Here, a capacity to float emerges as a fact that is contrasted with Sean's fear of exploring the potential to float and his uneasiness in the water. In another sequence, Sean watches a television broadcast in his room of the world championships in swimming. He then closes his eyes and lies down in his bed. The next sequence shows a swimmer who looks like Sean swimming in the pool in the same manner as those in the world championships broadcast. In the narration of the film, the ability to swim is a dream for Sean. Though the ability to swim is a fiction for Sean's body, which feels uncomfortable in the water, it exists as a fact that still concerns his body (Vaahtera 2016a).²⁹

²⁹ For the distinction between fact and fiction, see Haraway (1989). See also Williams (2009), who pays attention to how the dichotomy fact/fiction, separating different cultural articulations from each other, is historical.

In “Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body,” I put forward a formulation of the *thanatopolitics of bodies’ potentials*. The concept centers on how bodily changes can be articulated in a way that assumes “that bodies have potentials which either should be preserved or eradicated” (Vaahtera 2016a, 9). In *I’m Afraid of Swimming*, the swimming lessons are meant to change the subjects’ relationships with water. Sean’s teacher shows him how to enjoy being in the water, and in this way, the goal is to eradicate Sean’s feeling of discomfort.

My objective is to re-articulate physical skills and through that the way we think about the capabilities of bodies and bodily changes. My viewpoint considers how biopolitical aims can establish some bodily experiences as states that hinder “real” bodily experiences. In other words, it is important to weigh how biopolitical projects can produce beliefs that there are bodily states that should be replaced. As Helén (2016) has shown, the ostensibly personal experiences of well-being and happiness have been objects of the government’s concerns in modern states, the Nordic welfare states in particular. Thus, biopolitical aims to affirm “life” or “vital potential” (Helén 2016, 37) do not focus just on the physical conditions of bodies but also on how people learn to experience their bodies and lives. In “Biopolitics and the Repressive Hypothesis of the Body,” I show how fearfulness and the experience of feeling uncomfortable in water are assumed to be qualities whose elimination enables one to emerge as one really is.

Thus, the specific biopolitical objective of promoting the ability to swim can be viewed as an aim to render the inability to swim as a state of repression. When the notion emerges in the context of physical skills, repression promotes viewing bodies in a way that physical capability appears as an invisible but real condition of a body. The idea that connects “reality” with conventional able-bodiedness is thus one way of naturalizing ableism at the level of culture. Repression can also have a specific role in the politics of national culture. For example, in the recent conversations about immigrants in public swimming pools, assumed immigrants are associated with repression. In this context, articulations have surfaced that assume in a psychologized tone that immigrants have problems with accepting nakedness and that liberated people (who are contrasted with immigrants) can easily appear naked in public pools. Here, ideas about repression generate notions about national culture and, moreover, about specific national embodiment. In the next section, I focus on this context.

Such a body politic, which assumes that bodies can have qualities that need to be eliminated, is mostly ignored when the intertwining of biopolitics and

thanatopolitics is theorized. Giorgio Agamben (1998) uses the term *thanatopolitics* and has linked it to the politics that divide the population into two groups: those whose life is valued and those who are killed.³⁰ However, my approach traces how this understanding emerges at the level of a single body.³¹ Disability studies perspectives that challenge conventional understanding of what negativity of bodies mean (Chen 2012, 153) allows us to view thanatopolitics in this way. In the rest of the section, I elaborate the idea of the thanatopolitics of bodies' potentials and also briefly consider its implications for the cultural meanings of transgender bodies.

According to Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan (2009), the association between transgender surgeries and destruction was particularly powerful in the 1940s and 1960s, and according to them, turning to the understandings that were available then provides a more nuanced understanding of the body politic,³² which articulates bodies as resources of the state. Stryker and Sullivan (2009) point out that during that time some doctors and lawyers viewed trans women's genital operations—which usually consisted of penectomy but not vaginoplasty, making the body seem “not whole”—as illegal because they connected these operations with a historical situation in which people who wanted to avoid going to military duty cut their “healthy” body parts away. People who opposed genital operations used the term *mayhem* to describe this alleged crime against sovereignty (ibid.).³³ There was a cultural horror in these operations, as they produced bodies that appeared to be morphologically unable to respond to the cultural demands given to genitalia.

Indeed, usually only unconventional ways to mold bodies, such as transgender operations, have been connected with a process that “destroys” the body. However, in the context of transgender embodiment, it is possible to argue that the process that destroys the body at the same time creates a

³⁰ In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault (2003) pays attention to how biopower as a form of power that aims to preserve the forms of life can mingle with techniques that destroy life.

³¹ See also Mackenzie (2009).

³² Indeed, the term *body politic* denotes old historical associations that have linked the bodies of human beings with the state in such a way that the assumed power center of the state (the sovereignty) has been assumed to orchestrate its subjects. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *body politic* as “a nation regarded as a corporate entity.” Stryker and Sullivan (2009) emphasize how *body politic* is a fiction about the power of sovereignty but still a cultural idea that frames the understandings of bodies.

³³ For more about this, see Vaahtera and Vähäpassi (2014).

more satisfying composition.³⁴ Transgender people have expressed for a long time that operations that remove some parts of their body produce more satisfactory experiences. Also, in the context of physical skills, the process that changes the body so that it cannot react as before can be a very pleasing experience. This assumption appears in *I'm Afraid of Swimming*. When the teacher advises Sean on the ability to float, he highlights that when one is able to relax in the water and trust that one can float, it is difficult to be in the water without floating. This resonates with the popular notion that once the ability to swim is acquired, the skill will never disappear. In this respect, we can think about learning to swim as a process that destroys the body that is not able to swim. The way in which the destruction of some body parts or conditions produces satisfying bodily experiences should not be ignored, and at the same time, it is important to note that it is a political question about which kinds of bodily states can appear destroyable.³⁵

For Stryker and Sullivan (2009), the historical idea of mayhem around transgender bodies pushes us to ask how unconventional bodies have appeared to be threats to the state because they have been deemed useless. In this sense, Stryker and Sullivan (2009) re-articulate mayhem as a disorder in a state's will to administrate embodiment and produce useful bodies that can be integrated into current social formations. While for Stryker and Sullivan (2009) mayhem is an improper bodily transformation (a deed) that offends the body politic of sovereignty, concerning the embodiment of the nonswimmer, mayhem can also be the omission of a bodily transformation. I have used the concept of the repressive hypothesis of the body to demonstrate how these "omissions" in bodily transformations can be theorized to account for the way cultural norms operate in the material body and emerge through psychologized assumptions about the body. Finally, we can consider the cultural threat the nonswimmer poses. Is it the inability to survive alone in the water that contradicts the cultural expectations of autonomous bodies? Or is it the psychologized suspiciousness that the nonswimmer does not "realize" their true embodied self? Or is it the moral horror of an unfit citizen who does not fulfill the expectations of the state and enhance their body?

³⁴ Though I am using the term *destruction* here, I do not claim that all changes caused by hormones and surgical techniques are irreversible despite their association with irreversibility. On transgender embodiment see also Vähäpassi (2017).

³⁵ The term *destroyable* in this context is owed to Karhu's (2017) analysis of how cultural norms engender "killable lives." Karhu (2017) draws on Butler's (1999 [1990]) understandings of norms as mechanisms by which social phenomena become intelligible and theorizes how certain nonhuman animals become killable.

Through this contemplation of mayhem, it is possible to question how bodies that do not present a developed form or those that are viewed as being in a state in which they do not “realize” themselves are culturally positioned as “killable.” We can thus ask how specific qualities of bodies are connected to frameworks of cure and intervention (Kafer 2013, 27) and how the questions of cure are also connected to the capacity for destructibility. In other words, how the changing understandings about bodies enable specific qualities of bodies to emerge as destroyable.

I am interested in how ableist imaginaries assume bodily states as not only possible to replace but as states that need to be replaced.³⁶ Nayan Shah (2001, 257) claims that benevolent public health reforms that attempt to engender standards of living can eventually “diminish that which does not fit.” Also, the cultural imaginaries that concern “self-actualization” (Giffney 2008, 68) can be approached by asking what kinds of potential are associated with it and how teleological visions of developing and actualizing one’s potential are framed by the fear of being useless, as Noreen Giffney (2008) suggests. When someone claims that someone should use their full potential, the present state is implied to be not good enough. In the context of schools, someone is seen as an underachiever when their performance does not meet the expectations of the school (Mietola 2014). We can thus think about how capability is associated with certain bodies in such a way that capability is seen to express their real form. An Aristotelian teleology assuming that bodies are aiming to achieve their essential natures echoes these understandings. For Aristotle (2008), the end, which expresses what someone or something really is, is associated with the best. The idea of full potentiality shares this sense and furthermore is usually associated with the growth of productivity and the qualities that are in line with current academic and economic ideals. In this sense, it is possible to think how underachievers are assumed to waste their potential or how activities that do not lead a person to a more valued state in a society can be viewed as pointless.³⁷ With this logic, underachieving is associated with being in a state that does not express who one really is. It is possible to view fears of being in a state that is associated with uselessness as expressions of ableist culture, which idealizes productivity, and further as expressing the logic that links “realness” with particular states.

³⁶ Here, I am thinking, for example, about the work of Harjunen (2009) and Kyrölä and Harjunen (2017), which theorizes fatness as liminality.

³⁷ Aristotle (2008, 47) said that “something is pointless when its nature is to serve some purpose other than itself, but it fails to achieve the purpose for which it exists and which it is its nature to serve.”

Wendell's (1996, 91) observation of how "most people learn to identify with their own strengths (by cultural standards) and to hate, fear, and neglect their own weaknesses" is a way of articulating the thanatopolitics of bodies' potentials. Wendell's idea centers on how ableism frames how people experience themselves. When some embodied forms of being are understood to be just waste, people can also experience some of the potentials of their bodies to be waste. However, as I showed in the section "Interrogating Able-Bodiedness," Wendell still subscribes to a problematic presumption of "real body" that ironically reinforces ableist assumptions about bodies while attempting to re-articulate them.

Rather than challenging ableism by emphasizing "real bodies," it is important to consider what kinds of bodies are associated with realness in such a way that the connection can pass as natural. Consequently, I have attempted to provide a perspective that centers on how "realness" associated with conventional able-bodiedness becomes reinforced through the notion of repression. The repressive hypothesis of the body emphasizes that presenting particular qualities of bodies as somehow repressed is a way to shape and intervene in bodies. Moreover, it lets us consider how cultural articulations that connect repression to bodies that do not fit into the norms of conventional able-bodiedness solidify able-bodiedness as a real and primary condition of bodies.

4.3. Bodies of Latent Potential

In this section, I analyze how the assumption of latent potential has functioned in the articulations on the ability to swim. My objective is to offer a more specific examination of ableist articulations about bodies. This approach is connected with Campbell's (2009) aims to investigate how ableism operates in different articulations of bodies and frames the understanding of culture as an assemblage of communal ideas and customs that are considered to be important to preserve. Campbell (2009, 196) calls for explorations that would ask how the assumptions of ableism frame the "values of culture, its characterological objects, and secure the transmission of the 'memory' of a body of people." My work further investigates these mechanisms.

My formulation of bodies of latent potential encapsulates a specific cultural assumption in which bodies are articulated in a way that connects them with latent potential. In this section, I analyze both historical and contemporary cultural texts about swimming. In what follows, I first note how the ability to swim emerges in the Finnish cultural texts of the early

twentieth century as latent potential in everyone. I then consider how the notion of latent potential has been contrasted with eugenic beliefs that aim to enhance race. I challenge this understanding and then examine how notions that emphasize how bodily qualities are not fixed and determinate can also function in ways that generate hierarchizations. I connect my investigation with Kyla Schuller's (2018) recent work about the role of plasticity in eugenic biopolitics.

When I turn to a contemporary public discussion about behavioral codes in public swimming pools, I consider how the assumption of latent potential fosters a specific investigation of how ableism and orientalism overlap. In the context of Finland, assumed immigrant bodies are constituted, in this discussion, as threats to national culture. Drawing on the methodological framework of Foucauldian genealogy (see section 3.2), which considers how contemporary social situations frame historical investigations, I read historical and present-day cases about the intersection of swimming and national belonging to perceive new ways to articulate bodies and abilities. My idea in analyzing, in the same section, historical notions about ability to swim and how the bodies of assumed immigrants are perceived in the public pools at the present moment is not to claim that the cultural anxieties around these two cases would be similar. Rather, I bring these cases together to show more nuances in the conjunction of swimming and citizenship articulations and explore how conventional embodiment has emerged in the notions about cultural progress and homogenization in specific ways.

The idea that everyone has the potential to learn to swim emerges in different ways in Finnish cultural texts about swimming in the early twentieth century. Toivo Aro (1887–1962), who was a sports journalist and diver, wrote many articles for the *Finnish Sports Magazine* (*Suomen Urheilulehti*) that emphasized the ability to swim as a quality of a civilized Finn. Though Aro claimed that anyone could swim, this idea was not accepted outright at that time. For example, a writer who published under the pseudonym A. J-nen stated in the *Teacher's Journal* (*Opettajain Lehti*) in 1936 that “nature itself hinders swimming skills from becoming more general,” arguing that lakes and rivers are cold and inhospitable during the school year, and there are few options for teaching schoolchildren how to swim (J-nen 1936, 519). However, J-nen also admitted that everyone could potentially be able to swim. J-nen (1936, 518) mused that it was “theoretically” possible but hardly in practice because of climatic factors (Vaahtera 2016a). The ability to swim appears here as a latent potential of bodies. J-nen connects its actualization with the environment.

In the *Finnish Sports Magazine*, the actualization of the ability to swim was also connected to people's feelings about their own bodies (Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018). In particular, women who were not able to swim were assumed to have internalized an incorrect perception of themselves as weak and incapable (ibid.). There was an educational aim by the *Finnish Sports Magazine* to teach women, who were assumed to have a duty as mothers to take care of their bodies, to consider themselves capable (ibid.). The *Finnish Sports Magazine* was forming the idea that the ability to swim connotes a specific kind of national embodiment and articulating pedagogical attempts in the framework of the nation. These national pedagogies (Tuomaala 2000, 2004; see also section 2.3) focused on molding not only the body but also the mind—as the goal was to train people to see themselves as capable.

The actualization of latent potential was articulated as a process by which one abandons a false belief about oneself and starts to identify with capability. An ableist logic that connects “real” identification with abledness frames this articulation (see section 4.2). Overall, bodies in this context were seen moldable, and their qualities were related to external factors.

According to Vike Plock (2006), physical cultures at the turn of the twentieth century emphasized fitness in such a way that assumed latent potential. Plock (2006) submits that the assumption of latent potential in physical cultures induced egalitarian ideas since its scope was not limited solely to one group of people, such as those considered to be more civilized. Though Plock (2006) notes that physical capability was associated during that time with national development and that racist ideas were also circulated in physical cultures, according to Plock, the belief in latent potential conflicted with eugenic beliefs, which she claims function through the assumption of biological determinism. However, according to Schuller (2018), eugenic attempts to optimize human bodies have worked not only through biological determinism but also through relational models that understand bodily qualities to be plastic and moldable. Schuller (2018) uses the term “relational” when describing such models which contradict with biological determinism.

Minna Uimonen (1999) remarks that the notions of plasticity and determinacy coexisted in the understandings of heredity at the turn of the twentieth century. These views could draw from both Lamarckian tradition, which assumed that behavior could influence descendants' vitality, and from the Mendelian notions of the heredity of immutable biological qualities (ibid.).³⁸ These two understandings—and a mix of both ideas—were used in

³⁸ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) was a French naturalist who developed the idea that acquired qualities can be transmitted to descendants. Gregor Mendel (1822–1884) was an

the context of Finland at the turn of the twentieth century to articulate specific social situations (ibid.). Schuller (2018) has noted that biological determinism is often assumed to be a primary idea in the background of racist and eugenic movements. This obscures how beliefs developed in the framework of Lamarckian theory were maintained for a long time after the theory became unpopular and was deemed unscientific,³⁹ and, furthermore, how Lamarckian ideas framed attempts to uplift race (an attempt that is eugenic) by approaching culture as a mutable collection of practices that can be transmitted to new generations (Schuller 2018). This leads us to consider culture as a notion that can engender hierarchizations.

The assumption of latent potential emerges in the articulations of the ability to swim at a time when eugenic sciences associated Finns with inferior races (Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018; see Hietala 1996 on eugenic sciences). In this context of eugenic fears about the quality of the Finnish race, the *Finnish Sports Magazine* articulated the bodies of Finns as capable and powerful—as bodies of latent potential. Aro in particular articulated the ability to swim as a pivotal skill for a civilized Finn, highlighting that swimming was cultivated in ancient Greece and Rome. According to Aro, the ability to swim was connected in these locations—which are often associated with Western culture—to civilization (Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018).

Aro promotes the ability to swim by using the assumed roots of Western culture to articulate its importance. Hence, by employing the idea of culture to engender cultural change, Aro aspires to shape the qualities of bodies. The *Finnish Sports Magazine* uses the notion of a civilized body. The aim is to produce bodies that are physically capable and whose capabilities establish their civilization. Furthermore, the emphasis on Finns' ability to swim becomes a tool for the enhancement of "the Finnish race." The latent potential of Finns to learn to swim was at the same time latent potential for Western culture. Furthermore, in this work, the notion of culture helped to articulate specific civilizational concerns and the need to mold bodily qualities. We can consider how the questions around the ability to swim in the Finnish context were, in the early twentieth century, also specific claims about the whiteness of Finns—as the understanding of which groups of people can be white was

Austrian monk whose experiments with pea plants have been recognized as a precursor of the genetic model of heredity (Schuller 2018).

³⁹ See also Pick (1989, 100) about the popularity of Lamarckian ideas in the context of France.

during that time connected with questions about developed civilizations (see Chen 2012, 106–115).⁴⁰

Moreover, since the early nineteenth century, concerns about whether Finland belongs to the East or West alongside attempts to distance Finland from qualities associated with the East (for example, from Russia) have framed the construction of Finland's national identity (Maïche 2015). As Maïche (2015) and Rastas (2012) observe, the idea of Finland as a Western country has been actively engendered. I have not been able to explore in more detail how the distinction between the East and West appeared in Finnish debates on the ability to swim or how the ability to swim functioned as a tool to connect Finns to the imagined West. Though these debates are out of the scope of this study, the cultural notion of the West as a place of more developed culture and bodily cultivation emerges in the understandings that promoted the ability to swim in the early twentieth century.

Said (1993), who has theorized orientalist assumptions, notes that the idea of culture has functioned as a way of distinguishing “us” from the “rest,” and culture—though operating in the register of relationality—is often articulated in a way that reinforces national belonging. In orientalist thinking, the West appears more developed, and it illuminates civilization (Said 1978, 1993; Aman 2013). Orientalism makes a substantial distinction between the “Orient” and the “Occident” and yet its view that the Orient is underdeveloped and needs civilizational training from the Occident invites the idea that the Orient is latently similar to the Occident (Aman 2013). Thus, the assumption of latent potential functions in orientalist logic. This kind of understanding emerges in contemporary media coverage about assumed immigrants and racialized people in the public swimming pools of Finland. The article “Bodies of Latent Potential” turns to these cases and shows how the assumptions about embodied behavior in public pools operate with an orientalist logic.

Considering that the ability to swim was connected in the early twentieth century with civilization, it is not surprising that the ability to swim is now deemed a civic skill in Finland (Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018). In the contemporary discussion about behavior in public pools, the inability to swim is linked with the bodies of assumed immigrants, who are allegedly more likely to use the pools for socializing and activities that do not strengthen the body than white Finns. Also, worries that assumed immigrants do not want to appear naked in the shower facilities and saunas at public pools conflict

⁴⁰ For perspectives on whiteness, see also, for example, Ahmed (2004), Bell (2006) and Essed and Trienekens (2007).

with the notion of a Finnish culture that is liberal and approaches nakedness with ease. In these discussions, the inability to swim and the unwillingness to appear naked challenge the behavioral norms of the pools. These worries have been manifested both in the openly racist articulations of far right-wing media, newspaper articles published by the publicly funded national broadcasting company YLE, and in the material produced by the Finnish Teaching and Lifesaving Federation. Concerns about inappropriate behavior in the public pools have been articulated in a manner that assumes that this kind of behavior needs to be fixed. For example, the Finnish Teaching and Lifesaving Federation has published a guidebook for immigrants outlining behavioral codes in the public pools. These articulations echo orientalist understandings. On the one hand, they assume a clear distinction between the Orient and the Occident, and on the other hand, they assume that the Orient is latently able to embody the norms of the Occident (Vaahtera and Lappalainen 2018).

The way in which the actualization of latent potential for a specific physical capability was assumed to generate a more civilized culture in early twentieth-century Finland, and how the assumption of latent potential appears in orientalist logic helps to show more specific ways that ableism intersects racializing assumptions. The Orient's designation as a "reacting party" (Maïche 2015, 148) and a moldable object, which is still assumed to be unable to fully actualize those qualities the Occident aims to help it to achieve, demonstrates how the idea of plasticity appears in racialized assumptions. Indeed according to Schuller (2018), historically the process of racialization assumed different capacities for mouldability—associating the ability for more active plasticity with whiteness. In this respect, the educational aims to teach Finns to see themselves as capable, attempts which were articulated for example in the context of the *Finnish Sports Magazine*, as I have shown, do not seem only as aims to advance the body but also as methods of engendering whiteness. This historical understanding of racial difference can be still captured from the contemporary public discussion about public swimming pools emerging in the logic, in which the Occident is assumed to be more active and capable of development.

Understanding how plasticity and latent potential have been tied to progress and development even in mundane contexts such as swimming training illustrates the different types of articulation that obstruct appreciation for embodiment that is viewed as not fully developed. Moreover, how the notion of national culture functions as a tool to articulate what kind of behavior is possible in a public space further raises the questions

of accessibility. Kafer's (2013, 153) position that disability studies could consider accessibility as a contingent question without presuming what kinds of bodies and what kinds of conditions of access are important can illuminate to how imaginaries about bodies define proper embodied behavior by drawing on the imagined national culture. Thus, questions about accessibility also relate how notions about culture define how a public space can be legitimately used.

The conception of bodies of latent potential captures a cultural idea that bodies can have capacities that they only latently manifest. I have investigated how this notion functions in specific contexts. In the early twentieth century, the ability to swim appeared, in the context of Finland, as a latent potential of a proper citizen subject. The ability to swim was connected to civilization, and there was a hope that Finland would be associated more easily with Western culture. In this context, latent potential engaged simultaneously in hopes about bodies and belonging: Finns became associated with the ability to swim and with Western culture. Both the ability to swim and Western culture could be considered to be latently existing in Finnishness. In the present moment, latent potential can be captured from the public discussion about racialized people and assumed immigrants in the public pools. Here, embodied behavior is articulated in a way that uses orientalist logic and the assumption of latent potential. In the distinction between the Orient and Occident, the Orient is presumed to be latently similar to the Occident but still unable to fully actualize its potential.

In the attempts to inquire how ableism and the mechanisms of racialization intersect, turning to the assumption of latent potential can show how racialization is articulated through the notion that a body possesses not-yet-actualized abilities. Furthermore, this research has shown how the context of swimming has enabled articulations about race in both the early twentieth century and today. Hence, this can illustrate how the everyday forms of culture, even in their most innocent manifestations, can participate in much more dangerous cultural politics.

5. Conclusions

My exploration of the cultural meanings of swimming has turned my attention to articulations that appear to support various kinds of bodies. I have focused on specific articulations in which a body emerges as able to take different forms and able to learn new skills. These kinds of articulations appear to offer a perspective that can shake certainty about what bodies can be, and in this respect, they seem to provide ways to blur a distinction between the capable and the incapable. I have offered a cultural analysis that unpacks how such understandings emerge in specific contexts. It shows that these articulations can be less generous to various existing modes of embodiment. The previous chapters have demonstrated that evolutionary accounts that emphasize open-ended becoming, psychologized ideas of repression that aim to liberate bodies, and relational notions that emphasize a cultural change do not necessarily offer challenges to the records that prioritize conventional forms of embodiment and “abledness” (Campbell 2009). These understandings, which articulate bodies as changeable and plastic, offer specific mechanisms that prioritize able-bodiedness. However, examining these mechanisms opens a space for the re-articulation of able-bodiedness when the supposedly central position of able-bodiedness is connected to specific cultural articulations about bodies.

Though the accounts of evolutionary biology support indeterminate views of what a (human) body can be, I have shown how affective attachments to conventional human bodies can frame such accounts. Secondly, my investigation has focused on how the assumption of repression appears in the articulations about physical capability. Ideas about repression can validate, in a teleological manner, certain kinds of bodies as more real than others. I have explored how the perceptions that connect repression with unfit bodies cause capability appear to be an original quality of the body. Finally, I have investigated relational understandings in which the qualities of bodies are connected to external conditions. In a relational perspective, bodily qualities are not assumed to be determinate either. In this perspective, culture can become a factor that offers ways to intervene in bodies and, moreover, culture itself emerges as a moldable domain. I have looked at how the attempts to shape how bodies behave and react have arisen around interests in cultural development and maintaining a progressive culture.

The approach that I am offering concentrates on the specificity of articulations about bodies. It considers how the mechanisms that homogenize bodies draw from a multitude of meanings and practices. In this respect,

when I have attempted to intervene in an ableist culture, I have considered how an ableist culture develops in polymorphous⁴¹ ways—taking different forms and using inconsistent mechanisms. This perspective on culture, which considers how it is diverse and incoherent, can be seen in my analysis of the cultural dimensions of the notions of humans’ genetic connections to nonhuman animals, psychologized repression, and the way in which the idea of culture has been used in different contexts. I have drawn attention to how a psychologized idea of repression can fortify understandings of an undeveloped culture and how the notion of culture can be used in the understandings of biosciences. Consequently, it is important to consider how ostensibly different registers of thought circulate each other’s ideas.

To examine ableist logic in more detail, I have offered concepts that can assist in analyzing the cultural systems in which the ideals of bodies are reinforced. The concept of able-bodied belonging intervenes in ableist rhetoric, which occurs as notions about the communities in which we all appear to belong while at the same time prioritizing conventional bodies. This view can expose how ableist rhetoric is used in articulations about similarity and the bonds that unite everyone. Being human in the age of evolutionary biology means we are connected through our material bodies to nonhuman animals. However, with respect to able-bodied belonging, this relationship can advance in such a way that human beings experience themselves as animals whose bodies are associated with a potentiality that makes them exceptional animals.

My approach pays attention to the perspective that views the body as potentiality. The concepts of the repressive hypothesis of the body and bodies of latent potential show how bodies are viewed from a perspective that asks what kinds of qualities they could develop. The body emerges as a domain of not-yet-actualized qualities and deeds. In particular, the repressive hypothesis of the body confronts such assumptions by showing how repression functions to prioritize the capability of bodies. Bodies of latent potential offers an approach to perspectives which emphasize how bodily qualities are open to change by exploring how cultural fears, wishes about development, and orientalist hierarchies materialize in such perspectives.

The title of the dissertation, “Crippling Swimming,” states my approach, whereby swimming is interrogated from perspectives that reveal the cultural politics that intermingle with it and how different existing bodies have challenged its conventional cultural manifestations. Although my research has

⁴¹ I borrow the term *polymorphous* from Foucault (1980, 34), who uses it when describing the processes that enabled sexuality to become an object of knowledge.

focused on swimming, it is possible to imagine how other scholars could use this kind of approach, for example those studying practices that are thought to expand bodies' capabilities. I am also thinking about the work of Margaret Price (2011, 2015), who explores how ableism focuses on people with mental disabilities and turns to articulations of experiences which confront normal-appearing realities. Price (2015) emphasizes that people can have experiences which are meaningful to them, even though such experiences can lead to dangerous situations and are not understood by others. Hence, it is possible to consider how *able-minded*⁴² belonging prioritizes "normal" mentalities and assumes belonging to a shared reality. By writing about cultural associations between repression and incapability, I aim to offer a way of exploring how different kinds of marginalized realities could be considered in a nuanced way through the approaches offered by disability critique.

My genealogical methodology has illustrated polymorphous understandings of swimming. I have focused on exploring how the notion of the ability to swim as a civic skill has emerged in Finland to associate Finland to the West and civilization. However, in this concluding chapter, I want to briefly mention that the cultural fuss about the importance of the ability to swim has not occurred without a sense of parody. In 1984, the Finnish comedy sketch show *Velipuolikuu* portrayed swimming teaching as a practice that echoes cultural fantasies about the superhuman and progress. The sketch opens with a swimming teacher calling adults who are now about to begin swimming lessons, "weaklings." The teacher says, "In this era of the superhuman, it is perhaps difficult for adults to accept their faults, even though one simply lacks the ability to swim. Ok, weaklings!" The swimming teacher is an exaggeratedly authoritarian figure who uses violent teaching methods. The sketch satirizes familiar swimming teaching techniques as practices of violence. For example, what the teacher calls a method to help the students explore the water involves the teacher splashing water on a student causing the student to cough and choke. Another method that is supposed to demonstrate how to glide through the water ends with the teacher appearing to drown a student. *Velipuolikuu* articulates swimming teaching as an intervention into bodies, which comes across as an aggressive need to make bodies similar in the name of progress. With the *Velipuolikuu* parody, the notion that the ability to swim is an important skill emerges as related to cultural values and not as an ahistorical idea.

⁴² I thank my preliminary examiner Alison Kafer for the suggestion of changing "bodied" into "minded" in this formulation and look at where it could lead.

The articulations about swimming have allowed me to investigate forms of ableism in which articulations that create uncertainty about what bodies can be and present bodies as plastic can still homogenize forms of embodiment. I have focused on positive-seeming articulations about bodies and explored how they connect with assumptions on eradication and eliminating improper qualities. The recent work of Schuller (2018) contributes to showing the complexities of the cultural meanings of bodies in a way that is connected to my research. According to Schuller (2018), though plasticity has often been taken as a subversive assumption, it has provided attempts to optimize and normalize bodies. Schuller (2018) questions how the notion of plasticity has been falsely positioned in critical research as a counter-logic for racism. However, according to Schuller (2018), the assumption that bodies are moldable and plastic has also facilitated eugenic beliefs that seek to improve race and biopower's aims to know how bodies react to intervene in those reactions. In this respect, I would argue that the approaches that stress plasticity as a quality of bodies provide powerful and persuasive mechanisms for prioritizing conventional embodiment. Thus, we should scrutinize plasticity instead of celebrating it. As Schuller (2018) notes, the challenging of plasticity's position in theory should interest disability studies scholars. Though Schuller does not explicitly analyze ideas about disability, disability studies' objectives are related to her interrogation of plasticity. Indeed, it is noteworthy that disability studies has become a discipline that cannot be easily bypassed when analyzing bodies. I would situate my work within this tendency to question ability as an ideal condition of bodies.⁴³

Studying how plasticity has provided cultural hopes about liberation (Schuller 2018) also leads to interesting questions about why contemporary theorists of the body so favor the approaches that emphasize change and moldability. For example, new materialists have stressed the notions of continuous movement and becoming. In the field of critical disability studies, Margrit Shildrick (2012), whose analysis offers productive ways to consider bodies from an anti-ableist perspective, still emphasizes plasticity as a notion that offers unconventional approaches to bodies. With essentialism becoming one of the worst accusations against any scholar (Hemmings 2011), one must consider how the fear of being associated with essentialism affects how we

⁴³ For other examples of recent research that draws heavily on disability studies' perspectives without solely focusing on disability, see Chen (2012) and McCormack (2014).

learn to analyze embodiment. The fear of being associated with essentialism can be an unrecognized viewpoint when scholars choose to focus on forms of embodiment that are easily linked to the ideas of change, transformation, or fluidity. The same fear can also affect which analytic approaches are selected. However, these kinds of cautions echo an essentialist logic that knows for sure how to view specific mechanisms. In this sense, scholars should consider how cultural fears about being labeled an essentialist thinker can impede theorists from analyzing embodiment that is not associated with mobility and change and hence eventually essentialize interpretations about the cultural politics of bodies. Hence, without essentializing how a body emerges as a domain of potentiality—that is, without being certain of how the conjunction always functions—a beneficial approach would scrutinize what perspectives of bodies it has facilitated and how it has hindered us from producing articulations of embodiment that could cripple the world as we know it.

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