

EASE OF MOVEMENT AND FREEDOM OF CORPOREAL EXPRESSION? FEMININITY, THE BODY AND LEOTARDS I IN TRAMPOLINE GYMNASTICS

Carly Stewart, Rhiannon Lord, Gareth Wiltshire
and Scott Fleming

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK

1 Introduction

Traditionally, the sport of trampoline gymnastics has insisted on the leotard as the standardised uniform in all female competition. However, on January 1st 2009 British Gymnastics [BG] announced the following change to the regulations:

6.2 Dress (Female)

Long tights may be worn either flesh colour or same colour as leotard (must be **skin tight**).

In BG competitions for levels D¹ and below female gymnasts may wear skin tight shorts in a colour and style matching the leotard. (BG, 2009a — original emphasis)

The reason given for the change was to “help ensure more women and girls feel confident to participate in the sport” (BG, 2009b). There had been recent calls for practitioners of the sport to move away from the leotard aesthetic, and there are those (ourselves included) who think this change was long overdue. To illustrate the key issues more fully, this chapter presents the meanings that a group of seven female trampoline gymnasts attach to notions of femininity and the female body. In particular, we offer their insights into embodied anxieties and dilemmas as scripts of gender relations embedded in the struggles to maintain a hegemonic or singular notion of femininity whilst managing other dimensions of corporeality associated with the changing adolescent female body. The wearing of leotards (which had hitherto been compulsory in competition without additional

tights or shorts) was central to these struggles and to the construction of the gendered experience of trampoline gymnastics. We suggest that (at least) two sets of harms were caused: first, the dominant feminine aesthetic insisted on a singular understanding of femininity and served to exclude other notions of the female body; and second, that this feminine ideal caused unnecessary levels of anxiety, discomfort (mental and physical) and body consciousness.

We present the views of the trampoline gymnasts in the form of creative fiction (see Sparkes, 2002) — a space for anonymous narratives to be read by audiences that might not otherwise read them. Our respondents (aged 14 to 17 years) also reflect the vast majority of the membership of BG, 75% of whom are under the age of 18. With a lack of empowerment for athletes in general, and young athletes in particular, this small-scale study acts as a platform for the expression of opinion from a constituency of sports practitioners who are seldom afforded a ‘voice’.

Following the discussion of method, the chapter is organised into six further sections. The most significant of these are the two narrative tales: sections 3 and 6. These anchor the substantive themes of the discussion sections: 4, The leotard, femininity and the trampoline aesthetic; 5, Regulatory discourse and social discipline; and 7, Body consciousness and puberty. In each of these sections connections are also established with some of the extant literature, before some concluding comments (section 8) act as a summary. We begin, however, with a brief consideration of the research design and method.

2 A brief note on method

The project was initiated to explore the attitudes, beliefs and meanings of femininity and the body held by female trampoline gymnasts, especially in relation to leotards. Focus group discussions were used which placed the young people at the heart of the investigation allowing them to express their experiences of these complex sociological phenomena (Veal, 1997), and to provide rich and illuminating data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Focus groups (rather than individual interviews) also had the benefit of being more appropriate for the age of the participants — generating a greater amount and variety of data (David and Sutton, 2004), as well as helping diffuse power relations between the researchers and the researched. This is especially important as the two of us responsible for data collection [RL and GW] were older than the participants. One, a male, had no former experience of trampoline gymnastics; the other, a female, was actively involved as a coach in the trampoline gymnastics club that

the participants attended. Measures were also taken to diminish some of the potential social barriers: for example, through wearing casual clothes and simplifying the language used, and by first asking general questions to ensure participants were comfortable with the researchers before addressing the specific subject matter of the research.

Ethical considerations were a priority, particularly given the age of the participants and the possible disclosure of private and personal information (Halloway, 1997). Approval was sought and granted from the UWIC Research Ethics Committee. Throughout the research, we emphasised our intention to understand the experiences of young female trampoline gymnasts, and recognised that this might include recollections of a potentially sensitive nature (Mason, 1996).

The focus group discussions were transcribed and anonymised. Three substantive themes were identified and these formed the basis of the two creative fictional narratives. These were inspired by our interpretation of the participants' words, and crafted (we hope) with sufficient empathy to convey their perceptions and attitudes accurately.

3 Fictional narrative: *Preparation is everything*

Sarah Thomas prodded her sparkling white teeth, her slim fingers poking at the gap at the front. She'd always hated it. "Mum!" she bellowed, "Can you do my hair!"

Mrs Thomas stomped into the bathroom, welcomed by an array of utensils and accessories. She began scrapping Sarah's long blonde hair into a ponytail. "Mum, you're hurting!" Sarah moaned, struggling to get away from her mother's grasp.

"Stop whingeing, we haven't got time!" her mother continued, coiling Sarah's hair into a plump bun and securing it with a number of bobbles. She then trapped the rebellious strands that remained with a hair net and grips. Finally, she decorated the style with a glittering silver 'scrunchy' to match Sarah's leotard. A choking cloud of hairspray hovered in the bathroom as Sarah began to apply a thick layer of creamy foundation, revealing covering her face as though if it was were a blank canvas. She applied an ebony frame around her eyes and to her lashes; a puff of rouge powder to her cheeks and smeared a pale pink gloss on her lips.

Returning to her bedroom she pulled her sparkling silver and blue leotard past her silky slim legs. She admired herself in the mirror, the leotard hugging her tiny figure. "Aren't you ready yet?"

Your Dad is waiting for us in the car” Mrs Thomas asked, in a slightly irate tone.

“No!” Sarah scowled, “I hate this ‘thing’ mum, look at it! My legs are horrible and my belly is bloated. It’s killing.”

“Don’t be silly, we haven’t got time.” Mrs Thomas comforted her daughter, whilst passing her tracksuit bottoms, “and nobody looks at your legs! I’ve got some tablets in my bag that are good for period pain, take some in the car and you’ll be fine.” Sarah adjusted her leotard over her hips, as best she could. Finally she enclosed herself in her baggy tracksuit and quickly gathered her bag.

In another house, Janice slouched in front of the mirror, wiped her glistening wet cheeks and began to apply thick foundation to her round, red, blotchy face, sweeping her spiky hair out of the way. She’d been preparing for her first trampoline competition for weeks. Butterflies roamed her stomach. She had not finished when her brother set upon her, “careful you don’t pop all your spots doing that” he laughed. Steven was Janice’s annoying younger brother who knew just how to provoke a reaction from her at the worst times. Janice felt a lump in her throat and her eyes well. “Get out you little brat!” she screamed.

“What’s going on?” Janice’s mother enquired as she entered the room. She immediately identified the problem, “Steven, leave your sister alone. Out!” she pointed toward the door. Steven mumbled as he left. Janice couldn’t hold the welling back anymore, floods streamed from her eyes. “I can’t do it mum!” “You’ll be fine when you get there,” her mother dismissed her wailing, reassuringly patting her on the back. “It doesn’t matter how much of this stuff I put on I’m still spotty and ugly”, Janice continued to wail. “No you’re not darling”.

“Look at me” Janice screamed, standing in her beautiful, shining leotard. Janice was one of the larger girls in her trampoline club and the months of enduring taunts from the other girls were now echoing in her ears. They didn’t know she had heard their laughs when she bounced and her top had risen up revealing her ample stomach. She prodded at the dimples and lumps that were trying to escape from the navy velour skin that encased her. The sparkling blue arms of the leotard clung to her own, making them feel stiff. Her thick legs wobbled as she moved to see her buttocks. Janice howled. “Come on love, you’ve got to get ready, Wendy will be waiting for us”.

“Ring her and tell her I’m not coming. I can’t do it, look at me, and imagine me bouncing on a trampoline.” Janice continued to stream tears down her round cheeks.

“What about the girls in the team? You don’t want to let them down do you?” Her mother asked.

“They hate me anyway. I don’t care. I’m not going. I’m never going again!” Janice retorted.

“Now love, you don’t mean that, you love trampo ... ”

Janice’s mum stared into her daughter’s red, puffy eyes. She could see her daughter was distressed. “Janice, are you sure?”

“Yeah”, Janice sobbed through her hands that were claspng her face. Her mum left the room.

“Wendy? It’s Janice’s mum” Janice overheard her mum on the phone, “I’m afraid Janice won’t be able to make it to the competition, she’s not been very well this morning ... ”

Janice felt a wave of relief. Her sobs slowed and she crept down the stairs and placed her chubby arms around her mother, who stroked her hair.

4 The leotard, femininity and the trampoline aesthetic

Sport and physical fitness are complex sites of multifaceted gender dynamics and sexual politics that have historically enforced and maintained hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995; Messner, 1992; Messner and Sabo, 1990). At the core of these is an intimate concern with the physical body. Connell’s (1987) analysis of gender focuses upon the ‘exterior’ body, its shape size and musculature and further examines how men’s and women’s bodies are defined as different through social practices, giving bodies and thus human embodiment qualitatively different meanings. There has also been a focus on the social construction of the feminine body in sports (Bolin, 1992; Gilroy, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; McDermot, 1996) and fitness (Markula, 1995; 2001; 2003) which has shown these arenas as sites of struggle where the meaning of gender has been negotiated and contested.

The sport of trampoline gymnastics is one such site of struggle that must be understood as more than just a physical activity. It also reflects and transfers meanings and values, and takes the body as its starting point. It is a clear signifier of gendered ideals, and is a body on display. Body-hugging leotards create a body-consciousness that is legitimised by notions of ‘ease’ and ‘freedom of movement’. *Milano*, the manufacturer and sponsor of BG for 17 years, explicitly

advertises its designs, “to enhance the beauty and grace of the sport” (BG, 2009b). The seasonal catalogues of leotards and tracksuits for gymnasts and trampoline gymnast competitors are produced and distributed, featuring pictures of young female gymnasts, moulded, shaped, flexed and manipulated by the designer. The ideal female figure is sculpted in a very personal display — on occasions, an almost naked look, sheathed in bright and shiny colours. Importantly, the majority of these models/gymnasts appear to be pre-pubescent². This is particularly striking when parallels can be drawn between some research on sportswomen in the media that likens their pictures to soft pornography with cameras lingering on athletes’ breasts, buttocks and crotches (Duncan, 1990; Hargreaves, 1993). Rarely photographed in sporting poses, the models/gymnasts in this particular catalogue are sexualised modelling a skin tight leotard with a high ‘V’ shape cut around the crotch, requiring that they wear little or no underwear.

The gendered inscriptions of trampoline gymnastics extend to other forms of body management that also adhere to the ‘beauty and grace’ that leotard manufacturers promote. The trampoline gymnast ‘body project’ (see Shilling, 2003) is worked on continually to comply with a particular feminine ideal. Stories of significant time spent working on appearance (such as hair and make-up) were central to these athletes’ experiences. When asked if they would ever consider cutting their hair for sport³ all instinctively replied “No!” Hair length was a clear marker of explicitly heterosexual feminine identity. One of them laughed nervously and enquired, “are you hinting towards the, don’t laugh, lesbian view here?” — which was followed by group laughter. A picture emerged of the feminine trampoline gymnastics identity characterised by being heterosexual, beautiful (enhanced by plenty of cosmetics) and well groomed (with long hair, every strand sprayed into place), glamorous, graceful, and perhaps most of all, thin. Jenny explained: “The rest of us are all quite skinny, whether we all think so or not, we’re all pretty skinny, so I’d say trampolinist, you think gymnast, you think skinny, girl, possibly tall, you know, really slight and stuff.”

5 Regulatory discourse and social discipline

Sport plays a fundamental role in disciplining the female body in western cultures (Chase, 2006; Costa and Guthrie, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). After negotiating a set of ‘female appropriate’ behaviours in everyday life, women’s bodies are further subjected to social mechanisms particular to the sporting body that continually reinforce

a specific ideal. As such, the female body has become a site of continual self-scrutiny (Markula, 1995), or in Foucauldian terms, by using the panoptic metaphor, 'self-surveillance' (Foucault, 1978)⁴. In this way trampoline gymnasts may come to internalise and embody the social signifiers and systems of their sport as supported and recreated by sexualised and embodied discourse. Using an openly suppressive (or even oppressive) power mechanism, athletes were disciplined by the previous uniform rule that for higher levels of competition required female competitors to wear a leotard without shorts or long tights. Importantly too, they are also persuaded to accept control through an invisible gaze that requires them to monitor their physical appearance to meet their internalised perception of the feminine ideal. The leotard is therefore a vehicle through which the power of desired body aesthetic discourse is invested and intensified. Elaborating on her earlier remark, Jenny added:

Well you might look at us and think we're all pretty skinny, but I'm pretty sure everyone can name thousands of things wrong with themselves. I mean you might not see, but we *feel* it and if we're wearing something where we don't feel confident, you don't feel comfortable at all. [Emphasis added]

Even those athletes who felt that they fitted the trampoline gymnast ideal felt uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their appearance at times. So whilst there may have been a heightened sense of self esteem from achieving the required aesthetic standards, this was not an uninterrupted euphoric (Markula, 1995), and spilt into life outside the sport. Through the evaluative gaze of others, Laura outlined the pressure she feels to shave her legs for school sport:

When you go into, like, school knowing that you have a PE lesson and you were going to wear shorts then you'd purposely shave your legs beforehand, 'cos you wouldn't want to go into a PE lesson with hairy legs.

In short, the perceived pressure to conform to a conventional beauty standard (of smooth shaven legs for females) is entrenched in the trampoline female gymnast ideal⁵. When trampoline gymnasts compete, they are on display — and they are aware of it. The awareness of the gaze acts to constrain the individual, who acts accordingly and conforms (Foucault, 1978).

There were occasional instances of private reflexive resistance to the discursive power and authority. Holly raised an important question about the rules set by BG and the *Federation Internationale de Gymnastique*:

I can understand the need for leotards to some extent — but the long sleeved one — because of the tightness to the body. But I wouldn't argue with that because the tightness is needed, but not like skin. Because that just makes it about sex appeal doesn't it, really? And that's not fair to any gymnast. It's not about that.

Jenny was just as direct: "It's as if they're using sex appeal to attract people to the sport, which is all wrong. What's going on? It's just all wrong." Their remarks reveal the tension between leotards as enhancing performance functionally for technical purposes, and of being judged on a body aesthetic. Perhaps more important still is their perception of the rules of their sport as sexually exploitative and sexualising.

The singular dominant 'ideal' femininity that is produced and invested in trampoline gymnastic bodies is legitimised by the leotard and it is oppressive because of its singularity (Markula, 1995). The parallel with the experiences of women fashion models is unavoidable. Both share a set of body management routines that include a stylised mode of dress, application of make-up, dieting and exercise that appear to be congruent with the transition into female adulthood. As in the fashion industry, this singular account of embodied femininity in trampoline gymnastics works to oppress, exclude and marginalise other forms. A short excerpt from the focus group discussion sheds light:

- Jenny: We had a girl here, like, a while ago.
Holly: She finished a while ago.
Jenny: Yea she used to be in the club, but she was quite big.
GW: She was quite big, was she?
Jenny: Yeah. And like the rest of us thought, that's like horrible of us or whatever, but we would all be like 'Oh my God — Jess on a trampoline!' You don't expect to see it.
Amy: She used to wear all these really really short tops and stuff.
Louise: Like v tops
Amy: Like strappy tops and stuff.
GW: So what about Jess, would she fit in with the crowd?
Group: No (laughter)

It is easy to see how young women who did not fit with the perception of an homogenised 'ideal' femininity became shunned and even

ostracised. As an exclusionary mechanism, the dominant social order remains unthreatened and reinforced, and alternative (which *de facto* means subordinate) forms of behaviour are denied social legitimacy, recognition and credence (Ezzell, 2009).

6 Fictional narrative: *The competition — round one*

Sarah sat poised in the middle of the trampoline awaiting the judge's signal to start her routine. Her coach, Dianne and her team mates stood to the corners of the trampoline willing her to succeed. "Sarah Thomas?" asked a kind man with white hair, dressed in a formal suit.

"Yes," Sarah barely replied.

"When you're ready you may begin," he explained.

Sarah stood, turned to the judging panel, her cheeks glowing like hot coals and presented in the traditional fashion. A sensation of lightness, as though she had little control of her body, flowed over her as a wave. Her stomach churned. She turned to her focus point, took a deep breath and pushed into the trampoline bed. With every bounce her leotard stretched and pulled. She could feel it rising, but knew there was little she could do. She finished, stopped and held her balance, thinking only of pulling her leotard that was doing little to cover her buttocks. Applause rose in the hall. Dianne and the girls greeted her from the stage, handing her a pair of shorts. She clawed at them quickly with her highly groomed nails.

Simon swayed through the streams of gymnasts. He was one of the younger men on the judging panels and was well acquainted with many of the gymnasts. His eyes opened at the group of girls dressed in silver and blue.

"How are you doing girls?" he grinned.

"Alright Si? Just supporting Sar," replied, Louise, the eldest in the group.

"Oh yeah, I was just judging you ... you did alright. You need to work on that kick out in your back somersault though, and we had to take some marks off you because we could all see your knickers."

"What?" Sarah flushed.

"You need to go and take your knickers off, or are you 'on' or something?" Simon laughed. Sarah flushed scarlet, her stomach fluttered.

"Di, I'm going to the toilet", she mumbled before moving swiftly.

"Don't tease her Si, she's got to get back on in a minute!" Dianne glared at him, disapprovingly.

"Si, why can't we wear shorts anymore?" asked Louise.

"We'll take marks off you. It's better if you don't wear them!" he replied, "Besides you've got nice legs, what do you want to hide them for. It's not like you've got legs like her!" Simon pointed to a slightly larger gymnast. The girls giggled at the wave of ripples that rose up the legs of the performing gymnast. These became howls of laughter as they watched the girl tumble out of her final somersault into the visibly uncomfortable split leg position. A number of other gymnasts close by smirk and try to hide their mean smiles as they watched her flee to the arms of her coach, her tears clearly visible.

Sarah emerged from the toilets with red eyes. This morning's incident with Simon had significantly impacted upon her performance, leaving her outside of the medal tables, and she seriously considered whether this was something she was prepared to go through again.

7 Body consciousness and puberty

In a sporting culture of display, the leotard was not popular with these young trampoline gymnasts. This was not merely a matter of disapproval of the revealing nature of the garment, Laura also noted that there were implications for the quality of skill execution: "It shows too much ... and if you feel like that it starts affecting your performance". The onset of the menarche heightened body consciousness, and they described that they began to feel particularly uncomfortable in leotards around the age of 10 to 13 years when they began to experience the development of breast tissue, the growth of body hair, and the onset of menstruation.

Attitudes towards these maturational changes have often been characterised by embarrassment (Hargreaves, 1994; Clarke and Gilroy, 1994), and are evident in the euphemisms surrounding the subject as well as sanitary protection advertising campaigns, packaging and education. Being 'on' and other ways of talking indirectly about menstruation has an underlying tone of being undesirable with a need to keeping it hidden. Television campaigns echo this discourse with slogans such as "no leaks, no show, no worries" (Clark and Gilroy, 1994: p. 15). The high V-cut of leotards leaves few options for choice of sanitary wear other than a tampon.

Despite the 'ease of movement' argument, these young trampoline gymnasts described increased anxiety during performance due to the uniform regulations. Far from enhancing 'the beauty and grace of the sport' as *Milano* claim, the BG rule that leotards should be 'skin tight' actually prevented a full range of movement and inhibited

confidence. As Becky explained, all of this was compounded by intolerance from unsympathetic competition judges. Institutionalised and enshrined in competition rules, hers was an unpleasant experience of the competitive environment:

“I was in a competition and one of the judges said ‘can you take your shorts off?’ I explained the issues that I was ‘on’ and they wouldn’t take it and they told me to take my shorts off otherwise I can’t compete.”

The competitors’ performances were also angst-laden. Particular elements, like ‘straddles’ were troublesome because they reveal the crotch and inner thighs; and the end of the routine when the athletes ‘present’ to the judges was also a concern as they often felt that their leotard had risen up with their buttocks showing. Jenny was candid once again:

You see this a thousand times, you’re like stop, present and then pull the leotard out of your bum. Well you shouldn’t have to worry about that, your routine’s done then and you shouldn’t have to worry about that. It shouldn’t be based around what you wear⁶.

In addition to self-scrutiny, the use of photography at competitions added to the angst for some trampoline gymnasts. British Gymnastics has a policy that has led to professional companies (often with male photographers) being employed to take photographs during competition which are displayed and sold at the event. Holly described one of her own experiences:

I was “on” which made everything ten times worse but despite that I would have felt awful ... I couldn’t wear shorts and I just remember doing my straddle and just seeing some guy with a camera taking a photo and was just thinking I’m not wearing shorts, I’m wearing a leotard which has a piece of material like well the same size as knickers isn’t it, underneath me. Yeah it’s stupid. They ride up and they ride in!

8 Concluding comments

There are two sets of concluding comments that emerge from this chapter. The first is methodological, and relates particularly to the use of fictional narratives. The second is a commentary on trampoline gymnastics as a sport that illuminates gender relations and reflects traditional notions of femininity.

The use of a research design that empowers athletes, especially young athletes, is not commonplace. In seeking to represent the views of (at least) some trampoline gymnasts, we do not claim, of course, that **all** girls and young women have experienced the sport in the way that these participants have. Neither do we suppose, though, that theirs is a unique experience not shared by anyone else. In short, there no reason to think that their views are atypical.

The focus group discussion provided an important forum for these young trampoline gymnasts to express their opinions, and to do so away from the sport's institutional gaze with an assurance of anonymity. Some of the evidence cited above is reassuringly forthright on those themes and issues about which they felt strongly. We trust these data, and from them the narrative tales in the form of creative fiction serve to highlight the central arguments. We might have presented the findings only in this way — that is to say, as the narrative tales alone. Instead, though, we have contextualised and interpreted them in the discursive sections that follow. This, we argue, renders the possibility of misinterpretation less likely — and given the sensitivity of the subject matter, we are keen to avoid potential ambiguity and/or misunderstanding.

There are three substantive points that emerge from the study. The first relates to the leotard as crucial to the particular femininity associated with the trampoline aesthetic. Trampoline gymnastics takes the body as its starting point and then displays it. The body-hugging leotard helps to create a body-consciousness, and to heighten it. The minor rule change introduced at the start of 2009 might suggest an increasing awareness of the views and concerns of the athletes themselves, but it does little to address the underlying (re)construction and reification of a singular femininity in the sport with all the implications that has for its participants.

The second important finding is the self-surveillance and self-regulation that these young trampoline gymnasts experienced. They had internalised the social signifiers and systems of their sport which help to support and recreate an institutionally sexualised and embodied discourse. Moreover, for those girls and young women who are in some way incompatible with the perception of an homogenised 'ideal' femininity (or who think that they are), there is an exclusionary mechanism that serves to maintain the dominant social order.

Finally, it is not merely **self**-surveillance to which these young trampoline gymnasts were subjected. It was also the scrutiny of others. Part of that, of course, is the inherent nature of a 'display' sport. Yet the involvement of others — especially relatively young

men — in the judging and photography of the sports performance became problematic. During the transition from childhood to adulthood, elevated body-consciousness proved to be an even greater source of anxiety.

People do, of course, create their own social realities and identities through interactions with others (Lorber, 2008), but for young trampoline gymnasts the opportunity to shape the reality of their sporting world is severely limited. The image and practice of the sport for women is created within the discourse of an homogenised heterosexual femininity which is predicated on the need to wear body-revealing leotards. In turn, the young athletes in this study had internalised their responsibility to adhere to their perception of the feminine ideal, and until presented with the opportunity to participate in this research there was no hint of questioning the perfect image or resisting the discursive power.

Notes

- ¹ Competition levels range from A through to H, with A being the highest. Level D denotes the highest level of regional competition before moving to national level. It is the first level at which male and female competitors are required to compete separately.
- ² It may be that some of these models are not pre-pubescent. However, we are unable to say with any confidence that the majority of these gymnast models are adult young women.
- ³ From an instrumental marketing perspective, short hair might be considered a logical solution to enhancing the grace of the sport, given that the function of the leotard is to enhance the grace of the sport by restricting body 'excess' or 'overspill'.
- ⁴ Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' was an eighteenth Century prison structure in which a guard tower at the centre of the surrounding cells allows the guard to see all inmates without the inmates being able to see the guard: the design produces a constant *possibility* of being subject to surveillance, which makes the prisoners docile (Duncan, 1994). The extension of this metaphor to understanding social discipline is based on the idea of permanent visibility ensuring the function of power. Foucault uses the idea of self surveillance in which the individual becomes her/his own guard and is therefore disciplined without the actual gaze of a prison guard (Markula and Pringle, 2006).
- ⁵ Tsang's (2000) experience of similar beauty ideals and the pressure to *not* have hairy legs in female sport reminds us that this is "the active construction of a femininity that is being played out over my legs. This is something I am 'told' (by my friends, by myself, by society) I can and should control" (p. 49).

- ⁶ British Gymnastics competition rules require gymnasts to demonstrate their stability by holding position at the end of their routine for three seconds; failing to do so results in points deductions. Competitors are therefore unable to adjust their leotards during this three second period.

References

- Bolin, A. (1992) 'Flex appeal, food, and fat. Competitive bodybuilding, gender and diet', *Play and Culture* Vol. 5, No. 4: pp. 378-400.
- British Gymnastics (2009a) *Code of points changes for trampolining and double mini trampoline 2009-2010*. Retrieved April 22, 2009 from: http://www.britishgymnastics.org/site/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=104&Itemid=27
- (2009b) Equality — Do women and girls have to wear only leotards in competition?. Retrieved November 24, 2009 from: http://www.britishgymnastics.org/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=354&Itemid=66
- Chase, L. F. (2006) '(Un)Disciplined bodies: A Foucauldian analysis of women's rugby', *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 23, No. 3: pp. 229-247.
- Clarke, G. and Gilroy, S. (1994) 'This bloody business: Menstrual myths and periodic leisure', in C. Brackenridge (ed) *Body matters: Leisure images and lifestyles*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp. 12-17.
- Connell, R. (1987) *Gender and power*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- (1995) *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Costa, M. and Guthrie, S. (1994) 'Feminist perspectives: Intersections with women and sport', in M. Costa and S. Guthrie (eds) *Women and sport: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 235-252.
- David, M. and Sutton, C. D. (2004) *Social research: The basics*. London: Sage.
- Duncan, M. C. (1990) 'Sports photographs and sexual difference: Images of women and men in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games', *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 7, No. 1: pp. 22-43.
- (1994) 'The politics of women's body images and practices: Foucault, the panopticon and *Shape* magazine', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol. 18, No. 1: pp. 48-65.
- Ezzell, M. B. (2009) "'Barbie Dolls" on the pitch: Identity work, defensive othering, and inequality in women's rugby', *Social Problems* Vol. 56, No. 1: pp. 111-131.
- Foucault, M. (1978) *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* [translation by Alan Sheridan]. New York: Random House.
- Gilroy, S. (1989) 'The emBody-ment of power: Gender and physical activity', *Leisure Studies* Vol. 8, No. 2: pp. 163-71.

- Halloway, J. (1997) *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Hargreaves, J. (1993) 'Bodies matter! Images of sport and female sexualisation', in C. Brackenridge (ed) *Body matters: Leisure images and lifestyles*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp. 60-66.
- (1994) *Sporting females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*. London: Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lorber, J. (2008) 'Constructing gender: The dancer and the dance', in J. A. Holstein and J. F. Gubrium (eds) *Handbook of constructionist research*. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 531-544.
- Markula, P. (1995) 'Firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin: The post modern aerobocizing female bodies', *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 12, No. 4: pp. 424-53
- (2001) 'Beyond the perfect body: Women's body image distortion in fitness magazine discourse', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol. 25, No. 2: pp. 158-179.
- (2003) 'Postmodern aerobics: Contradiction and resistance', in A. Bolin and J. Granskog (eds) *Athletics intruders: Ethnographic research on women, culture and exercise*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, pp. 53-78.
- Markula, P. & Pringle, R. (2006) *Foucault, sport and exercise: Power, knowledge and transforming the self*. London: Routledge.
- Mason, J. (1996) *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage.
- McDermot, L. (1996) 'Toward a feminist understanding of physicality within the context of women's physically active and sporting lives', *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 13, No. 1: pp. 12-30.
- Messner, M. (1992) *Power at play: Sports and the problem of masculinity*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Messner, M. & Sabo, D. F. (1990) 'Towards a critical feminist reappraisal of sport, men and the gender order', in M. A. Messner and D. F. Sabo (eds) *Sport, men and the gender order*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, pp. 1-15.
- Shilling, C. (2003) *The body and social theory*. London: Sage
- Sparkes, A. C. (2002) *Telling tales in sport and physical activity*. Leeds: Human Kinetics.
- Tsang, T. (2000) 'Let me tell you a story: A narrative exploration of identity in high performance sport', *Sociology of Sport Journal* Vol. 17, No. 1: pp. 44-59.
- Veal, A. (1997) *Research methods for leisure and tourism*. London: Pitman.

