

TRAMPOLINE-GYMNASTS' EMBODIED LIVES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

Gymnastic *bodies* have been a relatively 'absent presence' in the literature. Despite patterns of problematic body issues (e.g., weight-control behaviours, body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem) highlighted in elite artistic and rhythmic gymnasts, and national governing body recognition of these issues, we know very little about their embodied lives and even less about the experiences of trampoline-gymnasts. Thus, this work aimed to explore the embodied lives of trampoline-gymnasts as they progressed through their trampoline career.

An ethnographic study was conducted within one trampoline club over a period of 17 months. Thirty-six trampoline-gymnasts aged 6-21 years old took part, providing rich, stories of individuals' lives in and through various points of their trampoline career. An embodied narrative approach permeated the research design, framing the research aim and objectives, data collection, analysis and representation. An analytical focus on narrative structures within trampoline-gymnasts' stories produced ideas about how these young people narratively constructed and understood their embodied lives. Ultimately, over the course of their career, trampoline-gymnasts had little autonomy in making decisions about their sporting lives, particularly when choosing to enter and remain in the trampoline club. Coaches were key gatekeepers in selection and recruitment processes and parents decided if their children would join and remain in the club. Moreover, trampoline and gymnastic discourses restricted the types of bodies constructed in this group and impacted upon the ways in which their bodies were experienced. Options for retirement were also constrained by a limited number of narratives for preferred future selves and identities. Yet, being in this group gymnasts formed a sense of belonging and accomplishment which was long-lasting and engrained in the body-selves and identities they constructed.

Collectively, the research findings have provided an understanding of trampoline-gymnasts' embodied lives over the course of their career. A model of embodied careers in sport has been created, illustrating how trampoline-gymnasts' embodied experiences are narratively constructed and understood over time. Importantly, this work has given them a voice. Their storied experiences provide a potential platform for change, ensuring healthy and prolonged participation in this and other gymnastic disciplines.

Keywords: embodiment, narrative, selves, identities, trampoline-gymnastics

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Trampoline-specific terms were frequently used in this trampoline group. These terms included shortened variations of formal terms (e.g., sum instead of somersault), abbreviations and slang. These words have been highlighted in **bold text** in the thesis.

| | |
|--|--|
| Add-a-trick | A trampoline game. One gymnast begins by performing a single skill on the trampoline, the next person has to perform this skill and then 'add-a-trick' or skill. If a person cannot remember the sequence of skills in the correct order they are out. The game continues until all but one person cannot perform the sequence. The game aids skill development and linking of skills. |
| Award scheme | Generally used in recreational classes. BG provides an 'award scheme' outlining progressive trampoline skills. Once an award has been obtained the individual, or more often their parent, can purchase the relevant badge and certificate for a small fee. |
| Basic Skills | Deemed basic by coaches and club gymnasts. Examples include shaped jumps (e.g., tuck , pike , straddle –see appendix I). |
| Bed | Refers to the trampoline bed. The soft webbing that gymnasts bounce on. |
| BG | British Gymnastics |
| BOB | Short for Ball-out Barani, a compulsory skill for those competing in regional D (see ' grades '). |
| Body landings – Back landing, front landing, seat landing | Sometimes called 'drops' rather than body landings, although this is discouraged. All describe specific body contact with the trampoline bed. For example, back landing described contact between the gymnast's back and the trampoline bed, typically with the legs at a 45 degree angle. |
| Bun(s) | A hairstyle common to females in this group and the trampoline community more generally. |
| Conditioning skills | Off trampoline exercises that are used to aid performances on the trampoline and/or build strength or flexibility. Examples include burpees , v-sits , tuck-line outs , straddle sits . |
| FIG | International Gymnastics Federation [translated from French] |

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| Frame pads | Soft safety padding that covers the metal frame of the trampoline. |
| Full | Short for a back somersault with a full twist (360° of backwards somersault rotation and 360° twist rotation). |
| General warm-up | See warm-ups . |
| Genie/ Crack the nut/ Popcorn | A trampoline game. A small number of children sit on the trampoline cross-legged. One is elected 'the bouncer', someone who jumps up and down on the trampoline trying to get the others out. The aim of the game is to be last person sitting, without letting go of the feet, rolling on to the back for more than 3 seconds or touching the safety mats. |
| Grades | Another term for competition categories, stemming from an older competition structure. Club grades include I and H , regional grades G, F, E, D and the highest level performer in this group was a National C grade. |
| Line-outs/ Kick-out | The straight shape a gymnast makes with their body after performing each skill. Typically their arms will be by their sides when doing this and the movement will be performed quickly. |
| Marshal | An officiating position at competition events. A marshal ensures that gymnasts compete in the correct order and also that the required safety requirements are maintained (e.g., spotters are of an appropriate age/size) |
| Over-rotation | Too much rotation when performing a skill, usually resulting in a poor landing. |
| Panel | Or competition panel. Within a competition there will a number of panels, so that a competition can run effectively and quickly. Each panel will have two trampolines so gymnasts can choose which they'd like to compete on. A panel of five form judges and one tariff judge will assess each performance and a series of manual and computer recorders note their scores. |
| Play moves | Moves that are not involved in competition performances but are 'fun' and/or progressions for competition skills. |
| Presenting | Competition etiquette. Gymnasts 'present' to judges before and after their routine. This also signals that the gymnast is going to start their routine and when it has ended. |

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| Push-in mat/ Throw in mat | Also called 'crash mats'. These mats are thinner and smaller than safety mats and are used for the sole purpose of learning skills. They remain on the trampoline or can be pushed underneath a gymnast when learning a skill. |
| Qualifications | Refers to progression within the competition structure. A gymnast can ' qualify ' from Regional G to Regional F, for example. Each competition category has its own qualification marker (e.g., 45.00 for regional G) which individuals must meet in order to progress. |
| Routines | Competition routines. Each gymnast, no matter what competitive level they are at, must perform at least two routines in a competition, one compulsory, also called a ' set ' routine and one voluntary, as called a ' vol '. Each has ten skills. |
| Running order | The order in which gymnasts must compete in a competition. |
| Safety mats | Also called 'crash mats'. These are placed on spotting decks (see below) or can be thrown in under a gymnast who is learning a new skill to provide a soft landing and/or prevent an accident. |
| Spotting/Spotters | A safety mechanism common in training and competition. 'Spotters' are responsible for the safety of a trampoline-gymnast should they fall off the trampoline. They should attempt to 'catch' them and support them to a landing that is as safe as possible. |
| Stirrups | Male gymnastic apparel also called gym trousers. |
| Stopping | Competition performances should be stopped with precision, with one ' bounce-out ' or less. Additional movement or bounces are penalised by the judging system. |
| Straight jumps | Basic jumping skill with the body in a straight line. Arms rotate in a backward motion to build height and stabilise the gymnast. |
| Structured warm-up | See warm-ups . |
| Top | The peak of the jump. Noted by the gymnast as the point at which everything stops moving and they are momentarily suspended in the air before falling back down to the trampoline. All skills should be performed at the top. |
| WAG | Women's Artistic Gymnastics |

Warm-ups

Getting ready for training or competition. There are different forms and associated etiquettes with different types of warm-up. In club sessions, initially gymnasts will perform simple or **play moves** in preparation for a structured **warm-up** which will focus on practising and/or developing basic trampoline skills. These can be trampoline or floor based.

In competition, there are two formal warm-ups: **general warm-up** and **first touch**. A general warm-up tends to take place for a set period of time before a competition session begins on a panel. The time is allocated on the number of people competing in the group. During this time other people might be bouncing on the other trampoline associated with the panel. Following this, each performer is given the opportunity to perform one routine under competition conditions (i.e. in front of judges who are likely to be adding up their scores).

WG

Welsh Gymnastics

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis derives from my own journey in sport and trampoline-gymnastics. Thus it seems only logical to begin by acknowledging the positioning of my own voice within this work. I am a trampoline coach and have been since 2006. My own experiences of being a trampoline-gymnast, certainly in a competitive sense, are very limited. I attended recreational classes or lessons for a brief time as a child, learning basic competencies and skills. However, my trampoline career (if you can call it that) was very short lived and was surpassed by my other sporting interests at the time, swimming and hockey.

My re-emergence in the sport was part of the ethos of local authority leisure facilities in 2006 to train and utilise their staff as sports coaches in order to expand the available sport and leisure opportunities in the community and increase health and safety standards. At the time I was working as a 'centre assistant' or lifeguard in a council-run sport centre, alongside my undergraduate degree. My manager had noted the time I spent around the trampolines and asked if I would be interested in undertaking a coaching qualification in the sport. I agreed, eager to engage in activities that would support my degree and develop my future career prospects.

On completion of my 'trampoline coach' qualification, I began coaching recreational and club sessions at the leisure centre, under the supervision of another, more experienced coach who acted as my mentor and guided me through further coaching qualifications. I quickly noticed the difference between recreational sessions and club training; competitive trampoline-gymnasts were more serious and had different values and practices, they behaved very differently. I enjoyed coaching club gymnasts, they wanted to

learn and compete and I felt a sense of reward when they succeeded (i.e. learning complex skills or doing well in competitions).

In the early months of being in this club environment, my reluctance to compete in a formal competition was noted by a colleague who teased me quite frequently about it. I laughed off his taunts, declaring that *one day* I would compete in a leotard and my performance would be judged. To this day I never have competed in a formal trampoline competition, despite continuing jibes from my peers (other coaches, parents and gymnasts) and their less than subtle collective purchase of a club leotard in my size as a Christmas present. Some time ago now, I noted the basis for this reluctance. I perceived my body to be different to the bodies in this club and the wider trampoline community. Its appearance and age were not the same as the young, slim, lean bodies I was used to seeing. These feelings are not uncommon among trampoline-gymnasts (Stewart, Lord, Wiltshire and Fleming, 2010) and I have since come across many young gymnasts who have experienced similar feelings about their body.

I have a certain fondness for the gymnasts I work with and those within the trampoline community more generally. I have spent, and continue to spend, a lot of time with coaches, gymnasts and their families. These relationships are the underlying motivation for this research. Through the exploration of the embodied lives of trampoline-gymnasts, I hope to inform ideas for prolonged and healthy participation in this sport for this and future generations.

Embodying the journey

Aside from my personal motivations for conducting this research, sporting bodies, and the social body more generally, have become a source of academic interest (Markula, 2015; Shilling, 2012). Societal changes, technological advancements and global consumer culture have enabled the body to become expressive and malleable, a project that can be worked upon as part of self-identity (Shilling, 2003). Sport, exercise, nutritional enhancement, cosmetics and medical modification are just a few avenues through which we can mould our bodies. In a sense, we are now able to construct our own bodies to reflect our identity, who we are and how other people see us (Shilling, 2008, 2012; Woodward, 2000). Western media are saturated with idealised, sexualised bodies of film stars, celebrities, models and athletes (Markula, 2001), often with extensive bodily alterations - cosmetics, surgical adaptations and enhancement of the images prior to publication with digital technology (Clay, Vignoles and Dittmar, 2005). These images are portrayed as naturalistic, normative bodies that can be obtained and mastered (Clay et al., 2005; Markula, 2001). Our bodily appearance and worth have become judged against these often unrealistic, unobtainable, dominant connotations of the ideal gendered, and arguably heterosexual, body (Markula, 2001).

Bodies that differ from the ideal are often viewed as inferior or unacceptable and can be subject to criticism and ridicule. Thus, inevitably problematic bodies are not uncommon. These bodies include, but are not limited to, those who have a heightened awareness of body image (Furnham, Badmin and Sneade, 2002; Muth and Cash, 1997), those who are dissatisfied with their body (Stice and Whitenton, 2002; Triggerman and Slater, 2001) and those with low self-esteem (Clay et al., 2005; Daniels and Leaper, 2006). Prolonged experiences of these body-centered problems can lead to disordered eating (Cash

and Deagle, 1997; Gusella, Clark and Van Roosmalen, 2004; Thompson and Smolak, 2003; Werthiem, Paton, Shutz and Muir, 1997). People who deviate from typical gendered body constructions can also experience these problems; for example, female body builders (Wesely, 2001) or boxers (Paradis, 2012) and male netballers (Tagg, 2008). These problematic or unaccepted bodies become a greater cause for concern when they become evident in children and young people (Thompson and Smolak, 2003).

The role of sport in this area is complex. It is commonly thought of as a vehicle to producing a confident body, one that is functional, competent and positively experienced (Burgess, Grogan, and Burwitz, 2006). However, sport often places demands on the types of bodies individuals construct (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011). Some sports, particularly those that place emphasis on constructing a lean, aesthetic body for performance, such as gymnastics, dance and ice skating (Best, 1974), have produced high-rates of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Abbott and Barber, 2011). Moreover, a number of studies have highlighted that girls and women of elite status in these sports display characteristics of body monitoring (De Bruin, Oudejans, and Bakker, 2007), shame and guilt if the desired body is not achieved (Davison, Earnest and Birch, 2002; Parsons and Betz, 2001) and disordered eating (Kerr, Berman and De Souza, 2006).

These studies are useful in highlighting these types of behaviours, but they also raise questions. Why do athletes develop body-centred problems? How and why do they choose to construct particular bodies? What processes inform ideas about the body? And how do these individuals experience their bodies over their athletic career? Hausenblas and Downs (2001) and Abbott and Barber (2011), among others, have argued that there is a lack of empirical research that lends itself to exploring and providing an understanding of body-self relationships in aesthetic sports. In the past the fleshy lived body in sport has

been accused of being 'missing in action' (Loy, 1991). We have come a long way since these claims, but calls for further research into the lived carnal body in sport continue to emerge (Allen-Collinson, 2009).

Trampoline bodies

Best (1974) exemplifies trampoline-gymnastics as an aesthetic sport, but it has received limited attention in the literature on sporting identities and embodiment; studies in women's artistic gymnastics (WAG) are more common (e.g., Kerr, Barker-Ruchti, Schubring, Cervin and Nunomura, 2015; Warriner and Lavalée, 2008). Trampoline-gymnasts' performances and success are determined by a panel of judges who subjectively judge the body, its appearance and movement, against given criteria, making it, by Best's (1974) definition 'aesthetic'. He states, 'the aim [of the sport or performance, in this case trampoline-gymnastics] cannot be specified in isolation from the aesthetic' (p.202). That is, the aesthetic nature of a performance determines the outcome or success of the performer. Aesthetics are deeply rooted in the sport, extending beyond judgements about performance in a competition routine to its rules, regulations and publications. For example, British Gymnastics (BG)¹ dictates the dress uniform that all competitors must wear at competitions in order to take part. At the time of this research², dress uniform rules stated:

6.1 Male gymnasts

- Sleeveless leotard
- Gym trousers in a single colour
- Trampoline shoes and/or foot covering of the same colour as the gym trousers or white

6.2 Female gymnasts

- Leotard with or without sleeves (must be skin tight)
- Long tights may be worn either flesh colour or same colour as leotard (**must be skin tight**).
- A full-length one piece leotard may be worn (must be skin tight)
- Any other "dress" which is not skin tight is not allowed
- Trampoline shoes and/or white foot covering
- For reasons of safety, covering the face or the head is not allowed

¹ British Gymnastics is the national governing body of trampoline-gymnastics in the UK.

² Dress uniform rules have since changed slightly, effective September 2013, after data collection in this research concluded. See chapter eight, p.297.

In BG competitions for levels D³ and below female gymnasts may wear small skin tight shorts in a colour and style matching the leotard.

6.3 The wearing of any item of jewellery or watches is not permitted during the competition.

6.4 Any violation of 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 may result in disqualification from the round in which the offence occurs. This decision is made by the Chair of Judges Panel.

6.5 Teams

Members of a team or a synchronised pair must wear uniform dress. Failing to do so will result in disqualification of the team or synchronised pair from the team or synchronised event. This decision is made by the Chair of Judges Panel.

(British Gymnastics, 2009a original emphasis)

The focus on aesthetic factors such as colour, style and tightness of clothing is clear, as are the consequences for not conforming to this code, and these rules are exercised meticulously in practice (Stewart et al., 2010).

In recent years BG has become aware of the conflict between aesthetic traditions, such as the leotard, and the impact they have on participation levels and well-being. Statements have been published expressing an ongoing aim to ensure 'all young people that (sic) participate in gymnastics have a safe, fun, positive experience' and 'more women and girls feel confident to participate' (BG, 2009b). In addition to this commentary, in 2009 BG revised the clothing requirements for female competitors (see rule 6.2 above) incorporating some opportunity for girls and young women in lower level competitions to cover more of their body by wearing tights or shorts. In contrast, there is a lack of detail surrounding male dress. Aesthetic stipulations are limited to the colour of their gym trousers and shoes, which are typically white. Thus there are fewer aesthetic requirements placed on male bodies and gendered performances are structurally embedded in trampoline-gymnastics.

A small-scale study carried out with female trampoline-gymnasts (aged 14-17 years old) at the time of the 2009 rule change revealed that the uniform regulations prior to the revision were (in part) a source of problematic body-self relationships (consistent and prolonged self-surveillance and regulation of the body) that were being experienced by

³Competitions in 2009-2013 were ability based, ranging from novice categories (I) through to elite (A). Level D denotes the highest level of regional competition before reaching national level.

young people competing in this sport (Stewart et al., 2010). Gymnasts also perceived that the revised uniform rules had not been advertised openly by the governing body, although they were published in the competition handbook which was available on the public website. Thus there were tensions between the positive body politic projected from the governing body and the ways in which aesthetic elements in this sport were experienced, received and acted upon. Further exploration of trampoline bodies in the climate of the post-2009 rule change and wider contexts, outside of competition is now needed.

Trampoline bodies are also characterised by youthfulness. In 2011, 92.5% of the BG membership base (i.e. gymnasts, coaches, judges and volunteers from clubs across all gymnastic disciplines) was aged under 16 years old (BG, 2013a). A further 5.4% were aged 16-24 years old. Older age categories carried steadily smaller percentages of the membership base. Few studies have explored the body-self constructs of children and young people in sport, perhaps because of the ethical and methodological challenges associated with researching youth groups (Garue and Walsh, 1998). Yet, these are interesting bodies, in a state of 'becoming', frequently constructing and reconstructing their body as they move toward adulthood (Uprichard, 2008). Moreover, those who begin their sporting career as children are more likely to have a deeply engrained sense of sporting identity (Stevenson, 1999). Thus, studying the trampoline body will likely provide fruitful contributions to our knowledge of *children's* embodied experiences of sport, adding to work that is dominated by adult bodies.

In addition to unique age-related characteristics, the BG membership base also revealed a disproportionate gender split; 75% of its members were female and 25% male (BG, 2013a). This gender imbalance is echoed in the literature, where WAG dominates the focus (see chapter two, p.72). Male bodies, from all gymnastic disciplines, are rarely

seen or heard in the literature on gymnastic bodies. However, their embodied experiences are important to our knowledge of what gymnastic bodies are and how they are experienced. Healthy and prolonged participation in this sport is dependent upon the exploratory inclusion of their lives.

The thesis

This thesis presents the findings of an ethnographic study that aimed to explore the embodied lives of trampoline-gymnasts in one trampoline club in the Welsh region⁴. The underlying objectives associated with this aim were to a) understand how trampoline-gymnasts (re)construct and perform their embodied identity over their career, b) form ideas of how relationships with others (e.g., coaches and parents) support these constructions, c) explore the consequences of constructing a trampoline body, d) explore how gymnasts' storied lives are narratively constructed and understood, and e) enable trampoline-gymnasts' stories and voices to be heard.

The ontological and epistemological nature of this research views the body, self, identity and narrative as intricately linked (Frank, 1995; Sparkes, 1999). Put simply, 'we make sense of our life experiences [bodies, selves and identities] by telling stories that explain and justify them' (Richardson, 2000, p.45) and the body is the vehicle through which these stories are created, told and experienced (Frank, 2010). This is a departure from the quantitative psychological research that dominates the focus of the body in gymnastics (see chapter two, p.72). Close attention to gymnasts' stories offered a more complex understanding of individuals' embodied careers in sport (see chapter eight, p.277)

⁴ British Gymnastics is divided the UK into 14 manageable regions as part of its organisational structure. Wales is just one of these regions.

and highlighted previously unexplored experiences of children and young people in trampoline-gymnastics.

Following this introduction, I present my review of literature which takes place in two parts. The first reviews the key concepts of the body, self, identity and narrative, exploring how they have been studied and understood across time and academic disciplines and ultimately drawing some conclusive ideas about how these ideas will be used in this research. The second part reviews studies of bodies, selves, identities and narratives in sporting contexts and how these might relate to this research. It also provides a review of the gymnastic body, how it has been studied and highlights key trends associated with it. The chapter concludes with an outline of the research problem, summarising the key gaps in the literature and highlighting the rationale for this study.

Chapter three outlines the methodological and ethical nature of this research. An overview of qualitative research and its traditions are given before detailing the methodological approach and processes of data collection, data analysis and data (re)presentation. The penultimate section discusses how this qualitative work might be judged, outlining criteria that helped me form ideas about this thesis and the research more generally. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations and procedures which framed the research design.

I then present four thematic chapters which provide the key findings of this research. Chapter four sets the scene, orientating the reader into the values and practices of this trampoline group. In doing so, I present a career map that illustrates the key phases these trampoline-gymnasts experienced – recreational classes, selection and recruitment, entry into the trampoline club, being in the group and looking to retire; the intricacies of which will inform the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Chapter five explores gymnasts'

experiences of entering this trampoline group, how they were selected and recruited, their initial experiences in the club and how they began to construct a trampoline body and identity. Chapter six presents accounts of the lived experiences of maintaining a trampoline body and being in this trampoline group, including the challenges that this entails (i.e. developing a sense of belonging, experiences and conflicts of the pubescent body and the ways in which the trampoline body is judged). Chapter seven addresses the body-centred challenges that threaten trampoline careers such as ageing, injured and ill bodies and explores the possible narratives these young people draw upon when looking to retire.

Finally, chapter eight provides a discursive summary of the key findings. In exploring bodies in trampoline contexts, I synthesise my embodied approach into a model for understanding embodied careers in sport and outline how this might be applied to future work on the body in sport. Drawing upon this model, I discuss the original contributions this research has made to our understanding of the trampoline body and thus gymnastic bodies and put forward recommendations for change to ensure healthy and prolonged participation in this sport. Having pointed out the key findings of this research, I reflect upon my time in the ethnographic field and outline directions for future research. To conclude this chapter and the thesis, I offer final reflexive thoughts on the research processes, referring back to the aim, objectives and judgement criteria outlined in chapter three.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first will contextualise the body as a serious sociological concern, outlining how it is important in society and how it has been studied within social sciences. Throughout this discussion, Chris Shilling's (1993, 2003, 2012) influential discussion of the social body will be drawn upon heavily as his work has mapped key debates of the body over time. Moreover, this section will highlight how the body, self, identity and narrative are intricately linked, moving toward embodied approaches (Sparkes, 1997). Then, drawing upon the work of Arthur Frank (1990, 1991, 1995) and Erving Goffman (1990a, 1990b) this section will outline the theoretical perspective that frames this research.

The second part will review the research on sporting identities and sporting bodies, specifically how they are (re)constructed, negotiated and experienced over an individual's sporting career. Initially this section will address various examples within the sporting literature, spanning a broad range of activities so as to look at how these phenomena have been considered in sport studies. The latter part of this section will then be narrower in focus, discussing the literature specifically on gymnastic bodies.

To conclude, a summary of the gaps in the literature will be outlined. The questions produced by these gaps will be highlighted and clarification of the aim and objectives in relation to these will be given.

PART I

The body in society

In recent years there has been an increased popular interest in the body (Peterson, 2007; Shilling, 2003). Contemporary capitalist societies maintain a constant emphasis on the body, leaving little opportunity to escape the constant stream of media showcasing and advertising of the young, sexy, beautiful body and how it might be achieved (Featherstone, 2010; Peterson, 2007; Shilling, 2003). Television programmes such as *The Human Body*, *Extreme Makeover*, *How to Look Good Naked*, and *Supersize vs. Superskinny*, and images in magazines such as *Shape*, *Vogue* and *Men's Health* reflect this. Shilling (2012, p.216) refers to an increasing 'global preoccupation with size, shape, performance and look of bodies' framed by consumer culture. Weight-loss supplements, personal training, nationwide fitness chains, plastic surgery and beauty cosmetics form multi-million dollar/pound industries that support individuals' access to and achievement of the ideal body (Peterson, 2007). In 2012 the global fitness industry alone was estimated to be worth \$75.75 billion (Statista, 2015).

Just as attention is afforded to beautiful bodies (Featherstone, 2010), the various abnormalities and deficiencies of bodies have also received significant media coverage. Television programmes such as *Embarrassing Bodies*, *Extraordinary People* and *Body Shock* have portrayed, in some cases extreme, alternatives to the body beautiful rhetoric that is so prevalent. Whether the focus is on the body beautiful or its alternatives and dysfunctions, the body has become a prominent and unavoidable presence in our society.

Against this backdrop, people are becoming increasingly concerned with the health, shape and appearance of their bodies as expressions of individual identity. Giddens' (1991) work on self-identity in (high) modernity is important to ideas about the body and its relationship to self-identity. He refers to modernity as the social structures and modes of

life which emerged in post-feudal Europe (i.e. industrialisation), the impact of which has become increasingly global. This societal change led to a reduction in the power religious institutions had on bodies in society, and facilitated an increased degree of control that nation states and the medical profession exert over bodies (Shilling, 2003). However, during this period of radical change, the previous religious existential and ontological certainties of the body, what it is and how it is used, were not replaced with scientific certainties, ultimately leaving individuals with the task of establishing definitions of what the body is, how to maintain it and to make sense of their daily lives (Giddens, 1991).

Giddens (1991) has suggested that we are in a period of 'high modernity', in which a radicalisation of the trends of modernity is now in place. That is, a further decline of religious frameworks and grand political narratives which initially constructed and sustained societies' knowledge of what the body is and its purpose, and an increase in consumer culture through and on the body. In 'high modernity', Giddens (1991) accepts that the body is constitutive of self and identity, by providing a stable foundation on which to construct and reconstruct a sense of self in the modern and increasingly less stable world. He argues that in order to do this, individuals have become increasingly reflexive in the ways in which they define and construct their bodies, and they actively engage in constructing and maintaining their bodies to *reflect* their sense of self-identity.

Using Giddens' (1991) work as a starting point, Shilling (2003, p.4) has viewed the body as '*a project* which can be worked at and accomplished as part of an *individual's* self-identity' (original emphasis). The appearance, size, shape and contents of the body are open to reconstruction in accordance with the designs of the individual, and although varied amounts of time are dedicated to the body project, individuals are actively aware, concerned with and responsible for the control and management of their body. Bodies

then, are both personal resources and social symbols that radiate messages about a person's self-identity (Shilling, 2012). A number of empirical studies have viewed the body in this way, for example, work on the construction of healthy bodies (Shilling, 2002); muscular bodies in bodybuilding cultures (Monaghan, 2001; Wesely, 2001) and bodily adaption through plastic surgery (Gimlin, 2006). Thus, we live in an age in which we have the means to control our bodies, but we also have a great deal of uncertainty about our knowledge of what bodies are and how we can and should control them (Peterson, 2007; Shilling, 2003).

Our bodies are not fixed, they are fluid and constantly changing, they age, decay and ultimately die (Frank, 1991). Shilling (2003, p.6) notes that in a society that values young, fit, beautiful bodies, the ageing and aged body, characterised by weight gain, wrinkled skin and sagging flesh is something that is 'disturbing to modern people'. Similarly, the body's refusal to be moulded to the design of the individual illustrates its fleshy reality. Peterson (2007) identifies a number of studies concerning women's experiences of their body whilst they try to adapt it in various ways (e.g., exercise, plastic surgery, cosmetics). These studies have reported eating disorders, frequent or yo-yo dieting, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression as common outcomes when the body fails to meet the designs of the individual. Drawing upon this area of work, Shilling (2003) also identifies that (images of) desirable bodies tend to perpetuate pre-existing social inequalities which limit the options and choices available when considering our bodily designs. He highlights the ways in which some women's body projects appear to be more reflective of male designs for the female body, rather than expressions of individuality. However, whilst some women struggle to achieve these patriarchal designs (Markula, 2001), constructing an alternative female body that challenges societal norms of femininity

can also lead to ridicule (Wesely, 2001). Similarly, our reflexive concern with the body is having significant implications for children and young people. Children as young as nine years old experience anxiety about their body shape and weight (Thompson and Smolak, 2003). Indeed the contemporary body politic and obesity discourses that frame ideas of healthy bodies free of excess fat, limit ideas about what the body can be and can lead to ill-health, such as depression, low self-esteem, and disordered relationships with food (Rich and Evans, 2005).

In summary, interest in the body has become an increasingly prevalent and complex feature in society providing contentious debate. It has become a platform for individuals to construct and maintain their sense of identity. Bodies have become 'projects' (Shilling, 2003), personal resources and social symbols that reflect an individual's self-identity to the world. Yet, while facilitating, bodies are also constraining. They are fleshy corporeal entities that are subject to ageing, illness and injury, and cannot always reflect individual designs, often forming problematic body-self relationships. For these reasons (and others discussed below) the body has become an important social issue. This leads us to consider the ways in which the body has been traditionally studied and how sociology of the body might be useful.

The body as a sociological concern

Sociological interest in the body became increasingly prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s (Frank, 1990; Peterson, 2007; Shilling, 2003). A number of books were published in this period discussing the relationship between the body and society, at micro and macro levels, making significant (theoretical) contributions to the ways in which the social body in modernity might be theorised and explored (e.g., Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner, 1991; Turner, 1992a; Shilling, 1993; Williams and Bendelow, 1998). In 1995 the journal

Body and Society was devoted to the continued study of the body as an explicit focus of sociological work. Comprehensive reviews of the socio-cultural body (e.g., Frank, 1990; Howson, 2004; Peterson, 2007; Shilling, 1991, 2003, 2012; Turner, 1991) map a series of societal and academic changes that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth century which have led to a move toward the body as a serious sociological concern, providing context to how the body has been studied in sociology and how it will be viewed in the present study.

Contemporary explanations for the recent interest in the body in sociology suggest that the new found preoccupation has arisen because of the traditionally *disembodied* approach adopted by the discipline, particularly in early and classical sociological work (Frank, 1991). As Shilling (2003) notes, traditionally sociology has been profoundly influenced by Cartesian thought, adopting a dichotomous view of the body. Deriving from the work of René Descartes, and later developed by other early philosophers (e.g., Descombes), Cartesian thought is associated with an ontological distinction between mind and body, privileging the former as that which defines the self:

I thereby concluded that I was a substance, of which the whole essence or nature consists in thinking, and which, in order to exist, needs no place and depends on no material thing; so that *this "I", that is to say, the mind, by which I am what I am*, is entirely distinct from my body. (Descombes, 1637; cited in Eakin, 1999, p.7 original emphasis)

Shilling (2003) suggests that a great deal of sociological work has adopted this philosophical dualism of mind and body, focusing on the mind, not only as the source of thought through which the self is produced, but as that which defines us as social beings. Thus, in much classical and early sociological work, the corporeal body is viewed as a passive shell or machine in which the self could be located and accessed.

That is not to say that the corporeal body was completely neglected in early sociological work; instead it might be better viewed as an *absent presence* (Leder, 1990).

While the body is not an explicit concern within classical sociological work, it is inherently an unavoidable, hidden entity within it (Shilling, 2003). Early sociologists were concerned with the (new and developing) structure and functioning of societies and the nature of human action, providing an insight into elements of human embodiment, but neglecting any comprehensive study of human experience of the body. For example, bodies engage in and experience physical labour [Marx 1818-1883]; bodies are central to religious rituals and social classifications [Durkheim 1858 - 1917]; and the body is regulated and rationalised in modern life [Weber 1864-1920] (Howson, 2004). Frank (1990), Turner (1991) and Shilling (2003) have all suggested these early sociologists did not focus on the body for a number of reasons. First, they lived in the mid-late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in which industrial, capitalist societies were emerging and developing. Issues such as a rise in wage labour, political democracy and citizenship were at the forefront of their investigations, rather than the body explicitly. Second, at this time the body was predominantly viewed as a natural, pre-social phenomenon which did not require any serious sociological analysis. Instead the subject was left to medical science, philosophy, anthropology and psychology, which were viewed as completely separate fields unrelated to sociology. Third, the methodological approaches of early sociology demanded the regulation of the sociologists' bodily experiences; implying experiences of the human body and subjectivity were not sociological concerns (Bauman, 1992). Émile Durkheim, for example, valued a cognitive inquiry that required an objective mind, free of emotion and prejudices in order to achieve a reality of social situations (Shilling and Mellor, 2001). Finally, these founding sociologists were *men*, whose work was highly influenced by their biographies (including the historical and social context in which they lived) and the social issues they faced. Had these men experienced the corporeal dangers associated with being

a woman during this period (e.g., high rates of death during childbirth) they may have taken a greater interest in the body (Shilling, 2003).

The move toward the body as a serious sociological concern, stems from a number of societal changes and academic developments that began to take place within this period of early sociological work (modernity) and became more prominent in the latter part of the twentieth century (high or late modernity) (Giddens 1991). First, the 'second wave' of feminism brought about a large number of studies exploring social inequalities and oppression through the bodies of men and women (Shilling, 2003). These studies highlighted the significant contribution that could be made by using the corporeal body to study societal inequalities. Second, both Shilling (2003) and Howson (2004) suggest the notable shift in the demographic make-up of society in the last century has led to increased study of the body. Medical advancements have led to an increasing ageing population, particularly in Western societies (Shilling, 2003) and made the treatment of bodily ailments, deformations and disabilities more available (Peterson, 2007). Similarly, technological and medical advances have also allowed body modifications, such as piercing, tattooing and cosmetic surgery to become more readily available and accepted, particularly in Western societies, as part of individuals' self-identity (Featherstone, 1999). Thus there is now a multitude of different types of bodies (e.g., young, sexualised, aged, transgendered, disabled) which receive varying hierarchal status and attention in the public domain. For example, the ageing or aged body is generally removed from public attention in favour of the young, slim, sexualised body which is highly prized in contemporary consumer society (Shilling, 2003). And so, sociologists have become interested in how people experience their body in relation to the social world and the inequalities within it. Finally, a rise in consumer culture, linked to the changing structure of modern capitalism

has shifted an everyday focus from the hard work, frugality and denial witnessed in the nineteenth century, to contemporary saving and investing workforces, with increased availability and freedom of leisure (Shilling, 2003). Frank (1990), Featherstone (2010) and Giddens (1991) suggest that the body has become part of our consumer culture; we (re)construct our bodies as part of our leisure, consumer behaviour and to reflect our identity. Modifying and decorating the body reflects a sense of identity or identification with a particular sub-group in society (Featherstone, 1999). Thus against the backdrop of social changes and academic developments within high modernity, the corporeal body has become a site for serious sociological concern.

With the emergence of the body as a key sociological focus, the nature of the body, what it is and how it is viewed and used in society has become an important debate in sociology (Shilling, 2003). There are multiple definitions of what the body is in sociology, often adopted from other disciplines (e.g., psychology) and even within the sub-discipline of 'sociology of the body' definitions vary, adding to the complexity of defining the nature of bodies (Howson, 2004; Shilling, 2003).

Various body perspectives might be placed on a nature-society continuum (Birke, 1992; Shilling, 2003), viewing the body as a purely biological entity at one end and the body as entirely social on the other, with a multitude of variations in between. Traditionally, sociology has taken a naturalistic perspective of the body, viewing it as a purely biological form that generates social meanings. Socio-biologists have suggested that the essential features of individuals are made up of genetic, predisposed characteristics, which are then used to classify them into social categories (e.g., black/white, male/female) and explain various social phenomena (Shilling, 2003). These biological reductionist/essentialist perspectives derive from Cartesian traditions in sociological thought (see

above), specifically the nature/culture dichotomy; and although they are now heavily criticised for their simplicity, they form the basis on which the body is now studied in contemporary sociology (Shilling, 2003).

In reaction to naturalistic views some sociologists have begun to view the body as a social construct (Shilling, 2003). Social constructionist perspectives view the body as somehow 'shaped, constrained and even invented by society' (Shilling, 2003, p.62). These perspectives are united in opposing the naturalistic view that the body is purely biological, agreeing that social forces impinge upon the body. However, these views differ on how much of a social and biological product the body is and identifying *what* these social forces are and *how* they affect the body, producing a multitude of various social constructionist views of the body (Shilling, 2003). Despite these complex variations social constructionist approaches to the body, as a whole, have considerably challenged the dual approach to the body in classical and early sociological work and have done much to make the body a serious sociological concern (Howson, 2004; Shilling, 2003), although some will be more useful than others to this research.

In those views that are most polarised to naturalistic perspectives, the biological body disappears and becomes entirely social. Michel Foucault's (1979, 1980, 1981, 1982) work on power and discipline systems that control the body exemplifies this. Shilling (2003) argues that Foucault has significantly contributed to social constructionist views, highlighting the body as a social product. However, his post-structural epistemological view of the body means it disappears as a material, corporeal phenomenon and instead exists in and through discourse. Thus, instead of overcoming the nature/culture dualism, it is replicated, albeit in a different way to classical sociological works. Shilling (2003, p.71) suggests '*natural essentialism* is displaced by *discursive essentialism*, a situation which

leaves Foucault without the means of examining the mutual development of biology (or anything that is material about the body) and society' (original emphasis). Moreover, in placing such an emphasis on discourse, Foucault says little about what the body actually is.

More central in the body-society continuum is the work of Bryan Turner (1984, 1992a) who also examined the monitoring and control of bodies by social systems, providing an extension of Foucault's work. He demonstrates a greater concern with the biological body than Foucault, acknowledging that bodies might break down and become ill as a result of societal controls imposed on them (Frank, 1991). However, despite his advances, Turner's work, much like Foucault's is still problematic insofar as his (post-structuralist) focus is on social systems that control the body and not the experiences of individuals and their human embodiment, in Shilling's (2003) view maintaining many of the criticisms of Foucault's work.

Echoing the discussions of Frank (1990, 1991) and Shilling (2003), I acknowledge the body as a corporeal, fleshy entity which is subject to change. The size, shape and appearance of bodies vary according to their age, care, nutrition, as well as the social relationships they engage in and the environments they encounter (Shilling, 2003). Thus, the body is best thought of as a social *and* biological product. The nature/culture bifurcation that is prominent in the literature is unhelpful and unnecessary (Frank, 1991), therefore this work will take an embodied approach.

Embodied approaches: Body, self and identity

A number of theorists have taken a socially constructed, embodied approach in their sociological, anthropological and philosophical studies. Marcel Mauss [1934], Pierre Bourdieu (1973, 1984), Arthur Kleinman (1988), Judith Butler (1990, 1993), Norbert Elias [1939], Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Mary Douglas (1970, 1984) in particular have greatly contributed to the view that the body is both a social and biological construct (Eakin, 1999; Fraser and Greco, 2004). However, the primary focus of their work is often not embodiment. Instead, macro-structural concerns are the forefront of these investigations. For example, they focus on how the body reinforces and maintains social systems, norms and structures (Bourdieu, Mauss and Douglas), discipline specific matters such as mental health within the wider medical community (Kleinman), and the (female) body as a basis of inequality within society (Butler and Grosz). Shilling (2003) argues that these theorists take a symbolic interactionist perspective in their analyses insofar as they epistemologically view the body as integral to human agency and place more emphasis on the control and management of bodies by individuals rather than focusing on social structures acting upon bodies.

Symbolic interactionism has been viewed as a major alternative to functionalist and post-structuralist perspectives offering the study of the self-society relationship through the process of symbolic communications between social actors (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1994). The approach is rooted in George Mead's (2015) work on the self as a social phenomenon, one that emerges through the process of social interaction with others, and is dependent upon bodily action. Mead suggested *conditioned responses*, comprising of bodily gestures and conversations, are essential features of the self. He also argued that the self is reliant upon the ability of humans to reflexively imagine how others might perceive

us (termed the 'looking-glass self'). We might dress, speak or act in particular ways to convey a sense of who we are to others and in doing so we claim specific identities in society. However, whilst Mead placed the individual at the centre of his inquiry, less is said about the presence of the corporeal body in favour of a study of the self, echoing traditional dualist attitudes. More recently, Giddens (1991), building upon the ideas of Erving Goffman presents the idea of *reflexivity* in relation to individuals' self and identity, but does more to acknowledge the physicality of the body in this reflexive process. He states:

reflexivity of the self *extends to the body*, where the body is part of an action system rather than merely a passive object. Observation of bodily processes - "How am I breathing?" - is intrinsic to the continuous reflexive attention which the agent is called on to pay to her behaviour...Experiencing the body is a way of cohering the self as an integrated whole.
(Giddens, 1991, p.77-78 original emphasis).

Thus, symbolic interactionist perspectives of the body take seriously the intricate, integral nature of the corporeal body, self and identity as inseparable social constructs. This said, defining the terms *self* and *identity* is a problematic task. Both have been subject to differing terminologies and definitions from various disciplines over time (Eakin, 1999) and often the terms are used interchangeably within the same texts (Smith and Sparkes, 2008; Swann and Bosson, 2010). However attempts to define them place emphasis on "I" and "me"; and questions concerning "What am I?", "Who am I?", "How do I see myself?" and "How do others see me?" (Eakin, 1999; Sarup, 1996; Smith and Sparkes, 2008; Woodward, 2000).

Smith and Sparkes (2008, p.7) suggest that the concepts of self and identity should not be viewed 'in essentialist terms, but as multi-dimensional and connected to social, historical, political and cultural contexts... In an alternative formulation, therefore, the self and identity are defined and viewed in the plural', that is *selves* and *identities*. For Brewer and Gardener (1996), the self should be viewed as both individuated and relational.

Individuals' sense of self and how they see themselves is indicative of both a *personal* self, which is individuated and inaccessible to others, and a *social* self, which is relational, reflecting assimilation to others or collective groups. Both the personal and social selves coexist as the same individual, but are 'activated' at different times and within different social contexts in a complex interplay, both informing the other.

Much like Mead, they suggest that the self is dependent upon social interaction with others, 'individuals seek to define themselves (make sense of who they are) in terms of their immersion in relationships with others and larger collectives' (Brewer and Gardener, 1996, p.83). Similarly, Eakin (1999) suggests that humans are relational beings and make sense of who they are through experiencing the world and interacting with others. Within these discussions, two fundamental elements of the social self emerge - relationships with *others* and *larger collectives*. Brewer and Gardener (1996, p.83) use the term *interpersonal identities* to denote interactions with others (e.g., parent-child) and *collective identities* which 'do not require personal relationships' but require 'common bonds' or attachments to other group members (e.g., being female, being an athlete). Thus, the social self might be viewed as the sum of multiple identities.

Brewer and Gardener (1996) do not explicitly refer to the body in their definition of selves and identities, although they do make clear the intricate connection and interplay between the two concepts. However researchers viewing these concepts in this way have suggested that selves and identities are inscribed onto, enacted and experienced through the body (e.g., Eakin, 1999; Kerby, 1991; Sacks, 1990; Schwalbe, 1993; Sparkes, 1999). For example, Sacks (1990), a neurobiologist, theorises the self as corporeal subject that is constructed through bodily experiences and interactions in the social world. He states:

One is not a material soul, floating around a machine. I do not feel alive, psychologically alive, except insofar as a stream of feeling - perceiving, imagining, remembering, reflecting, revising, recategorizing runs through me. I am that stream - that stream is me.
(Sacks, 1990, p.49)

For Sacks (1990, 1995) the self exists in the life of the corporeal body, it is the agency of that body that constructs this 'stream' in relation to the social world. Woodward (2000) too acknowledges the body-self relationship through the inscription of identities on the body. She notes that *symbols*, such as wearing specific clothing (on the body) are important ways in marking shared or collective identities. Similarly, Schwalbe (1993, p.335) argues that signs 'can be manifested in speech posture, dress, body type' which are enacted and then reflected upon by the individual and others when affiliating with a personal and/or collective identity. Viewed in this way, selves and identities are inherently linked to bodies; individuals' lives are embodied.

This research will draw heavily upon the embodied concepts of Erving Goffman and Arthur Frank to frame understandings of trampoline-gymnasts' lives. These authors have both contributed greatly to ideas of the socially constructed body in their respective symbolic interactionist analyses (Fraser and Greco, 2005; Shilling, 2003).

Erving Goffman's manageable bodies

Goffman's work is centrally concerned with how individuals control and manage their corporeal bodies in everyday social interactions. In his analyses of social interactions, he makes three key epistemological assumptions about the nature of bodies (Goffman, 1990a). First, he views the body as the material property of individuals who have the ability to control and monitor their bodily performances in order to facilitate social interaction. Thus, the body acts as an enabling resource to exercise human agency. Second, the meanings attributed to bodies are determined by 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' (Goffman, 1963, p.35), conventional forms of non-verbal communication such as

'dress, bearing, movements and position, sound level, physical gestures...and broad emotional expressions' (p.33) which enable individuals to classify, categorise or label people in a hierarchal way. Consequently body idioms profoundly influence the ways in which people seek to control, manage and present their bodies. Finally, Goffman views the body as integral to self and identity. The body acts a resource through which identities are projected through performances and idiom. The social meanings attached to these bodily performances become internalised and subsequently influence an individual's sense of self and feelings of self-worth (Goffman, 1990a).

The body and social interaction

Goffman has commented extensively on the role of the body as central to social interaction in everyday encounters in which people act out specific social roles. Across his work, he refers to the *interaction order* (1983) as the autonomous sphere of social life in which *interaction rituals* take place; the analysis of which demonstrates the centrality of human agency in the successful maintenance and control of the body in everyday life. Within the interaction order, he refers to *deference* and *demeanour* as codes of acceptable, normative behaviour within all social interactions (1956). *Demeanour* is the way a person presents themselves and acts. *Deference* is the reaction and/or respect afforded to another person according to their demeanour. Thus, the two are fundamental to all social interactions.

Moreover, Goffman (2005) argues that in order for individuals to interact successfully they must observe and abide by corporeal rules or interaction rituals that govern social encounters. He refers to *face work* or *body work*, bodily performances (combinations of shared vocabularies of body idiom) that are crucial to maintaining the smooth flow of encounters and integrity to social roles in everyday life (Goffman, 2005).

Shilling (2003) exemplifies these types of work through the actions of shop floor workers who often master the false appearance of being busy when in visual range of supervisors, yet are engaging in private discussions with their colleagues. Another example is evident in Goffman's (1963) description of *civil inattention*, the most basic and frequent type of face and body work observed in interactions among strangers in public places. He explains that often strangers, when passing each other on a street, will glance at each other and sometimes smile or nod before looking away, indicating recognition of each other's presence but avoiding any gesture that might be perceived as a threat.

Within the interaction order, the body also becomes central in maintaining social inequalities through interaction rituals. Goffman (1985) acknowledges the role of face and body work in reinforcing gender inequality in advertisements, in which men tend to be portrayed as more physically competent and/or the breadwinners of the household and women are more delicate, less physically-able and more home-centred, taking care of household chores and children⁵.

The body, self and identity

For Goffman, the body is central to the formation and maintenance of selves and identities. In *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1990a), he developed a dramaturgical conceptual framework, a metaphoric-like play to illustrate how the self and identity are enacted through the body in everyday interactions. In this concept individuals, much like actors in a theatrical play, enact specific roles in relation to the social world (e.g., a mother, a sister, a teacher), projecting a component of their self-identity to enable others to make sense of who they are. Performances are specific to the social contexts in which they are given, but always inform the construction of the self. Individuals exercise a degree

⁵Goffman's (1990b) work on stigma also produces examples of this, but this has been discussed below.

of agency over the identities they choose to construct through choosing to engage with different social groups and the specific roles and behaviours, expected within a particular group (Goffman, 1990a). Just like an actor, an individual must do this convincingly in order to persuade the audience (other people, real or imagined) that they are an authentic member of the group. Goffman (1963, 1990a) refers to *impression management* as a process through which actors attempt to control their bodies in specific ways and enact certain roles in order to belong to a particular group. As part of impression management, *front regions* and *back regions* or *stages* are identified as social spaces which govern individuals' actions. An actor's performance in a 'front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards' or social norms accepted by a particular group (1990a, p.110). However, Goffman (1990a, p.115) acknowledges the prolonged periods of time individuals spend managing consistent bodily performances of self and identity and therefore the need for 'periods of relaxation'. Thus, whilst backstage the performer assumes the audience is unable to see them, so they can engage in practices to inform their front stage performances and/or contradictory behaviours.

The body is not only a resource or platform on which to construct and perform selves and identities, but also a constraint. In *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity* (1990b), Goffman's analysis of embarrassment and stigma suggests individuals can be categorised as a failed member of a social group or society through shared vocabularies of body idiom. He explains that embarrassment is often caused when individuals perform against perceived social norms and/or roles, revealing a level of incompetence and inconsistency in their authenticity, and is often manifested through stuttering, blushing and trembling. Embarrassment is a *threat* to individuals' social identity

and self. Individuals with stigmas, an attribute which is deeply discrediting, produce the same inaccuracies in performance, yet the consequences are often more damaging. In his analysis, Goffman (1990b) places stigma into three broad classifications. First, physical deformities of the body. Second, negative associations of individual character, those 'perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty...inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction' (p.14). Third, tribal stigma, associated with the ethnic and/or national origins, and/or religious beliefs or practices undertaken by the individual. Any of these traits in a specific social context can trigger a stigma, which is often internalised by the individual and can become part of their self. Goffman uses the analogy of a stranger possessing one of these traits to emphasise how stigmas are formed and how we justify this:

an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness...we believe the person with the stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority.
(Goffman, 1990b, p.15)

Thus, individual agency in the construction of selves and identities is not a free choice; the social script is, to a degree, already written for us (Goffman, 1990b).

Goffman's work on interaction order has been used extensively across various academic disciplines to frame and explore how individuals' fit into social groups and how they construct and maintain their identity through social interaction. For example, in education (Melander and Wortmann, 2011), in health and medicine (Conrad and Barker, 2010; Neale, Nettleton and Pickering, 2011) and sporting bodies (Beames and Pike, 2008; Birrell and Donnelly, 2004; Chesterfield, Portrac and Jones, 2010; Donnelly and Young, 1988). Thus, his work has significantly influenced the way in which we might *do*

sociology. Goffman places emphasis on micro-sociological phenomena, rather than macro-structural issues, to highlight 'issues of individual identity, group relations, the impact of the environment, and the movement and interactive meaning of information' (Chesterfield et al., 2010, p.303). However, Shilling's (2003) notion that Goffman does not provide an explicit theory of the body presents an issue for this work. He argues that in-depth ideas of the corporeal body and what it is are pushed aside in favour of a focus on individuals' social interactions and body/face work, thus echoing issues within previous disembodied approaches (i.e. Foucault and Turner, see above). In contrast, Arthur Frank's (1991, p.41) work provides a definition of what the body is in his attempt to bring 'bodies back in'.

Frank's bodies in action

Through a radical reworking and extension of previous theoretical positions (i.e. Foucault, Goffman and Turner) Frank (1991) provides a more comprehensive theory of the body. He acknowledges that Foucault and Turner in particular do a great deal to place the body at the forefront of their investigations, but both are concerned with social systems in relation to the body, rather than the body itself. Thus, he takes a micro-sociological, symbolic interactionist approach associated with Goffman (Shilling, 2003), placing more emphasis on subjective experience through *bodily* action and narrative discourse as integral components of human agency.

Defining bodies

Frank (1991) places the body at the forefront of his analysis, defining it as 'constituted in an intersection of an equilateral triangle the points of which are *institutions, discourses and corporeality*' (Frank, 1991, p.49 original emphasis). He defines each of these points, drawing selectively upon the work of Foucault (1974, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982), Turner (1984) and Giddens (1984). Differing from Foucault's conceptualisation, *discourse* is defined as 'cognitive mappings of the body's possibilities and limitations... [which] form the normative parameters of how the body can understand itself' (Frank, 1991, p.48). These parameters are not fixed, but fluid resources or choices that do not necessarily require body techniques. Discourses do not exist alone, they are spoken or enacted in relation to *institutions*, physical locations of the past or present in a specific space and time. They 'are constituted in and through discourses, and discourses are instantiated and modified in institutional sites' (Frank, 1991, p.49). Although Frank draws upon Foucault's ideas here, his definitions of discourses and institutions take a 'body up' rather than an 'institution down' approach, maintaining the body as his key focus. The final point of the triangle illustrates Frank's notion that bodies are a fleshy, *corporeal* phenomenon. He states bodies 'do not emerge out of discourses and institutions; they emerge out of other bodies, specifically women's bodies... [bodies] exist within space and time as physiologies' (Frank, 1991, p.49). This corporeal view of the body lends itself to the reality that we are inherently in a constant state of flux, bodies continuously age and ultimately die and decompose and are subject to injury and illness along the way.

From this definition, Frank (1991, p.48) proposes that a theory of the body 'needs to apprehend the body as both a medium and outcome of social "body techniques", and society as both medium and outcome of the sum of these techniques'. Body techniques are

much like Goffman's (1963) shared vocabularies of body idiom - physical gestures and bodily decorations that are socially given (Frank, 1991). They are 'instantiated in their practical use *by* bodies, *on* bodies...[as such they] are as much resources *for* bodies as they are constraints on them' (p.48 original emphasis).

Frank (1991) exemplified his conceptualisation of the body in relation to society using historical accounts of fasting medieval holy women. These bodies are located within the institution of the church as it existed at that time, and within the discourses which extended from the doctrines of that church (e.g., fasting as a holy act), medieval marriage and the role of women in society. The corporeal element in this example extends to the question of how much self-punishment and deprivation the body will bear whilst fasting. From such examples, Frank (1991) argues that discourses, institutions and corporeality are in a constant state of flux and it is subjective bodily experiences which are indicative of individuals' selves and identities that interest him.

Body usage in action

Frank (1991) develops his work from a critical discussion of Turner's (1984) structural analysis of the body which viewed the body as a problem for society. Arguing against this standpoint he states:

Bodies alone have "tasks". Social systems may provide the context in which these tasks are defined, enacted, and evaluated, but social systems themselves have no "tasks" ...social systems are built up from tasks of bodies, which then allows us to understand how bodies can experience their tasks as imposed by a system. (Frank, 1991, p.48 original emphasis).

Further to this point, Frank highlights the reciprocal nature of the body and culture, explaining that culture in-folds into the body and reciprocally, bodily processes (actions, stories and narrative) out-fold into social space. Ultimately, Frank acknowledges a reciprocal interplay between the body, society and culture but focuses primarily on the body. In his approach, he proposes 'to begin with how the body is a problem for *itself*,

which is an action problem rather than a system problem, proceeding from a phenomenological orientation rather than a functional one' (Frank, 1991, p.47 original emphasis).

In taking this approach two terms become salient throughout Frank's work - *embodiment* and *phenomenology*. *Embodiment* is defined as having a sense of one's own body within the social world, and how the individual experiences that world through their body (Csordas, 1990, 1993, 1994). Longo, Schüür, Kammers, Tsakiris and Haggard (2008, p.2) explain embodiment is the 'sense of one's own body as also intimately related to the sense of self, and is often taken as the starting point of individual identity'. *Phenomenology* has broadly been defined as a corporeally-grounded approach that examines individuals' lived experience, perceptions and meanings of the world (Kvale, 1996). Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty's (2002) existentialist phenomenology⁶, Allen-Collinson (2009) suggests phenomenology produces a 'dialogic where the world, body and consciousness are all fundamentally intertwined, inter-relating and mutually influencing. One's own body (*le corps propre*) is the subject of perception, the standpoint from which all things are perceived and experienced' (p.283). This research will adopt an existentialist phenomenological perspective of embodiment, much like Frank (1991) and Leder (1990). The body, which is central to existentialist phenomenological perspectives (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 2002) is the basis for our actions and the *lived body* is an 'embodied self that lives and breathes, perceives and acts, speaks and reasons' (Leder, 1990, p.6).

⁶ Many other strands of phenomenology exist (e.g., constitutive/transcendental phenomenology associated with Edmund Husserl [1859-1938] and hermenutic phenomenology associated with Martin Heidegger [1889-1976]).

Body problems and typology responses

Frank's (1991, 1995) conceptualisation of body usage derives from his approach to the body as a problem for itself as it undertakes action in relation to some object. Drawing upon Turner's (1984) earlier typology, Frank (1991, 1995) isolates four questions or action problems which the body must ask itself as it undertakes action in relationship to some object - control, desire, other-relatedness, self-relatedness.

The first question is concerned with *control*. The body must ask itself how predictable its performance will be. Frank (1995, p.30) suggests that in any given situation individuals must ask themselves, 'can I reliably predict how my body will function; can I control its functioning?' People define themselves in terms of the body's varying capacity of control and when these capacities are predictable, control as an action or bodily problem does not require self-monitoring. If control was thought of as a continuum, predictability is its highest expression with the performance of a gymnastic or balletic body, for example, placed at one end, and a contingent body, subject to forces that cannot be controlled would be at the other (Frank, 1995). Influenced by Goffman's view that the body is a component of human agency, Frank (1991) suggests that society places constraints on bodily action, demanding a considerable level of control, the loss of which might lead to stigmatisation.

The second question is concerned with *desire*, whether the body is producing or lacking desire. Questions the body might ask itself include 'what do I *want*, and how is the desire expressed *for* my body, *with* my body, and *through* my body?' (Frank, 1995, p.37 original emphasis). The body must constitute itself on a continuum of desire; from a body with limitations, deficiencies, in a sense incompleteness to a perfected complete model. Desire is the wanting of more and therefore a desiring body always wants and seeks more.

The third question is of its *relation to others*. Other-relatedness is an action problem concerned with how the shared condition of being bodies becomes the basis of empathetic understanding and interaction among living beings. Questions posed by this action problem might include, what is my relationship (as a body) to others (as bodies)? Does the body relate to itself in a monadic way, is it closed in on itself? Or does it exist in relation to others? Frank (1995) exemplifies the monadic body as one that experiences pain and illness, a subjective individual experience. Hospital patients may relate differently to nursing staff and doctors, experiencing different levels and effects of treatment. They may choose to engage with other patients or not. In this context, a monadic body would choose not to engage in conversations with staff and other patients. In contrast, the dyadic body understands itself as a medium through which other bodies are connected. 'Dyadic bodies exist *for* each other; they exist for the task of discovering what it means to live for other bodies' (Frank, 1995, p.37). Following on from the medical example above, Schweitzer's (cited in Frank, 1995) work suggests patients' empathy of what it is like to feel pain is a shared experience.

The fourth question is of *self-relatedness* (later referred to as body-relatedness). The body asks itself questions surrounding the nature of its being, particularly of its surface or exterior. For example, 'Do I *have* a body, or *am* I a body?' (Frank, 1995, p.33 original emphasis). Bodies are either associated or disassociated with their exterior or surface. To be a disassociated body an individual believes they are *in* a body, but not *of* the body; in a sense the bodily exterior or surface is a metaphorical garment that is worn. In contrast, an associated body does not disappear under a 'garment', it is who s/he is.

Frank (1991, 1995) states that as bodies respond to these four action problems, typical styles of body usage emerge. Placement upon the four continua within the

dimensions of control, desire, other-relatedness and self-relatedness, generates a matrix of four ideal styles of body usage (see Figure 1).

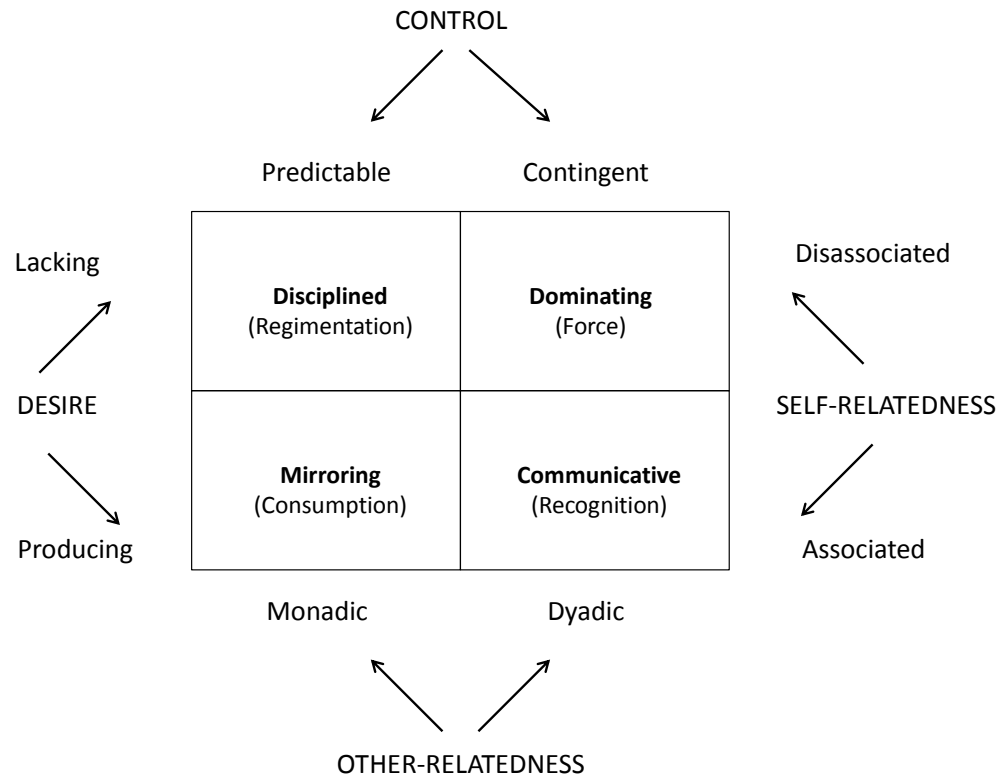


Figure 1. Frank's (1991) typology of body usage in action.

The four ideal types of body usage are represented by their respective media of activity used to resolve body problems - the *disciplined* body, the *mirroring* body, the *dominating* body and the *communicative* body. Frank (1991) suggests that this model is not as neat as it first appears; it represents *typical* or *ideal* styles of body usage in their most extreme form. These bodies might be viewed as 'four puppets that dance, and sometimes dangle, at the theoretical ends of these four continua' (Frank, 1995, p.40). The four styles are not meant to encompass all possible types of body usage, but serve as heuristic guides through which we can make sense of and understand the body.

The disciplined body defines itself in acts of regimentation. Therefore its most prominent action problems are those of control. It makes itself *predictable* through regimentation, seeking to hide any sense of contingency. Contingency is a state this body fears. So long as the disciplined body is regimented, the body can believe itself to be predictable. The disciplined body also lacks desire. Frank (1991) uses examples of low ranking military and monastic individuals as disciplined bodies. These bodies view themselves, within their respective institutions, as subordinate within a hierarchal structure, often told what to do, therefore they lack desire. Furthermore these bodies use regimentation as a way of recognising their own existence. Using a military soldier as an example, Frank (1991, p.55) states 'the soldier comes to know himself as being in his drill'. Such a body suffers its greatest crisis when it loses control, the response to which is to reassert predictability through regimes. A single-minded focus on regimes results in a body *disassociated* with its surface; the body becomes a tool fitted for instrumental purposes and is unable to give or receive affection. Thus, the disciplined body is *monadic*, and closed in upon itself. Although it can be *among* others, it cannot be *with* them. This body is contextually grounded in Foucault's theories of discipline and punishment through discourse. However Frank (1991) extends upon this idea, recognising the importance of corporeality. Bodies can do things for themselves; they discipline themselves and pursue means and ends that are their own, within institutions and discourses.

In contrast to the regimentation of the disciplined body, *the mirroring body* defines itself in acts of consumption. Frank (1991, p.62) describes these acts as 'the endless assimilation of the world's objects to one's own body, and of one's own body to the world's objects'. It is so named because it 'attempts to recreate the body in the images of other bodies: more stylish and healthier bodies' (p.43). The mirroring body remains *predictable*,

but for different reasons than the disciplined body. Where the disciplined body seeks predictability of performance, the mirroring body seeks predictability of appearance. It grooms itself to conformity through a set of internalised images which are often superficial. Again, much like the disciplined body, this body fears contingency, in particular any form of disfigurement or deficiency that alters its appearance, rather than disruptions to its work or performative routine. Both disciplined and mirroring bodies are *monadic*, but again in different ways. Both bodies act alone in a world that judges them. The disciplined body is 'closed in the virtuosity of its practice' and disregards others (Frank, 1991, p.61). In contrast, the mirroring body is 'open to an exterior world, but [is] monadic in its appropriation of that world' (p.61 added emphasis). Nothing can challenge the mirroring body's consciousness of itself; acts of consumption are used to recreate the body for itself. Thus, for mirroring bodies consumption is the monadic reproduction of the body through its assimilation of a world which exists only for itself. This body usage style also differs from the disciplined body in its continuous *producing of desire*. As the mirroring body sees an object 'it immediately aligns itself in some fit of that object; its desire is to make the object part of its image' (p.62). Acts of consumption facilitate the constant production of desire, although they are not limited to economic material consumption in the literal sense.

For the ultimate mirroring body, it is simply enough to walk through shopping malls, to see what is there, perhaps to "try on some things". The object need not be purchased because it has already been consumed in the initial gaze, there will be a new object next month, if not next week...[therefore] producing and reproducing desire.
(Frank, 1995, p.62)

The mirroring body is therefore almost compulsively *associated* with its surface, the primary visual for its appearance, which exists to be decorated as a projection of the body's understanding of itself. 'If the disciplined body tells its story in regimens, the mirroring body tells itself in its image' (Frank, 1995, p.45).

The *dominating body*, typically a male body, defines itself by force. It is constantly aware of its own *contingency* and is perpetually threatened by the unknown and/or new situations. Whilst it assumes contingency, it never accepts it. Crucially, where disciplined and mirroring bodies turn on themselves, the dominating body turns on others. In its state of contingency, that is to say fear and/or loss of control, this body turns its aggression onto other people, and is therefore *dyadic*. It therefore must be *disassociated* with itself in order to absorb and deliver punishment. In this state of crisis, it cannot produce *desire*. Frank (1995) has used the dominating body to frame the behaviour of ill bodies. He uses the example of 'Dick', a cancer patient who displays aggression toward his wife. In this scenario, Dick's diagnosis of cancer creates a state of contingency, fear and loss of control, as he does not accept his medical condition. In this state, he lacks desire because his ability to live was so in question.

Frank (1995) suggests disciplined, mirroring and dominating bodies could be discussed on a level of empirical description, as ideal types whose specifications provide some interpretation and understanding of how bodies exist at different moments in time. However, the *communicative body* is less a reality and more of an ideal. Unlike dominating bodies, the communicative body accepts, rather than assumes its *contingency*, as a fundamental element of life. Thus, contingency is less of a problem for the body, but a series of possibilities; therefore it is in the process of creating itself. The communicative body is fully *associated* with itself; it understands 'the body-self exists as a unity' (Frank, 1995, p.49) and contextualises the qualities of being *dyadic* and *producing desire*. The communicative body produces a desire to act through empathetic recognition. Referring to his empirical analysis of illness, Frank states:

When a body that is associated with its own contingency turns outward in dyadic relatedness, it sees reflections of its own suffering in the bodies of others. When the body is a desiring one, the person wants and needs to relieve the suffering of others.
Frank (1995, p.49)

Frank (1991, 1995) notes it is difficult to find a societal example of the communicative body, but exemplifies the performative body of a dancer, to illustrate where these bodies might begin to be found. The dancer is associated with their body and through the act of dance produces expressiveness. It evolves through contingency, becoming a source of change and inspiration.

In summary, Frank takes seriously the centrality of the corporeal body to individual subjective experience within society, and has made a considerable contribution to socially constructed views of the body, and body theory more generally, by providing a more comprehensive definition of the corporeal, yet social body (Shilling, 2003). In addition, he has done more than other social constructionist theorists to acknowledge how micro-level social phenomena are reciprocally linked to macro-structural social issues. Thus his conceptual theorisation provides a response to some of the criticisms of previous work on the social body (Shilling, 2003). Although Frank does not explicitly exemplify or analyse sporting bodies, his typology of body usage in action has been used to frame interpretive understandings of bodies in sporting contexts. For example, the disciplined body (Phoenix, Faulkner and Sparkes, 2005; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007; Sparkes, 2004; Stewart, Smith and Sparkes, 2011) and the mirroring body (Potter, 2008).

Bodies, narrative and stories

Frank's (1995, 2010) work does much to acknowledge the inherent and reciprocal link between the body, self, identity and narrative. He explains that bodies tell stories and, in turn, stories give us access to bodies, selves and identities (2000). However, stories are not freely constructed, they are framed by cultural narratives (Frank, 1995). Similarly, Somers (1994) refers to public or *meta-narratives* that shape individuals' construction of selves, identities and biography. Thus, cultural ideas or *narratives* of what it is to be healthy or female or an athlete, for example, frame individuals' ideas and subsequent stories about who they are and what their bodies should be.

Frank (2000) draws distinctions between *narratives* and *stories*. Although these terms are often used interchangeably throughout the literature, they have distinct and separate meanings. People do not tell narratives, they tell stories (Frank, 2000). Narrative is the internal structure that is inherently needed for storytellers to create and retell a story.

A narrative type is the most general storyline that can be recognized underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories. People tell their stories by adapting and combining narrative types that cultures make available.
(Frank, 1995, p.75)

Storytellers may not be aware that narrative structures exist, but they are evident in all stories. For example, Frank's (1995) analysis of illness stories proposes that ill people construct a sense of self, use and understand their bodies through three different narratives - restitution narratives (return to health), chaos narratives (no hope, never returning to health) or quest narratives (seeking a cure or an alternative life). Each of these narrative types contains a general plot, although the stories and experiences of the individuals who live a particular narrative might be very different from one another. Similarly, Ezzy's (2000) study of unemployed people concluded that two types of narrative emerged from participants' stories - heroic and tragic job loss narratives. He argued that these narratives

allow people to understand their unemployment, the impact it had on their sense of self and the future action they may take. Indeed, many commentators, across various disciplines, take seriously the notion that people structure and make sense of their lives through *stories* or *narratives*⁷. Kerby's (1991) psychological investigation of the self and identity, views the body as a corporeal entity which enables the *speaking-feeling* embodied subject to project a sense of self through language, specifically narrative constructions and stories. In reviewing his work, Eakin (1999, p.21 original emphasis) states 'self-narration is the act of the human subject, an act which is not only "description of the self" but "*fundamental to the emergence and reality of that subject*". Put simply, 'we make sense of our life experiences by telling stories that explain and justify them' (Richardson, 2000, p.4). Sacks' (1993) afterword of his book *A Leg To Stand On* exemplifies this. He tells his story of the aftermath of a tragic injury he incurred whilst hiking, in which he experiences alienation from his injured leg. In his disabled, impaired state of being, he reveal how he made sense of who he was during the early stages of his injury and through the writing of his story, he makes sense of his own self following this experience.

In addition to acknowledging the role of narratives in the construction and understanding of the self, commentators on embodiment recognise they are instrumental in the construction and portrayal of *identities*. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992, p.106) state 'personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities are fashioned'. Frank (1995) suggests stories are told *by* bodies *for* bodies. Thus, narratives are not just *told*, they are also *performed* and reflexively referred to in the construction of selves and identities (Frank, 2012; Giddens, 1991). Individuals draw upon (body) narratives as a resource to inform their own, future

⁷ For examples see the work of Atkins, 2004; Bruner, 1990; Crossley, 2000; Frank, 1995; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000a, 2000b; Kerby, 1991; Mishler, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1995, 1988; Richardson, 1990, 2000; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Sacks 1990, 1993; Somers, 1994; Taylor, 2005.

narratives and identities. Bodies 'are realised - not just represented and created - in the stories they tell. This realisation can and should be reflexive; by telling certain stories, ethical choices are made; the choices in turn generate stories' (Frank 1995, p.520). Adding to this point, Atkins (2004) notes that our understanding of who we are takes a narrative form, selves and identities are structured through the narratives that are made available to us. Thus, 'our lives are storied and identities [we] are narratively constructed' (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.5).

Narrative inquiry in sport, exercise and health

Narrative inquiry is still relatively new in sport research. Yet some scholars recognise that it has a lot to offer those studying the body in sport and exercise contexts (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b) and increasing numbers of narrative studies in sport and exercise are emerging (e.g., Carless and Sparkes, 2008; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2005; Sparkes, 1996, 1999, 2004; Sparkes and Smith, 2002, 2003; Tsang, 2000). Collectively, narrative inquiry presents a particular set of philosophical assumptions which are crucial to the aim and underlying objectives of this research. First, it takes seriously the notion of the sporting person as a lived, corporeal, socially constructed *body* (Frank, 1995; Freeman, 2003; Smith, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b; Sparkes, 2005). Narratives allow us to come to know bodies (our own and others), through the stories they tell. In listening to the stories that are told through and out-fold from the body, we might not only understand the life of a person, but also the social practices, interactions and the body as a *felt*, or embodied experience (Frank, 1995; Sparkes, 2009a). Therefore, narrative inquiry takes seriously phenomenological, embodied ways of knowing and understanding through storytelling (Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes and Smith, 2012). Thus,

paying attention to trampoline-gymnasts' stories is likely to reveal insights into how they (re)construct and experience their bodies.

Second, narrative inquiry has the potential to provide the meanings and understandings people attribute to their sporting lives in and through time (Phoenix, Smith and Sparkes, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). In storytelling acts, individuals recall past and/or contemporary events and feelings, illuminating both personal and social experiences in sport⁸. This has illuminated athletes' experiences of injury, depression, illness and burnout, and how (a lack of) involvement in sport, exercise and physical activity brings a sense of meaning to the lives of some athletes (e.g., Sparkes, 1996; Sparkes and Smith 2002). Narratives 'can reveal a great deal about individual and group lived experiences, including emotions, feelings, sense of health and motivations as they change through time' (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, p.6). In doing so, narratives also provide an insight into the (re)construction of selves and identities (Riessman and Quinney, 2005) which are played out through the body in habitual ways, in relation to others and in relation to specific contexts when in the flow of social interaction (Frank, 1995; Goffman, 1990a, 2005; Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). Sporting individuals' past, present and future selves have been located in their storytelling (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007). Such benefits add to the rationale for taking a narrative approach in this research.

Third, narrative inquiry focuses upon relationships and/or the social interactions between individuals that shape, enable and constrain lives (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). It moves away from scientific objectivity, for in the process of coming to understand and know people, the researcher is impelled into storytelling relations with participants (Frank,

⁸ Riessman (1993, 2008) argues that narratives are both personal and social. Personal narratives are constituted in and through available socio-cultural, or meta, narratives. Socio-cultural life speaks through individuals' stories. Therefore stories might be viewed as socio-cultural 'artefacts', telling us as much about society and culture, as they do about a person and/or groups of people.

2004; Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007). Therefore, narrative inquiry promotes a dyadic research process between researcher and participant(s), in which both parties co-construct the story or stories told and which of them are acknowledged and re-told (Riessman and Quinney, 2005). Frank (2000) refers to 'narrative morality', a dedication to telling stories that might not otherwise be heard. Thus, narrative inquiry is likely to offer insights into gymnasts' social relationships with coaches, other gymnasts and their parents for example, and provide their storied experiences of being in this trampoline group, both key objectives within this research.

Finally, against the backdrop of the 'crisis of representation'⁹, narrative research explicitly foregrounds issues of writing and representation (Bochner, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2002b). Communication is at the heart of all research, how we write is a theoretical and moral issue (Frank, 2000). Narrative inquiry moves away from monolithic reporting of research findings, toward pluralism and multiple forms of representation, such as confessional tales, creative (non)fiction and realist tales (Sparkes, 2002b). The philosophical assumptions of narrative inquiry support these representational forms and, when done well, they add to the field of sport and exercise (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). Moreover, numerous studies in sport have demonstrated that athletes draw from only a *small* number of available narratives to frame their lived experiences; demonstrating the limited access sports people have to varied narratives to inform their present and future selves (e.g., Phoenix and Sparkes, 2006, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2005, 2007, 2009b). Thus, narrative forms of inquiry have the potential to expand people's understanding of who they and others are, and the repertoire of who they might become through the

⁹ In response to a paradigmatic shift in the mid-90s, questions concerning the ways in which we write about "the other" have been raised and framed in what is termed as "the crisis of representation" (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000; Sparkes, 1995, 2002b). That is to say, there is an increasing concern about how authors write themselves in and out of their texts. This is still a concern in contemporary qualitative research.

facilitation of multiplying and disseminating further narrative resources to inform their past, present and future sense-making (Frank, 2007; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007).

The philosophical assumptions that guide narrative inquiry form a rationale for the use of a narrative approach in this research. From this review, a narrative inquiry offers a way of understanding trampoline bodies, how they are (re)constructed over time and relation to others. It has revealed individuals' stories and voices in sport, and favours forms of representation that bring these voices forward. Ultimately taking a narrative approach will offer insight and rich accounts of trampoline-gymnasts' lives and meet the aim and objectives of this research.

Narrative perspectives

Narrative inquiry houses a number of varied perspectives. Smith and Sparkes (2008) present and discuss a continuum of narrative perspectives that have been used in qualitative research - the psychosocial, the inter-subjective, the storied resource, the dialogic and the performative (see Figure 2). The initial narrative perspectives emphasise the personal nature of storied narratives, whereas the latter emphasise the relational and social nature of narrative. They stress that these perspectives are not fixed, nor is one better than the other, but they should be viewed as a fluid set of analytical lenses that, when tweaked, provide various forms of analysis. However, Smith and Sparkes (2008) do acknowledge that some key contributors to narrative research might exemplify specific types of narrative perspective better than others. Although in the natural temporal and historical development in individual thinking it is likely that authors shift and modify their thinking as they explore their interests and undergo theorising processes.

| <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> ← Personal /Individual Social/Relational → </div> | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Psychosocial | Inter-subjective | Storied resource | Dialogic | Performative |
| <p>View life stories as constructed through phenomenological experiences of the individual.</p> <p>Selves and identities are long-term projects, situated in the person (their past, present and imagined future) rather than social interactions.</p> <p>Realist assumptions.</p> | <p>View narrative as both equally personal and relational; culture informs selves and identities to an extent.</p> <p>Individuals reflexively draw upon cultural narratives selectively to inform their selves and identities.</p> | <p>Narrative selves and identities are socio-cultural phenomena; but are personalised by the individual.</p> <p>Through culturally available narratives people construct their lives and the lives of others; they are enacted.</p> <p>Narrative selves and identities are conferred, actively claimed and contested.</p> | <p>Society and culture are infolded into the embodied narratives of individuals; which are out-folded onto other bodies, <i>through words or voices</i>.</p> <p>Selves and identities are constructed and enacted within human interactions.</p> | <p>Selves and identities are storied <i>actions</i>, constructed within social and relational places.</p> <p>Emphasis is placed both on speech, conversation, words <i>and</i> performed constructions of self and identity.</p> |
| <p><u>Example(s):</u> Crossley (2000, 2003) McAdams (2005) Smith (1996)</p> | <p><u>Example(s):</u> Bruner (1990) Ezzy (1998)</p> | <p><u>Example(s):</u> Atkins (2004) Taylor & Littleton (2006) Taylor (2005)</p> | <p><u>Example(s):</u> Bakhtin (1986) Frank (2005) Shotter (2003, 2005)</p> | <p><u>Example(s):</u> Gergen (1994) Mishler (1999) Riessman (2003)</p> |

Figure 2. A summary of Smith and Sparkes' (2008) continuum of narrative perspectives in qualitative research.

From the literature reviewed, particularly Frank's and Goffman's theorisations of the *socially constructed* body, this research will draw upon the more social, relational narrative perspectives on this continuum. That is, storied resource, dialogic and performative perspectives, rather than psychosocial and intersubjective perspectives. These perspectives highlight the idea of embodiment and narrative as a socio-cultural phenomenon worthy of study (Smith and Sparkes, 2008).

Storied resource perspectives suggest individuals are 'shaped by a matrix of *cumulative narrative resources* or what might be termed, *webs of relationality*' (Smith and

Sparkes, 2008, p.16 original emphasis). Taking this perspective, Riessman (2003) argues that individuals are immersed in a culture that speaks through people's stories and bodies. Moreover public or meta-narratives (culturally available narratives) shape individuals' construction of selves, identities and biography (Somers, 1994). It is important to note that whilst individuals might choose to draw upon particular meta-narratives, they can also be imposed upon them. Gender, for example, is one such meta-narrative (Crolley and Teso, 2007). Narratives and lived stories are not natural phenomena, nor do they materialise from the minds of individuals. They are drawn from a limited repertoire of available resources that are 'social and interpersonal' (Somers, 1994, p.618). This repertoire is 'attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to inter-subjective networks of institutions, however local or grand' (p.618). Within these constraints, individuals personalise and edit their narrative and exercise some agency over the stories they tell and enact. Thus, storied resource perspectives suggest that whilst narratives are personal, they are constructed by and enacted within socio-cultural conventions (Atkins, 2004; Somers, 1994; Taylor, 2005). Furthermore, selves and identities are conferred, actively claimed and contested within narrative (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). Therefore narrative researchers might focus upon the types of identity work people do and the narrative resources that are drawn upon and integrated into individuals embodied selves, identities and biography (Taylor, 2005). Gubrium and Holstein (1998) note that there may be discrepancies between meta-narratives and the storied narratives of individuals, but these discrepancies signal the coming together of narrative, social structure(s) and storytellers, and are real and interesting challenges of undertaking this type of research.

Dialogic perspectives view relatedness and collective voices as precedent to individual accounts of dialogic selves and identities (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Frank's (1995) analysis of illness stories (discussed above) is an example of this narrative perspective, as is much of his work. He posits that the stories and words of individuals, which are both personal and relational, are central to dialogic perspectives (Frank, 2002). To 'become a self one must speak, and in speaking, one must use words that have been used by others, words that have come out of their talking bodies' (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.21). Thus, dialogic perspectives, much like storied resource perspectives view narrative selves and identities as constructed within social interaction, but the focus here is much more centred upon speech and dialogue within interactions.

Performative narrative perspectives view storied *actions* as equally important to dialogue within social interactions, therefore providing an extension of dialogic perspectives. Taking such an approach, Gergen (1994) argues that narratives are storied, conversational and performed constructions. In the act of telling, individuals are also performing an action within a social relationship. Moreover, social relationships require bodily actions and the accompaniment of various bodily adornments, objects and physical settings in order to make an individual intelligible and authentic. Therefore this perspective focuses on social, relational patterns of behaviour in comparison to dialogic perspectives.

Gendered bodies

As outlined in the section on 'trampoline bodies' in Chapter One, gender is on display in trampoline-gymnastics. Rules, regulations and strategies are gendered (e.g., BG 2009a, 2009b). Gender is readily displayed and played out on and through the body (Connell, 1987; Goffman, 1985), particularly in sport (Hargreaves, 1994) and therefore any study of embodiment is likely to reveal individuals' gendered identities. Feminist studies of gender have done much to bring the body, particularly the female body, into focus as a serious sociological concern (Howson, 2004; Shilling, 2003) and will form the basis of this section.

Early feminist thought first developed an embodied basis for gender inequalities, based upon sex differences in men and women ultimately taking a biological reductionist approach (Bartky, 1988; Howson, 2004; Oakley, 1972). Traditionally, patriarchal cultures reduced women's bodies to messy, uncontrolled, emotive, uncontained fleshy entities, in need of intervention or managing in accordance with the heterosexual designs of men. In contrast, men were often not deemed embodied at all, but instead mindful and rational; if they have bodies they are incidental and unproblematic. However, these dichotomous, biological reductionist depictions are unhelpful in understanding individuals' experiences of embodiment and the complex interplay of gender negotiation. Moreover, these perspectives risk reducing women to 'passive victims of patriarchal domination' (Hall, 1993, p.102).

The rise of 'second wave' feminism and its subsequent development formed the context for women to 'reclaim' their bodies from patriarchal control and provided an explicit focus of the embodied existence of women through the analysis and reworking of sex/gender, nature/culture and biology/society binaries which some popular and academic

thought posited between men and women (Shilling, 2003). This body of work understood gender as enacted in and through bodily performances or displays within social interactions (see the work of Butler and Connell, discussed below). Individuals' attempts to (re)fashion, (re)create and (re)construct a gendered sense of self through the body are socially constructed and understood. Oakley (1972) who first introduced the sex/gender debate into sociology argues that sex is biological, but gender is socially determined and culturally variable. It is expressed, performed and arranged in different ways on and through the body at different points in time and space. Developing this through the reworking of the biology/society debate, Connell (1983, p.71-72) states that 'gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine the social. It marks one of those points of transition where historical process supersedes biological evolution as the form of change' (original emphasis). These views do not deny the contribution of biological sex in the construction of gendered identities entirely, but instead argue that biological sex should be viewed alongside the influence of dominant cultural norms, sub-cultural influences and personal circumstances (Connell, 1987). That said, these key contributors posit that it is the socio-cultural meanings that are attributed to bodies, which dictate the acceptable ways to perceive and *perform* gendered selves as masculine or feminine. For instance, Connell (1987) argues that in *negating the body* (i.e. constructing and managing the body according to the social processes that categorise and attribute meaning to it) individuals undertake practices or performances to suppress bodily similarities between males and females in order to affirm a gendered identity. Often these suppressive acts are imposed upon them before they are capable of understanding these processes. Children are taught gendered behaviour from birth; they are assigned a gendered name, dressed in clothes associated with their biological sex (e.g., dresses for girls, trousers for boys) and later on given toys

indicative of their biological sex (e.g., Barbie for girls, Action Man for boys). Thus the body is a site for the construction, performance and display of gendered identities (i.e. masculinities and femininities¹⁰) which are socially constructed.

Connell's work on socially constructed bodies is particularly important in framing the gendered body in this research. Although acknowledging that gender is best thought as plural masculinities and femininities, Connell identifies dominant versions of masculinity and femininity that inform how people display or 'do' gender, termed *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasised femininity*. Hegemonic masculinity informs three key points surrounding the construction, practice and performance of gender. First, it emphasises heterosexuality and subordinates homosexuality. Second, masculinity is constructed and exists in relation to emphasised femininity which in turn can only be defined in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Thus, all gendered identities are judged and performed against these dominant forms of identity. Third, it privileges particular types of bodies, particularly the muscular male body.

Within this framework, Connell (1983, 1987) argues that the corporeal body is transformed by social practices, through the process of *transcendence*. In this process the body is an object of labour which is worked upon, often to construct corporeal differences between men and women, in addition to suppressing similarities. Men are influenced by the muscular, powerful body that is privileged in popular culture and might engage in muscle building exercises to construct what is perceived as a masculine body. In contrast, women are encouraged to focus on the comparatively passive decoration of their (ideally slim) bodies, through make-up, jewellery and engaging in less exertive exercise. Connell (1995) argues that 'cults of physicality' focus on the disciplined management of bodies and

¹⁰ The noted plurality of these terms is explained below in the discussion of Judith Butler's work.

their occupation of space. Specifically, the cultural emphasis on muscular masculinity influences boys'/men's use of space and interaction with others and 'to be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world' (Connell, 1995, p.57). Male bodies learn to occupy space in their childhood, sitting with their legs apart and taking larger strides when walking. In comparison, female bodies are expected to occupy less space; they cross their legs when sitting and take smaller strides in their walking patterns, even though their corporeal body may be capable of occupying more space than some male bodies. Thus physicality and the occupation of space are ways in which individuals perform embodied gendered practices.

In the interrelationship between negating the body and transcendence, embodiment can serve to justify, legitimise, reinforce and reproduce social inequalities (Connell, 1987). It symbolises the social power of men and reinforces domination and subordination of not only women, but also different groups of men. Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity are the prevailing privileged sets of cultural norms (or narratives) that shape individuals sense of self. Social meanings attached to the gendered body become internalised in ways that influence bodily action and our sense of self. Connell draws upon the example of throwing a ball to illustrate this. If a boy is unable to throw a ball 'like a man', and knows that he is unable, he must already understand what it is to throw a ball like a man *and* that his bodily action does not conform to the ideal masculine embodied action. Thus bodily action is indicative of gendered identity and individuals' gendered embodiment is informed and reinforced through the ways in which the body moves, gestures and uses space.

Hegemonic masculinity emphasises an analysis of privileged male bodies that occupy space through their physicality. However, the female body is rarely talked about in

any depth in Connell's analysis (Howson, 2004). It is an objectified, troubled body, a spectacle within popular culture, something to be observed by a male gaze, constructed in accordance with heterosexual male designs (Hill-Collins, 1990). Young (1990) provides a phenomenological analysis of the female body as being an object in a male gaze¹¹. She suggests there are two possible explanations for feminine modes of behaviour in women. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Young (1990) first suggests women are not born to be feminine, they are *taught* to be feminine in ways that emphasise control and containment. Thus femininity (a narrative) is socially constructed and mutually understood. Second, women are encouraged to become aware of themselves as objects of others' scrutiny, particularly male scrutiny, which acts as a discipline mechanism, encouraging docility. Awareness of a male gaze, especially in public, shapes how women move through and interact within these spaces. Therefore, in Young's (1990) analysis, the dominant female body narrative in Western culture (i.e. emphasised femininity in Connell's work) impinges upon the female body limiting its possible selves and identities to male designs.

Drawing upon feminist work on gender, Gergen (1994) argues that the distinctions between male and female bodies and their respective social constructions have serious implications for how we shape our material world through narrative and the stories we tell. She suggests cultural forms (e.g., children's stories, family histories, television and advertising etc.) provide narratives that are gendered, 'furnishing different structures of meaning for men and women' (p.74). Therefore the socio-cultural processes through which individuals construct their gendered selves and identities can be thought of as gendered narratives. These narratives are reciprocal in nature; individuals not only draw upon

¹¹ Although Young does not take an explicitly embodied approach, her analysis of the gendered body is still useful here.

cultural forms but perform gendered narratives that can be drawn upon by others. Thus, 'within the narrative forms by which we tell our stories of ourselves, these powerful gendered differences can make segregated selves¹² very "real"' (Gergen, 1994, p.73).

Judith Butler's (e.g., 1990, 1993) work is also important to the way in which gender has been studied and debated in social sciences. She moves away from a focus on distinct and dominant cultural narratives of masculinity and femininity and looks at the various possibilities of embodied masculinities and femininities that are performed. A feminist philosopher, Butler reworked the sex/gender distinction valued by sociologists. She argues that sex not only functions as a norm, a simple fact of static condition of the body, but as a regulatory practice that produces bodies, an ideal construct which is forcibly *materialised* over time. The process of materialisation is never complete; bodies never comply with the norms by which their materiality is impelled, they are instable entities of various possibilities. Gender then, is considered as performative acts, informed by (cultural) ideas, assumptions and stereotypes which are produced through performances of 'a stylised repetition of acts... bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self' and understood as natural over time (Butler, 1990, p.140). It is the repetitive nature of these performances that creates a sense of gender as fixed and attached to the biological sex of the body. For Butler, gender and sex are not separate or distinguishable, but both are implicated in the other in a discursive cycle. This is exemplified in Butler's analysis of the cultural enforcement of sexuality through what she terms the 'heterosexual matrix' in which heterosexual gendered bodies are privileged by society.

¹² 'Segregated selves' is a term used to denote a dichotomous sense of being between two social groups, in this case men and women, as result of prevailing cultural narratives which are inescapable. We are exposed to these cultural narratives consistently and continually over-time through various social structures (e.g., family, media and education), thus creating a sense of distinction between males and females. See Gergen (2000) 'Gendered Narratives: Bodies under construction' for a more detailed discussion.

Butler's work is central to studies of women and gender more generally, it provides a way of understanding gender outside of sociological notions of sex and gender, but it has prompted considerable debate and criticism within academic communities, particularly in philosophy and sociology (Howson, 2004). Her work has been criticised for marginalising the study of embodied experience in gendered performances. Shilling (2003, p.181), for example, argues that Butler's reworking of the sex/gender debate, 'ultimately results in a loss of the fleshy physicality of our embodied being'. Butler (1993, p.29) herself admits that in seeking to consider the materiality of bodies within various domains, she 'kept losing track of the subject'. Thus her work, much like Turner and Foucault, establishes theorisations of the governmental management of bodies, and says little about the embodied experiences of the individual (Shilling, 2003).

Feminist works on gender have provided an embodied focus on the subject, albeit through differing approaches. In doing so, many of them have referenced Foucault's work on power and discipline to frame their various analyses (e.g., Bartky, 1988; Butler, 1993), therefore focusing on the macro-structural issues associated with gender. The focus of this research is not to examine gender exclusively, but the body - specifically the embodied experiences of trampoline-gymnasts which will undoubtedly be in some way gendered.

Studies of sport, exercise and physical activity have studied gendered embodiment in various ways. For example, through the deconstruction of the nature/culture binary (Cox and Thompson, 2000; Wesely, 2001); feminist perspectives (Markula, 2001; Theberge, 2003); and through the work of Goffman (Guérandel and Mennesson, 2007); Connell (Anderson, 1999); Foucault (Barker-Ruchti and Tinning, 2010; Markula, 2001); and Bourdieu (Mennesson, 2000). What is important here is not to acknowledge any particular analytical lens as being better than another, but that the gendered body is a serious

sociological concern within the context of sport. Therefore gender is likely to feature prominently in the analysis and discussion of findings in this research.

A summary of the theoretical perspective

This research will take a narrative approach informed primarily by the theoretical framing of Arthur Frank (1991, 1995). His work provides an extension of Erving Goffman's work which will also inform discussion of the research findings. Both key contributors take a symbolic interactionist approach viewing selves and identities as embodied. Embodiment is socially constructed and understood, but under the control and management of relatively autonomous individuals, and is therefore individually experienced. Thus selves and identities are performed on and through the body. Frank (1995, 2010) recognises that individuals come to understand their lives and others through narrative, the subtle underlying structure of stories. While Frank (2010) predominantly takes a dialogic narrative perspective, I also accept that narratives are performed (Gergen, 1994; Riessman, 2003) and aid social construction and understanding of bodies as storied resources (Atkins, 2004; Somers, 1994). Ultimately the theoretical assumptions that I have established thus far in this chapter provide a coherent set of epistemological tools that will inform the analysis and discussion of findings in this work.

Having reviewed and outlined the embodied narrative framing of this research, the remainder of this chapter will review the literature on bodies, selves, identity and narrative (or embodied narrative approaches) in sport, exercise and physical activity. I will also review how the gymnastic body has been studied in this work.

PART II

Sporting selves and identities

A growing number of researchers have commented on the complexity of sporting or athletic identities (e.g., Donnelly and Young, 1988; Grove, Lavalley and Gordon, 1997; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; Phoenix et al., 2005; Stevenson, 1990, 1999, 2002; Warriner and Lavalley, 2008). Often athletic identities are constructed at a young age and opportunities to engage with and construct other identities are passed up or missed completely. Thus these identities are deeply engrained into an individual's sense of self (Grove et al., 1997; Krane, Greenleaf and Snow, 1997).

Much of the research on sporting identities tends to focus on a particular point in the individual's athletic career. For example, identity construction and confirmation (Donnelly and Young, 1988; Stevenson, 1990) and retirement (Grove et al, 1997). Researchers have also commented on the complex nature of athletic identities when sporting individuals experience some form of crisis within their athletic career such as, injury (Sparkes and Smith, 2002; Wainwright, Williams and Turner, 2005), illness (Stewart et al., 2011), ageing (Phoenix et al., 2005) and gender negotiation (Guérandel and Mennesson, 2007; Sisjord and Kristiansen, 2009; Theberge, 2003; Wesely, 2001). However, the present study aims to explore the lives of trampoline-gymnasts, specifically how their bodies and identities are narratively constructed and maintained *over time*. Therefore research on individuals' sporting careers or aspects of them is essential to this research.

Before delving into a review of sport and identity, it is important to acknowledge that much of the work on individuals' sporting lives has been reflected in studies of subcultures, a position this work will *not* adopt. Subculture is a loaded term with explanatory power; it is a 'system by which groups demonstrate the ways they differ in

such things as language, values, religion, diet and style of life from the larger social world of which they are part' (Crosset and Beal, 1997, p.74 drawing upon the work of Yinger). Broadly, Gordon (1997, p.296) states subculture is 'a sub-division of a national culture'. Thus, Crosset and Beal (1997, p.82) argue that in its purest sense, a subcultural analysis should focus of 'on a structurally subordinate group and their response to their marginal position within broader culture'. They explain instead, some sporting groups such as bodybuilders and youth baseball teams could be more accurately thought of as 'subworlds' or *groups*, the study of which focuses on specific cultural processes which bring a group of people together. Similarly, Eckert (2006), drawing upon the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, refers to *communities of practice* as a collection of people who engage in a common endeavour over a prolonged basis. I cannot claim that this trampoline *group* constitutes a subculture in the purest sense; there is little about this group which would separate their practices and values from society. Even teenage rituals and language intended to exclude others are understood by society as attempts to assert independence and practice displays of gender. Instead I will adopt the idea of communities of practice. Using the term subculture to frame the analysis in this work is unhelpful to its aim and objectives, but studies using this framing bring important insights into the individuals' experiences and lives in sport.

Identity construction and confirmation in sport

The ways in which individuals become involved and stay in sport is important to this research. Donnelly and Young's (1988) ethnographic study of identity construction and confirmation explains how individuals must undergo specific career processes in order to belong to a specific group. Drawing upon Goffman's work (see above), they put forward a four stage model of career processes that individuals in their teens and early adulthood

undergo in order to construct an athletic identity. The first stage is *presocialisation*, the initial stage, in which the individual gathers information about the sporting subculture, either from direct or indirect contact with participants, family members, peers or media, but often with little or no participation in the sport or engagement with the subcultural group. Therefore the information gathered is often inaccurate.

The second stage is initiated when the individual becomes in direct contact with the group through *selection and recruitment*. An individual can actively seek out membership to a group or be recruited by an existing member. At this stage, an individual's life chances and circumstances (e.g., socio-economic background) will be considered, in terms of their available resources (e.g., time and money) to commit to the sport.

In the third stage, *socialisation* begins. Misconceptions of the group's norms and values formed in the presocialisation stage are realised and rectified due to the extended immersion in the group and its practices and values or what they call 'subcultural norms'. Donnelly and Young (1988, p.229) refer to an 'impression management' process, in much the same context as Goffman (1990a), by which new members begin to enact the norms and values or various roles of the group. They use the example of novice rock climbers who quickly learn to show an absence of fear and portray open enthusiasm and willingness to an opportunity to climb as impression management. Furthermore, they suggest that consistent deviation from subcultural norms and values may lead to ostracism. Although, 'rookie mistakes' or errors in performance are expected from new members and often this is due to what they call *anticipatory socialisation* - where new members attempt to make clear to the wider social audience their affiliation and belonging to the subcultural group. A rock climber, for example, might wear their climbing shoes away from rock climbing sites (e.g., a pub). Whilst this is not normative behaviour for climbers, these mistakes

establish the individual as part of the climbing subculture to the wider social audience. The process of socialisation is ongoing, continuing into individuals' sporting career, but overt displays of group identity become more subtle over time and serve to educate new members.

The final stage is *confirmation* or acceptance into the subcultural group. At this point, the individual has internalised and consistently performs the norms and values of the sporting group. They act in ways that are expected and accepted, thus building a reputation as a reliable and established member. In addition, Stevenson (1999) suggests individuals become embedded into the sporting groups at this point in their athletic career. They form *entanglements* - commitments, relationships, reputations and specific role-identities within that group. However Donnelly and Young (1988) reiterate that if the individual is unable to meet the requirements of their role, then they might face ostracism on a temporary or permanent basis.

The athlete-coach-parent relationship

The age of the gymnasts in this research will typically be younger than those in Donnelly and Young's (1988) study. British Gymnastics (2013) states 92.5% of its membership base are under the age of 16. Therefore it is necessary to consider the role of parents and other significant people (e.g., coaches) in the process of identity construction and confirmation.

Parents have been identified as significantly influential in shaping their children's identities and social roles within society (Sarup, 1996; Woodward, 2000). Parents are predominantly responsible for inscribing gendered identity and associated behaviours onto their children through body and identity work in their early years (Connell, 1987; Sarup, 1996), selecting names, clothes and toys that are associated with their biological sex.

In sport contexts, studies suggest parents tend to be largely responsible for decisions about the sporting activities their children become involved and stay in (Coakley and White, 1992; Stevenson, 1990). Stevenson's (1990, 1999) studies of athletic identity also acknowledge the importance of parents in the construction and maintenance of athletic identities. In his work, parents were found to be the main driving force behind athletes' continued involvement and development in sport, providing financial and emotional support for their children as they progressed through their sporting career. Specific types of support included providing transportation, funding for clothing, equipment, memberships to governing bodies and clubs, training and competition fees and aiding confirmation processes by reinforcing their child's reputation and identity through praise. Wuerth, Lee and Alfermann's (2004) study of parental involvement in youth sport extends some of these ideas. Their findings suggest that parents offered gendered forms of support; mothers tended to be the main source of praise and understanding, while fathers were more likely to give directive behaviours. However, ultimately the children in their study perceived little pressure from their parents, which is surprising given the accounts of over-zealous gymnastic parents. Although insightful to this research, Wuerth et al.'s (2004) study was produced through a quantitative design, offering little in-depth rich information parental behaviour and Stevenson's (1990) focus was on the experiences of athletes. Parents emerged as a significant part of this but they were not an exclusive focus. Much like Stevenson's work, the focus of this research is the athletes, or trampoline-gymnasts, but from the research discussed here, it is likely that parents are to feature prominently, including how they influence trampoline-gymnasts lives.

Salmela, Young and Kallio (2000) provide an extension of this work, suggesting that athletes, parents and *coaches* are significant to an athlete's sporting career, albeit at

different times and in different capacities. They argue athletes often begin with a casual introduction into the activity based on their parents' decision for them to be involved and then through socialisation processes specific to the sporting group they become integrated into the sport. In doing so, they become attached to their initial coach(es) who provide a basis for establishing norms, values and competencies and still rely heavily on their parents for financial and emotional support (as suggested by Stevenson, 1999). However, as the athlete progresses and develops, they may seek more accomplished and experienced coaches and become less reliant on their parents, certainly for emotional support.

Collectively, these studies highlight the significance of parents and coaches in children's sport, but they also raise questions about the level of autonomy children have in joining and continuing in a sporting group, and consequently the types of bodies and identities they construct and engage with. From these studies, parents and coaches are clearly central to the sporting lives of their children, but this research will explore how this is experienced by those in this trampoline group.

Maintaining sporting identities

Recent work in sport and exercise science has called for greater attention to the lived experiences of sporting bodies, particularly the sensory dimensions of sporting embodiments (Allen-Collinson, 2009). Increasingly, researchers have conducted phenomenologically orientated studies of sporting bodies in their everyday identity work, to better understand the lived body in dance (Potter, 2008), sailing and surfing (Dant and Wheaton, 2007), football (Breivik, 2008; Hemphill, 2005), middle distance runners, scuba divers (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2011) and outdoor activities (Allen-Collinson and Leledaki, 2015). These studies explore the proprioception and kinaesthesia of sporting performances, as well as individuals' sensory perceptions (stemming from soft and deep

tissues - skin, muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints etc.) central to their experiences of embodiment (Morley 2001; Paterson, 2007) such as sweating, burning, pain, heat and cold. Drawing upon, Merleau-Ponty's (2002) concept of reversibility, that is the idea that when bodies touch an object or another body they are simultaneously being touched, Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2011, p.337) state:

[a] sportsperson's touch is often an active, deliberate, highly specific and much practised one, combining pressure between sporting body, terrain and equipment, and sometimes other bodies...[Therefore] sportspeople touch, and are in turn touched by, the physical properties of the sporting environments they inhabit.

Accounts of these experiences, specifically the sensations encountered within them provide researchers with the lived, corporeal experiences of sporting embodiments.

Little work has focused on the lived body of (trampoline) gymnasts, therefore it is necessary to draw upon other phenomenological work that has explored the lived experiences of sporting bodies to understand the types of data this can produce and how this will be beneficial to this research. Allen-Collinson's work in particular has contributed significantly to phenomenological accounts of the lived body in sport, exercise and health. Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2011, p.336) conducted a 'felt phenomenology' of the sporting bodies of middle distance runners and scuba divers to better understand sporting embodiments within their everyday activities. They focused upon touch (of the physical setting, rather than inter-corporeal touch), specifically the haptic structures of temperature and pressure. For example, a diver in the study comments:

The pressure of the suit against you as you descend, as the water pressure increases, that can feel really quite uncomfortable...You get pinching at certain points and sometimes a general effect. You know when you get your blood pressure taken and the collar squeezes your arm, it's like that, but all over, as you descend
(Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2011, p.340)

In discussing the findings of their study, Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2011) argue that sporting bodies develop an embodied memory or *historical density* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), a capacity to perform specific actions almost automatically. Whilst these performances

might be practised with the hands or feet, often they are dependent upon *body auxiliaries* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), sport specific clothing or equipment such as diving boots, football boots or sailboards. Furthermore, sensory experiences occur within social, sporting spaces - 'the dive', 'the race', 'the training session' (p.341). These sporting spaces and sporting embodiments are co-dependent and co-produced, a reciprocal relationship that requires not only subcultural etiquettes and mutually understood body practices, but 'haptic knowing, often sport-specific, and necessary for skilful practice' (p.341). Thus, Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2011, 2013) recognise the importance of social space in the study of sporting embodiment. Therefore it is necessary to look at studies that have taken this specific focus.

Sporting bodies in social spaces

The exploration of social space in sport also illuminates the day-to-day identity work of the lived body. Drawing on the work of Van Ingen (2003) and Lefebvre (1991), Andrews, Sudwell and Sparkes (2005, p.878) call for 'greater attention to be paid to the social production of sport places and the social relations within sports places in terms...of struggle and identity'. Moving away from spatial studies in elite sports, Andrews et al. (2005) conducted an ethnographic study of bodybuilders (both recreational and sporting) in a gym setting. Their findings suggest that sporting spaces, such as the gym, are more than physical settings or containers of sporting (sub)cultures or *groups* (see above). Specific rules, etiquettes and activities within these spaces make these spaces complex social and cultural constructions in which sporting embodiments are co-dependent and co-produced. In their bodybuilding example, Andrews et al. (2005, p.888) state:

when a person visits the gym, they not only interact physically with the weights, they interact with (or at least are impacted upon and negotiate) the personalities in-situ, and their behaviours. Together with the physical facilities, these social dimensions constitute "the gym" ... Being a true member of Roy's Gym involves far more than a membership fee, it involves sweat, commitment and performance and adherence to both formal and informal codes of conduct. A person has to be of a certain size, strength and attitude, possess certain expertise and act in a certain way.

Although Andrews et al. (2005) do not directly refer to Goffman's work or Donnelly and Young's (1988) model of identity construction and confirmation through career processes, parallels can be drawn between their work and the embodied identity work of bodybuilders. For example, much like Donnelly and Young's (1988) fourth stage of identity confirmation, Andrews et al. (2005, p.888) talk of Roy's Gym as 'a highly cohesive but yet exclusionary place. Bodybuilding can clearly imprint a very clear social order on a place'. Similarly, acceptance, ostracism and hierarchies can occur based upon embodied characteristics, competencies and trust. For example, the primary researcher acknowledges that the way he looks and his knowledge of weight training, probably aided his initial acceptance at Roy's Gym. Furthermore as part of the socialisation process (as defined by Donnelly and Young, 1988), Andrews et al. (2005, p.877) suggest that 'the gym provides a narrative resource' for bodybuilders (see discussion on narrative perspectives above). The collective body culture on display means that individual body projects can be realised and developed. Ultimately, Andrews et al. (2005, p.877) argue that sporting spaces are sites of 'social conflicts, cohesions and hierarchies, illegal and potentially health harming activities, as well as personal comfort and therapeutic attachments...[the study of which] may help researchers move toward a more comprehensive understanding, and coverage, of health issues in society' and sporting subcultures. Thus this research will look to trampoline-gymnasts' use of space, drawing upon Goffman's ideas of front and back regions (see above), to explore their experiential cohesions, conflicts and hierarchies over time.

Little is known about the embodied lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts or the sporting spaces they occupy. An exception to this is Stewart et al.'s (2010) study of trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of the leotard. This study did not have an explicitly phenomenological or spatial focus, although elements of the lived, corporeal body are discussed. Thus the phenomenologically orientated approach outlined earlier in this chapter, coupled with a focus on how trampoline bodies occupy and use space to inform their identity work (Goffman, 1990a) will provide rich, detailed accounts of these sporting embodiments and how they negotiate their athletic identity throughout their everyday activities.

Disrupted body-selves in sport: Injury, ageing and retirement

Biographical disruption as a result of injury, illness, ageing and/or retirement helps us to understand lives as narrated. A number of narrative studies have focused on these points in athletes' lives¹³. For example, Sparkes and Smith's (2002, 2003) studies on spinal cord injuries in rugby players and Phoenix and Sparkes' (2006, 2007) studies of athletes ideas of ageing. Moreover Frank's (1991, 1995) typology has been used as a theoretical framing in some of the studies in this area providing examples of how his work might be used in sporting contexts (i.e. Stewart et al., 2011; Sparkes, 2004; Sparkes and Smith, 2002).

The types of illness and injury in these studies is of a serious and often life threatening nature, for example, spinal cord injuries (Sparkes and Smith, 2002, 2003) and cancer (Sparkes, 2004; Stewart, et al., 2011). Although this research will not deal with such serious conditions of human experience, less severe injuries and illnesses associated

¹³ Examples of this work include Allen-Collinson, 2005; Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2001; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; Phoenix et al., 2005; Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007; Sparkes, 1996, 1998a, 2004; Stewart et al. 2011; Warriner and Lavalley, 2008.

with playing or doing sport are likely to emerge (e.g., broken bones, sprains, allergies etc.). These types of bodily conditions and the subsequent pain associated with them are often normalised by sporting individuals (Pike, 2005; Pike and Maguire 2003), but few studies have focused on how this is *narratively* constructed and understood especially in gymnastic contexts. In her autoethnographic analysis, Allen-Collinson (2005) explores normalised knee pain in middle-long distance runners in a storied way drawing upon narrative structures (such as 'faith, hope and disappointment') to inform understandings of these experiences, although she never takes a narrative approach per se. This research will look to expand upon these ideas through the adoption of a narrative embodied approach (see above).

The work on ageing is perhaps more of a prominent issue for this research. Trampoline-gymnastics revolves around the maintenance of a youthful body, one that is in constant state of becoming an adult (Uprichard, 2008). Yet these bodies are ageing, becoming adolescents and eventually young adults. Drawing upon the work of Frank (1991), Phoenix and Sparkes (2007, pp.1-2) acknowledge that athletes,

inhabit and engage with the world via particular kinds of "high-performance" bodies that have certain characteristics...Their bodies are often extremely disciplined and shaped by various regimes and technologies designed to ensure corporeal control and predictable performance outcomes...Moreover, while the body is immediately relevant to the identity that any individual attempts to promote, it is to be expected that it will hold particular significance for the athlete whose self-identity is constructed and maintained around possessing an able, pain-free, physically fit and high-performing body.

However, the corporeal changes associated with ageing, and in the case of trampoline-gymnastics, puberty, are likely to initiate changes in sporting performance. Phoenix and Sparkes (2007, p.2) state ageing is 'likely to lead to an often unavoidable *decline* in sports performance over time, once an optimal age for a particular sport has been passed' (added emphasis). Similarly, the onset of puberty has been highlighted as a source of 'drop-out' in sport (Clarke and Gilroy, 1993; Coakley and White, 1992), but there has been little

exploration of athletes, or more specifically gymnasts, lived experiences of puberty. Thus studies of ageing and bodily changes lead to questions of what the optimal age is for the (trampoline) gymnastic body.

Phoenix and Sparkes (2007) use the concept of 'narrative mapping', outlined by Markus and Nurius (1986) and Pollner and Stein (1996), to explore how athletes who are approaching the pinnacle of their sporting career might use the narrative resources available to them (from older team mates) to construct ideas about possible selves they may become. Pollner and Stein (1996) argue that as individuals experience change, they look to others for information or their stories to form ideas about what possible future awaits them. In doing so, they utilise storied narratives to inform or map their ideas about the possibilities of what they might become (Markus and Nurius, 1986). In the process of mapping, athletes identify future selves that are favourable and undesirable. For example, Phoenix and Sparkes (2007) identified three narratives that were commonly available to young athletes - *the preferred self*, 'almost past it' (trying to maintain performance); *the reluctant self*, 'stepping aside' (leaving the sport or entering veteran sport); and *the feared self* 'hanging on' (remaining in the sport despite decline in performance and possible pain and injury). In identifying these narratives, they also draw upon phenomenological, storied data to illustrate ideas of pain experienced as a result of ageing and/or performance beyond the optimum age for the sport.

Little is known about the narratives that are available to trampoline-gymnasts as they reach the pinnacle of their sporting career, or indeed at any other point in their career. An exploration of the narratives trampoline-gymnasts draw upon to inform their future selves, at various points in their athletic career will provide an insight into the lived experiences of these young people. Furthermore, the 'aging process' and/or pinnacle point

of their career and subsequent consideration of retirement is likely to take place in the relatively early stages of the individual's life course, in comparison to other sporting subcultures. Therefore this research will attempt to identify the possible selves trampoline-gymnasts might look to construct following their retirement. That is not to say that experiences of retirement are a focus in this research, but the reasons as to why trampoline-gymnasts leave the sport are likely to be observed, as well as the selves and identities they choose to construct following their athletic career.

Gendered identities in sport

A growing area of work has also explored the negotiation of gendered and sporting identities in various sports. Sport has traditionally been, and arguably still continues to be, a male arena (Connell, 1987; Næss, 2001). However, trampoline-gymnastics is a predominantly a female sport (British Gymnastics, 2013a). Therefore, it is necessary to look at how the female body has been studied in sport. Much of the research in this area has commented on the female body within traditionally male activities and how women negotiate their gendered identity as they engage in these sports. For example, girls in ice hockey (Theberge, 2003), women in Judo (Guérandel and Mennesson, 2007) and women in bodybuilding (Wesely, 2001). In these sporting contexts, the bodies of these girls and women are deemed something other than female due to the aggressive, combat and/or bodily constructions associated with the sporting subculture or group. However, more relevant to this research is the literature surrounding the female body in the fitness industry (Markula, 2001) and ballet (Adair, 1993). These studies use Foucault's work to inform their feminist analysis of these female bodies which observe images of the ideal female body, internalise them and seek to become them. In Markula's (2001) work these images are of the idealised female body in Western culture, specifically in fitness magazines. In

Adair's (1993) study it is the image of the prima ballerina that is idealised. Despite the theoretical frameworks used in these studies there are overtones of Giddens' (1991) and Shilling's (2003) work on bodies as projects and Frank's (1991, 1995) mirroring body. However, in seeking to become the ideal, the women participating in these activities display body dissatisfaction, anxiety and low self-esteem. In addition, Adair's (1993) study identified behaviours that impinged upon the immediate and long-term health of the dancers (e.g., eating disorders, unhealthy eating patterns and prolonged ignorance of injuries). These studies lead to questions about the types of behaviour (female) trampoline bodies perform as they construct their body.

Although male gymnasts are in the minority within gymnastic disciplines (just 25%, BG, 2013a) they will still be present in this study. Studies that have commented on the gendered bodies of men have argued that sport, and the fitness industry more generally, has and continues to (re)produce masculine identities (Atkinson, 2007; Connell, 1987; Messner, 1989, 1990; Næss, 2001). However, more recently some studies have sought to comment on the male body in traditionally female sports and how they negotiate their gendered identity as they become involved and stay in these sports such as netball (Tagg, 2008) and rhythmic gymnastics (Chimot and Louveau, 2010; Kamberidou, Tsopani, Dallas, Patsantaras, 2009). The male netballers in Tagg's (2008) study struggle to negotiate their masculine identity; often their sexuality is questioned and some experienced physical altercations between heterosexual and homosexual players. However, Tagg (2008) argues that this sporting context has become a progressive space in which these tensions can be challenged. Such reports raise questions about male trampoline-gymnasts experiences.

Collectively these studies present questions about the different ways in which *male* and female trampoline-gymnasts might experience their bodies. We know very little about

trampoline-gymnasts and the experiences of their lived bodies. Instead this review drew upon the literature on the gymnastic body more generally to see how it has been studied and what behaviours and experiences have been reported.

The gymnastic body

As indicated at various points in this chapter, we know very little about trampoline bodies and the lived experiences of these gymnasts. Despite the various disciplines that are now incorporated into gymnastics (i.e. artistic, rhythmic, trampoline, double mini-trampoline, tumbling, acrobatic and aerobic) there is an underlying commonality in the body associated within *all* gymnastic disciplines allowing some insight into the types of bodies and experiences that might emerge in this work.

Aesthetic sports (e.g., dance, diving, ice skating, gymnastics) determine the merit of a performer by the aesthetic *appearance* and movement of the body during a performance (Abbott and Barber, 2011; De Bruin, et al., 2007). The gymnastic body is one that is preoccupied with leanness, thinness and aesthetics (Borgen and Corbin, 1987; Harris and Greco, 1990; Thompson and Sherman, 2010). Under its various guises¹⁴ BG has emphasised the need for this lean, thin gymnastic body over a long period of time. For example, in the *British Amateur Gymnastics Association: Women's Gymnastics Manual* (Still, 1990), a chapter addressing 'diet and nutrition' argues that there are four main reasons as to why a gymnast should achieve this ideal, thin, lean body. First, to aid the prevention of injuries as 'extra fat weight of the body can cause injury to the joints on take-off and landing on apparatus' (p.30). Second, achieving this body aids flexibility, 'the more fat on the body, the less flexibility there is at a joint' (p.30). Third, 'a lithe body is aesthetically

¹⁴ As the governing body has evolved so too have the disciplines it has adopted and removed. The names it has taken have also changed to reflect its dynamic coverage.

more pleasing than one carrying fat' (p.31). And finally, a gymnast with this body can withstand more training and attain a greater level of skill, as 'a light-framed person can handle more repetitions than a heavy-framed one thus increasing the possibility of learning skills' (p.31).

More recently, in a trampoline specific resource pack for coaches, BG (2007) stated that as part of the talent selection process (which should take place at the age of 6-8 years old in females and 7-9 years old in males) coaches should consider the gymnast's body proportions. 'Good body proportions' are listed as 'lean, small and muscular' (p.6). In addition these young participants should be seen to learn 'basic movement and skills more quickly than their peers, [have] excellent balance and coordination, a degree of flexibility and strength...[and] desire to train harder and longer than their peers' (p.6). In addition to body proportions potential gymnasts must fulfil five further criteria. First, a 'natural talent assessment' considering the ideal morphological and anthropometric measurements (e.g., height, hip width, weight). Second, 'performance assessments' should be conducted to determine a gymnast's technical ability and success in competition. Third, a gymnast should have a 'psychological profile' consisting of 'high self-esteem, high self-confidence, control over anxiety, strong motivation to achieve success, willingness to work hard with commitment, [and low] levels of fear' (p.7). Fourth, the coach should assess the gymnast's personal situation, in terms of parental support and availability for and access to training - a processes outlined in Donnelly and Young's (1988) process of selection and recruitment. Finally, coaches should make an overall 'subjective evaluation' considering 'variables such as: desire, determination, commitment, concentration, aesthetic appearance etc.' (p.7) to make a final decision about a gymnast's selection into the sport.

With such a high demand for this ideal gymnastic body, at such a young age, it is unsurprising that the literature that has examined the gymnastic body has reported various conditions of crisis, for example acute and long-term injuries, retirement, eating disorders, weight control behaviours, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and anxiety (De Bruin et al., 2007; De Bruin et al., 2009; Kerr, 2015). Collectively this work has highlighted various questions and problems surrounding gymnasts' health and well-being, but the majority of this work is psychological and quantitative in nature (e.g., De Bruin et al., 2007; De Bruin et al., 2009; Rosen and Hough, 1988). It tends to lack the embodied, narrative approach demonstrated by other previously outlined work in sport, exercise and health. Although there has been a move toward a socio-cultural understanding of the gymnastic body, these studies tend to focus on the experiences of elite artistic gymnasts' experiences of retirement. Thus, this review will draw upon media reports, (auto)biographical accounts and academic studies to build a picture of how the gymnastic body has been portrayed and studied.

The gymnastic body in crisis

In the early to mid-nineties mass media attention was drawn to gymnastics following a number of disturbing reports of gymnastic practices and norms (Krane et al., 1997). Much of this coverage coincided with the release of *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes* written by investigative journalist Joan Ryan (1996) who examined the lives of elite gymnasts and ice skaters in the 1980s. At this time various media reported incidences of eating disorders, crippling injuries, abusive coaches and deaths in the sport (Bell, 1996; Boodman 1996; Gregory, 1996; Hersh, 1995; Kastor 1996; Sherwood and Palmer, 1996). Although the frequency of these reports heightened significantly following the release of Ryan's book, this type of reporting started in the early nineties (Hersh, 1992a, 1992b;

Noden, 1994; Press, 1992). Despite the slowdown in coverage, former American gymnast Jennifer Sey (2008) has recently published her experiences of gymnastics in her book *'Chalked Up: Inside Elite Gymnastics, Merciless Coaching, Overzealous Parents, Eating Disorders and Elusive Olympic Dreams'*, providing an indication that there has been little change in the sport. Further interpretations of gymnastic practices can also be made from the Nadia Comaneci's (2004) book *'Letters to a Young Gymnast'*. The content of these media articles and autobiographical accounts provides insightful personal perspectives of (elite) gymnasts which tend to evade empirical/academic work in this area due to the dominance of quantitative methodologies used. Thus, these sources highlight the public interest in the gymnastic body, gymnasts' stories and reveal behaviours and experiences which are likely to be evident in trampoline-gymnasts' stories.

Disordered eating and weight-control behaviours

Numerous survey-based studies have commented on the high frequency of disordered eating and weight-control behaviours in gymnasts, which are proportionally higher when compared to incidences in the general population, those who take part in sport, and those who take part in other aesthetic sports (De Bruin, Bakker and Oudejans, 2009; Haase, Prapavessis and Owens, 2002; Heffner, Ogles, Gold, Marsden and Johnson, 2003; Krentz and Warschburger, 2011; Smolak, Murnen and Ruble, 2000; Sundgot-Borgen and Torstveit, 2004)¹⁵. Harris and Greco (1990) suggest that this is due to the unique sport-related pressures that gymnasts experience to conform to an ideal body size and shape. The ideal body in competitive aesthetic sports is especially lean, and in the case of gymnastics prepubescent; and therefore gymnasts experience dissatisfaction when they perceive a

¹⁵ Also Berry and Howe, 2000; Black and Burckes-Miller, 1991; Harris and Greco, 1990; Hausenblas and Carron, 1999; Sherman and Thompson, 2006;

discrepancy between their own body shape and the perceived ideal body for best performance (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011).

To be clear, much of this literature does not explicitly refer to clinical eating disorders (e.g., anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa) but a spectrum of behaviours. Various terms are used throughout the literature (i.e. disordered eating, weight-control behaviours, eating disorders), but this material focuses on:

a wide spectrum of harmful and often ineffective eating behaviours used in attempts to lose weight or achieve a lean appearance. The spectrum of behaviours ranges in severity from restricted food intake to bingeing and purging.

(Otis, Drinkwater, Johnson, Leucks and Gilmore, 1997, p.i)

Other examples of weight-control behaviours include dieting, self-induced vomiting, taking diet pills, fasting (Rosen and Hough, 1988) and excessive exercise (Petrie, 1993). For the purpose of this thesis this spectrum of behaviours will be referred to weight-control behaviours.

Body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and anxiety

Numerous studies have linked weight-control behaviours to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and anxiety in athletes, particularly in those who participate in aesthetic sports (Berry and Howe, 2000; Davis, 1990; Haase et al., 2002; Krentz and Warschburger, 2011; Sundgot-Borgen, 1994; Triggerman, 2000). Despite the identification of the high frequency of these psychological conditions in gymnasts, there is little commentary in the literature to indicate *why* this is the case. Much of the work in this area derives from psychological and medical disciplines that have used quantitative research designs (questionnaires and surveys) which, whilst useful in identifying trends, leave the reader with the question of why and/or how these trends occur. In response to this, there have been increasing calls to move toward a socio-cultural framing to future studies on athletes' views of their body (De Bruin et al., 2007; Kerr et al., 2006; Krentz and Warschburger,

2011; Muscat and Long, 2008; Petrie and Greenleaf, 2007). Recommendations suggest the consideration of both societal and sport-specific pressures to be thin in order to better understand why and how aesthetic performers engage in weight-control behaviours and/or experience body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and anxiety.

Krentz and Warschburger (2011) used a (quantitative) socio-cultural model to examine disordered eating patterns and body dissatisfaction among athletes (including gymnasts) and non-athletes. They concluded that multiple types of body dissatisfaction should be acknowledged in future studies in this area – general dissatisfaction and sport-specific dissatisfaction. Ultimately, the ideal sport-specific body needs to be considered when assessing individuals' (dis)satisfaction with their body, rather than the conventional use of the term which has not been adapted for athletes (also suggested by Petrie and Greenleaf, 2007). Triggerman's (2000) study of body dissatisfaction within various social interactions supports Krentz and Warschburger's (2011) call for sport-related body dissatisfaction. He argues that body (dis)satisfaction varies and is determined by the situation and setting the individual finds themselves in. Similarly, Russell (2004) found that female rugby players, cricketers and netballers can identify two ideal body types - an ideal performing body and an ideal social body. However, despite the developments made by Krentz and Warschburger's (2011) socio-cultural approach, their study produced the same limitations as much of the previous work in this area. That is, using quantitative methods such as questionnaires and surveys which yield patterns and trends rather than explanations or illustrations of lived experience. Much of the research in this area has an absence of social theory; although social-cultural dynamics are discussed, psychological frameworks are applied. For example, De Bruin et al. (2009) used achievement goal theory to explain weight-control behaviours in aesthetic sports. Further, the participants in these

studies were often elite and/or college female athletes from multiple aesthetic sports. Therefore we tend to gain an overview of these issues across a sport type (e.g., non-athletes, aesthetic sports etc.) rather than the experiences of individuals in one particular sport. Some researchers have acknowledged that there are variations between different aesthetic sports and consequently they recommend that further research should focus on one rather than multiple sports (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011; Petrie, 1993; Sundgot-Borgen and Torstveit, 2010; Warriner and Lavalley, 2008). The focus on elite or college sport has created an absence of literature exploring these issues at lower competitive levels, in younger populations, when these behaviours might begin (as suggested by Thompson and Smolak, 2003), and in male participants.

Gymnasts' experiences of retirement

Although gymnasts' experiences of retirement are not within the parameters of this research, their ideas of retirement are important to the latter stages of athletic career which will be explored as part of this research. Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000), Lavalley and Robinson (2007) and Warriner and Lavalley (2008) have produced studies of elite female gymnasts *embodied* experiences of retirement using qualitative research methods (i.e. semi-structured and in-depth interviews). Collectively these studies acknowledge that a gymnast's career is likely to occur at a young age, when individuals normally construct ideas about who they are in relation to the world. Consequently, a gymnast's embodied self-identity is so deeply embedded, from such a young age, they have difficulty adjusting to life outside of gymnastics.

Taking a phenomenological interpretive approach, both Lavalley and Robinson (2007) and Warriner and Lavalley (2008) conducted retrospective, semi-structured interviews with retired elite gymnasts. Their findings suggest that the bodies gymnasts

construct as part of their embodied identity became the source of distress when trying to engage with new (sporting) identities, especially for those who wanted to disassociate themselves from the sport entirely. Moreover, these studies found that if a gymnast's retirement coincides with the physiological adaptations that take place at the onset of puberty, this also caused distress. Ultimately their post-pubescent body did not reflect their gymnastic identity; it didn't feel like a gymnast's body anymore, they felt lost, disorientated and disconnected to the world.

Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) do not refer directly to narratives in their study of retirement experiences of elite, female gymnasts, but they present two 'phases of retirement' (p.115), which might be viewed as two narratives which are common to retiring gymnasts. The first phase is 'Nowhere Land', a time of disorientation and confusion about their identity. For example, one gymnast in the study commented 'I'm still very uncertain as to who I am, I still need to find myself without gymnastics' (p.123). The second phase identified was 'New Beginnings', a time when the gymnast had adjusted to life outside of gymnastics and had engaged with new identities (e.g., a university student, gymnastics coach). They acknowledge that the length of time in and between these transitions will vary significantly, but is also dependent upon the circumstances that led to retirement. Those who retire due to injury and illness for instance, often have greater difficulty in pursuing other identities.

Thus, embodied narrative approaches have emerged from studies of gymnasts' retirement, producing insightful lived accounts of experience. However, this work is limited to elite female artistic gymnasts and retirement, limitations this present study hopes to develop upon.

Male bodies in gymnastics

Throughout the literature on elements of gymnastic careers and gymnasts' experiences, there is a lack of commentary on the gendered body in gymnastics, and more specifically male bodies. Kamberidou et al. (2009) and Chimot and Louveau (2010) have produced studies on male rhythmic gymnasts and how they struggle to negotiate their gendered identities in different spaces (sporting and non-sporting), taking an embodied approach. Both studies comment that rhythmic gymnastics has been historically depicted as a sport that is unacceptable for male participation, despite an increasing number of boys and men who are now participating.

Chimot and Louveau's (2010) empirical study of the construction and negotiation of a masculine identity in boys who participate in rhythmic gymnastics is one of the few social studies of male bodies in gymnastics. They conducted interviews with five male rhythmic gymnasts, aged 10-23 years old, in France. Their findings suggest that these gymnasts had to negotiate conflicting masculine and gymnastic identities, often to satisfy their family (particularly their father) and their peers. Often they used other sports, perceived as more masculine, as a vehicle to do this. One gymnast in the study commented 'My father doesn't like rhythmic gymnastics. He prefers basketball, volleyball and sports like that. He only lets me do rhythmic gymnastics because I play other sports like football, wrestling etc.' (Adrian, aged 13, p.441). Yet, despite their attempts to construct a masculine, sporting identity, the boys reported verbal bullying around their sexuality and even physical altercations all due to their participation in rhythmic gymnastics. Some attempted to portray traditional connotations of masculinity through engagement in other sports and/or identification with masculine body cultures (i.e. bodybuilding), but others retired from rhythmic gymnastics altogether due to the conflicting nature of their masculine

and sporting identities. Chimot and Louveau's (2010) study raises questions about the experiences of boys and men in the wider gymnastics subculture, and more specifically to this research, the gendered identities of male trampoline-gymnasts and how they are experienced and negotiated over time.

Outlining the research problem

This review has revealed three significant gaps in the literature. First, many of the studies that have commented on sporting bodies have focused on a transitory aspect of an individual's sporting career. For example, identity construction, negotiation or maintaining a sporting identity, injury, illness and/or retirement. Few studies have looked at sporting careers as a whole and the complex interplay between group members over time, although some studies have done more to acknowledge this interplay than others (e.g., Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007; Stevenson, 2002). This research will provide an overall picture of the sporting careers of trampoline-gymnasts, from presocialisation (as defined by Donnelly and Young, 1988) to retirement. That said, experiences of retirement are not within the scope of this research.

Second, the trampoline body has received very little sociological attention. Much of the literature on gymnasts has a psychological focus, often using quantitative methods, that tells very little about their lived experiences. Those studies that have used a socio-cultural approach and/or qualitative methods have used retrospective accounts of gymnasts' experiences, rather than observing their experiences and/or conducting in-depth interviews over time and in context. In contrast, this research will look to use an ethnographic research design to better understand the lived experiences of individuals who participate in trampoline-gymnastics.

Third, the participants in previous studies do not represent the gymnastic population in the UK. Often they are female, elite and/or college gymnasts in their late teens and early twenties who form only a small number of those who take part in and compete in gymnastics. The experiences of lower level competitive gymnasts, who are often children or adolescents *and* male gymnasts at all levels, have not been given attention thus far. Moreover, trampoline-gymnasts are scarcely mentioned at all in the literature. The gymnastic bodies are from artistic or rhythmic gymnastics. It is important to explore the experiences and stories of trampoline-gymnasts, particularly those that compete at lower levels of competition. We cannot assume that they are the same as elite artistic or rhythmic gymnasts and given the serious health and well-being concerns reported in these disciplines at elite level we should look to see if this is occurring elsewhere.

The gaps in the literature lead to a number of questions which this research will address. How do trampoline-gymnasts narratively construct their embodied identities? How are these identities confirmed by the trampoline group and the trampoline community? How are these identities (re)constructed and (re)negotiated over time? What narrative resources are available within this group and the trampoline community? How do narratives aid and influence career processes? Do trampoline-gymnasts experience similar forms of crisis to other gymnasts and/or those in aesthetic sports? What are the experiences of male trampoline-gymnasts? Do they echo the same experiences of male gymnasts from other gymnastic disciplines?

The overarching aim of this research is to explore the embodied lives of trampoline-gymnasts in one trampoline club. Within the context of this review, the underlying objectives associated with this aim are to a) understand how trampoline-gymnasts (re)construct and perform their embodied identity over their career, b) form ideas of how

relationships with others (e.g., coaches and parents) support these constructions, c) explore the consequences of constructing a trampoline body, d) explore how gymnasts' stories are narratively constructed and understood, and e) bring forward trampoline-gymnasts' voices and lived experiences. The embodied narrative approach outlined earlier in this chapter will inform the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of this research yielding intricate, rich, detailed accounts of trampoline-gymnasts' lives.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section reviews qualitative research, what it is, and how it has come to be 'accepted' in the contemporary social sciences research community as a legitimate way of doing research despite still facing some challenges (Lincoln, 2010). Within this discussion I will rationalise the use of a qualitative research design in this work and, drawing upon discussions of key paradigm debates, outline my ontological and epistemological stance in this work. This section concludes with a review of narrative inquiry, a relatively emergent form of qualitative inquiry in sport, exercise and physical activity research, and a justification as to why this approach was taken in this work. In some places this review will reiterate discussion of narrative from chapter two, but the work outlined here will be in much more of a methodological context.

The second section outlines the research procedures and processes undertaken. This will include descriptions of access and sampling procedures, methods of data collection, analysis and representation, a brief discussion on how this work might be judged and finally a description of the ethical procedures and processes undertaken.

This chapter is heavily supported by the recently published research guide *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health: From process to product* (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). This guide was drawn upon, more than others, because it was one of the most recent commentaries on qualitative research methods in sport and the authors' work is also sensitive to the narrative qualities associated with the present research.

Qualitative research

Gill (2011) explains that it is the nature of the research question that drives the methodological approach of any study (supported by Creswell, 1998 and Maxwell, 1996). This research is concerned with the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts and how they narratively construct and understand their lives. It asks *how* trampoline-gymnasts' body-self relationships and identities are constructed and *how* they are experienced, maintained, challenged and reconstructed over time. These questions demand detailed, rich, illuminating data to gain an understanding of trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of this sporting context and the narratives they draw upon to inform and explain these experiences.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress that unlike quantitative approaches that ask *why* in an attempt to make correlations between variables and make wider generalisations, qualitative inquiry asks *how* in order to gain a deeper understanding of those under study. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.17) state that 'qualitative research places emphasis on *understanding* through looking more closely at people's words (or) actions' (added emphasis). That is, the *understanding* of the meanings people attribute to particular events and situations (Patton, 1991). As Gubrium and Holstein (1997, p.4) put it, 'lived experience is on stage here, rich description is the name of the game'. Therefore a qualitative approach was required for this research.

Qualitative research is difficult to define because rather than being stable and one dimensional, the prevailing feature of contemporary qualitative research is its diversity. Sparkes and Smith (2014) and Walsh and Koelsch (2010) explain that qualitative research means different things for different people and so it might be best thought of as an umbrella term used to describe various forms of inquiry that seek to provide an understanding of a particular social phenomenon. As such, Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) note that there is no

one way to do qualitative research, but instead there are multiple qualitative approaches characterised by a complex series and/or interplay of philosophical and methodological tensions, contradictions and hesitations. It has been linked to a number of paradigms and epistemological standpoints such as post-modernism, post-structuralism, critical theories and various strands of phenomenology (Krane and Baird, 2005; Sandelowski, 1991). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that such diversity should not be viewed as a weakness of this approach, but considered an invitation to expand our understandings and create a platform for dialogue about the various approaches that can be employed to increase our knowledge of the world.

Since its emergence qualitative research has revolutionised the ways in which we, as researchers, think about and do research (Lincoln, 2010; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). In its early development it was viewed as an alternative to traditional quantitative research, often in a dichotomous sense, with both qualitative and quantitative research being defined by the virtue of what the other was not able to achieve (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). To some extent this dichotomy remains, but more recently scholars have provided comprehensive discussions about the virtues of qualitative research, independent of the 'failures' of quantitative approaches (Gill, 2011; Lincoln, 2010). The growth of qualitative research has increased in the last 25 years (Culver, Gilbert and Sparkes, 2012). Not only has the number of published qualitative studies grown, but the number of journals accepting or exclusive to this work has also risen dramatically (Culver et al., 2012). Yet, qualitative research has always been, and still continues to be, the subject of much controversy and debate (Gill, 2011; Lincoln, 2010; Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Walsh and Koelsch, 2012). As Avis puts it 'almost every aspect of qualitative research, what it is, what it is for, how it is done, and how it is to be judged, is the subject of controversy' (cited

by Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p.6). Therefore, in order to fully understand the qualitative approach taken in this research, it is necessary to grasp the philosophical foundations and methodological commitments associated with qualitative research more generally and how these relate to the research question.

Paradigms and perspectives

The term *paradigm* is defined as a 'basic set of beliefs that guide action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry' (Guba, 1990, p.17). More recently, Lincoln (2010) explains that paradigms:

tell us something important about the *researcher standpoint*. They tell us something about the researchers proposed *relationship to the Other(s)*. They tell us something about what the researcher thinks *counts as knowledge*, and who can deliver the most valuable slice of this knowledge. They tell us how the researcher intends to take account of multiple and contradictory values she will encounter.

(Lincoln, 2010, p.7, original emphasis)

Four main paradigms have operated and continue to dominate the literature within social sciences and sport - positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism and critical theories (Krane and Baird, 2005; Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Sparkes, 1992). These various sets of beliefs shape the ways in which researchers respond to questions surrounding ontology (beliefs about the nature of reality), epistemology (beliefs concerning the relationship between the knower and the known), methodology and interests which are often not complementary to each other (Gill, 2011; Lincoln, 2005; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). The underlying assumptions of each paradigm are summarised in Table 1 below.

| Assumptions | Paradigms | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|
| | Positivist | Post-positivist | Interpretive | Critical |
| Ontology | External-realist | Neo-realism | Relativism | External/ neo-realist Or Relativism |
| Epistemology | Objective Dualist | Objective Modified dualist | Subjectivist Interactive | Subjective Interactive |
| Methodology | Nomothetic Experimental Manipulative | Nomothetic Modified Experimental Manipulative Can include qualitative methods; ideographic but findings probability true. | Ideographic Hermeneutical Dialectical | Ideographic Participative Transformative |
| Interests | Prediction and control | Prediction and control | Understanding and interpretation | Emancipation, understanding and interpretation |

Table 1. The basic underlying assumptions of the positivist, post- positivist, interpretive and critical theory paradigms. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Sparkes (1992)

In seeking to explore the lived, narrative experiences of trampoline-gymnasts, the standpoint of this research lies within the interpretive paradigm (as suggested by Krane and Baird, 2005; Sandelowski, 1991 and Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Taking the storied-lives of trampoline-gymnasts as the focus of inquiry, this research identified *multiple* meanings, subjectivities, identities and narratives that inform the experiences of this trampoline group. Thus, I accept there are multiple realities which inform *an* understanding or interpretation of this trampoline club and the people within it. As such, the ontological and epistemological assumptions guiding this inquiry differ greatly from the more traditional positivist¹⁶ and post-positivist¹⁷ paradigms (Krane and Baird, 2005; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Sparkes, 1992). The study of human interaction and narrativity, assumes a world of multiple, socially constructed, subjective realities, regarded as *ontological relativism* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes, 1992; Sandelowski, 1991). In rejecting the dominant paradigm, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that reality is created by people as they evaluate their attempts to make sense of their lives and surroundings. Therefore, emphasis is placed upon meaning which is embedded within language and social interaction (Gergen, 1999a). In a research context, ontological relativism is the researcher's interpretation of individuals' movements and words, or the meanings assigned to motivations and intentions, which become social reality as it is perceived by them; it is an interpretation. However, this does not deny the materiality of the world or that this view is without criticism.

¹⁶ Sometimes referred to as the dominant paradigm, positivist perspectives view knowledge of the world as a series of 'truths' which together form a single reality that can be objectively studied by a researcher to provide verification or proof of a proposition. In these perspectives, events and values are viewed as isolated from one another, but having sequential, causal linkages. Explanations of events and values can be generalised and applied to similar (social) situations (Krane and Baird, 2005; Sparkes, 1992).

¹⁷ Post-positivism has much the same philosophic conventions of positivism. However, post-positivists embrace a broader range of methods (including qualitative methods), although they often quantify their data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). They also do more to acknowledge the link between the researcher and the research, whilst still maintaining objectivity by recognizing and acknowledging the possible biases they bring to their research. Their aim is to produce a detached, valid and generalizable research product (Krane and Baird, 2005).

Criticisms exist (see Smith and Deemer, 2000 for full discussion), but it is speculated that those who criticise this view have based claims or fears on misunderstandings or misguided views of relativism (Smith, 1989; Smith and Deemer, 2000; Sparkes, 1998b). Smith (1989, p.18) argues that once it is realised that objectivism (associated with positivist and post-positivist paradigms) is impossible then relativism can be seen as 'the inevitable consequence of our hermeneutical or interpretive mode of being in the world'. Thus relativism cannot be transcended, but is something we must accept (Smith and Deemer, 2000; Sparkes, 1998a).

In addition to ontological relativism, Smith and Deemer (2000) suggest that interpretivism is epistemologically non-foundational. The nature of knowledge is subjective and relative, therefore there are multiple truths (Gill, 2011; Smith, 1989; Smith and Deemer, 2000; Sparkes, 1992). One person's perceptions and experiences of a particular event are highly unlikely to be exactly the same as another. Instead, as Smith (1989, p.171) argues, 'truth - or what we come to accept as true in terms of intentions purposes and meanings - [is] the result of socially conditioned agreement, arising from dialogue and reasoned discourse'. Therefore, knowledge claims are partial, contingent, and historically, culturally and contextually bound. Ontological relativism and non-foundational epistemology are supported by an interpretive stance on methodology. Generally interpretivists accept that there is no one way to explore a particular research question, there are multiple pathways or courses of action that can be taken, although some are better or more appropriate than others (Gill, 2011). As such, *methodology* encompasses the principles and philosophical assumptions on which researchers base their procedures and strategies (Krane and Baird, 2005; Sparkes, 1992). It is more than just a method. It is an *approach* that forms the foundation of data collection, analysis, representation and

judgment of the research; and *methods* are tools which can be used when needed (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2008; Staller, Block and Horner, 2008).

The ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions guiding this research are interpretive in nature; there are multiple realities which are historically, socially and situationally bound (i.e. not replicable or generalisable) and there is an inseparable link between the researcher and the research.

The research design

Qualitative research is characterised by a number of common features or characteristics (Charmaz, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Walsh and Koelsch, 2012). In general, it focuses on the ways in which people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the social world, and produces rich, illuminative data, which has the potential to identify and explore (un)anticipated phenomena and information sources.

Flexible research designs are common within qualitative research (Holloway, 1997; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Everyday life and lived experience is complex and messy, it is not something we can easily know or describe; we, as qualitative researchers, may have to follow lines of inquiry that are unexpected in order to gain a deep understanding of people's lives and experiences (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). In order to do so, qualitative researchers often cannot prescribe their exact design at the outset of their research (Pitney and Parker, 2009). Instead they tend to identify the boundaries of their research and parameters which might be developed and/or adjusted throughout the research to allow them to follow salient themes that are emerging from the research process.

Accordingly, this research adopted an *emergent research design* as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) which houses what they consider to be key characteristics

of qualitative research (see Figure 3 below). This design is rooted in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work on naturalistic inquiry and has been supported by Sparkes and Smith (2014).

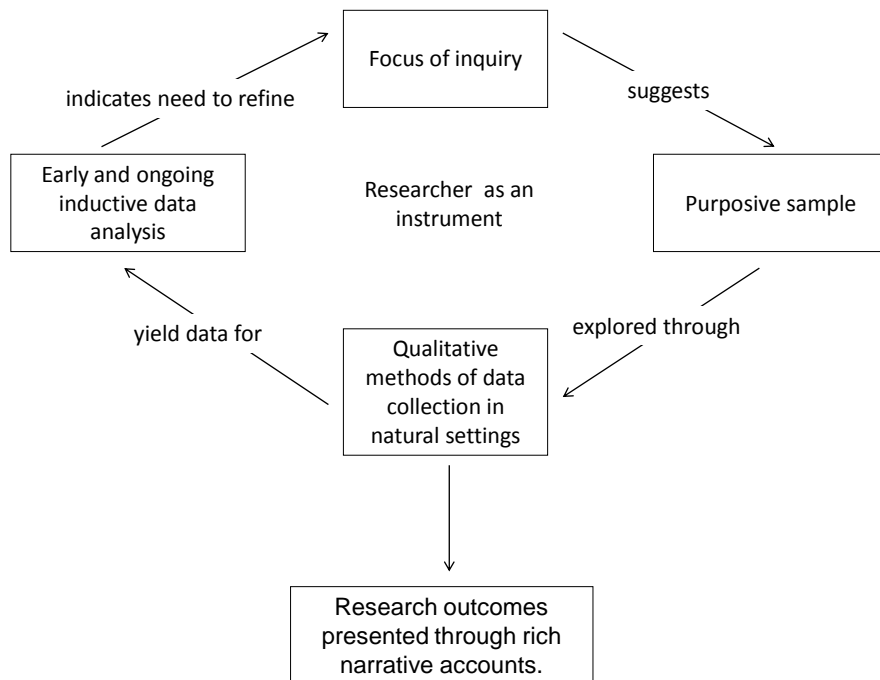


Figure 3. Characteristics of an emergent research design (adapted from Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Characteristics of qualitative inquiry

Qualitative inquiry has an exploratory and descriptive focus to obtain an understanding of a particular setting, person or group (Charmaz, 2004; Graue and Walsh, 1998; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Therefore it is well suited to the aims and objectives of this research, which ask how trampoline-gymnasts (re)construct and maintain their embodied identities over time and how these embodiments are experienced. In order to do this, qualitative researchers tend to use ideographic methods of data collection in the participants' natural setting(s) (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Sparkes and Smith (2014) explain that we know a lot about the world from describing it from the outside. Traditional research paradigms lend themselves to obtaining knowledge in this way; but in order to

explore the meanings that people attach to their lived experiences, qualitative researchers prefer to 'be there', in natural settings, engaging in social interactions. Similarly, Charmaz (2004) reminds us that to understand what living in this world means, we need to learn from the inside. That is, to develop an 'intimate familiarity with the phenomenon [as a] means of gaining a level of knowledge and understanding that penetrates the experience' (p.984). Gubrium and Holstein (1997) describe this as a commitment to 'close scrutiny', which involves the researcher placing themselves in direct contact with, or close proximity to, the lived world of those being studied in order to document and understand the organisation of social life that is practised and experienced. Despite the various terms used in the literature, ultimately qualitative researchers favour *naturalism* in their research methods. Examples include observations, unstructured and/or in-depth interviews and focus groups (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). In addition, Sparkes and Smith (2014) acknowledge that naturalistic inquiry might also include the exploration of visual imagery and textual documents produced for, about or by a group and/or individual under study (Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

Within the parameters of this natural setting, qualitative researchers tend to prefer various sampling methods that fall under the general term of *purposive sampling* (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Purposive sampling is defined as the deliberate selection of a setting(s), event(s), an individual, a number of individuals or a group by the researcher, on the premise that are likely to provide information-rich cases about the settings and/or social phenomenon that is of interest (Creswell, 1998; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). For qualitative researchers, the limitations of generalisation associated with (post)positivist paradigms and quantitative research are acknowledged and accepted, to the extent that one case study is not only permissible, but sometimes necessary to gain the

context rich, in-depth description required (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Similarly, Staller et al. (2008) suggest that researchers seeking to focus on subjectivities and narratives (which are the focus of this research) should not be concerned with traditional sampling questions such as "how many participants are in the sample?" or "how representative is the sample?" to better produce generalisations, but instead on the ability of a sample to provide rich, in-depth, contextual data which will contribute to greater understanding of an institution and/or social phenomenon. Holloway (1997) notes that this often means that sampling procedures are not fixed at the outset of the research but are an ongoing process guided by emerging ideas and information. Thus qualitative researchers might identify a number of sampling methods that they might draw upon throughout the research. Those drawn upon in this research are outlined in Table 2. below.

| Type of sampling | Description |
|-------------------|--|
| Maximum variation | Documents diverse variations and identifies important common patterns. |
| Snowball | Identified sources of rich information that will be of interest recommended by existing research participants. |
| Intensity | Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely. |
| Opportunistic | Take advantage of a particular situation of the unexpected; follow new leads as they arise. |
| Convenience | Saves time, money and effort, but not at the expense of information and credibility. |
| Typical case | Participants are chosen based on their fit with the perceived norm of a particular population |
| Deviant case | The researcher seeks an individual, individuals or groups that deviate substantially from the norm. |

Table 2. Sampling methods drawn upon within the purposive sampling strategy in this research. Definitions are provided by Patton (1991) and Smith and Sparkes (2014).

Numerous studies in sport and exercise have used purposive sampling strategies, drawing upon one or multiple methods from the table above. For example, Berry, Kowalski, Ferguson and McHugh's (2010) phenomenological study of body-comparison in female exercisers used criterion-based sampling, and Thorpe's (2012) ethnographic study of snowboarding culture utilised opportunistic and snowball sampling.

In an emergent research design, the researcher takes on an instrumental role, being both the collector and "culler" of data (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Wolcott, 1995). In doing so, early and ongoing inductive analysis is required in order for the researcher to identify what is becoming salient from the data and subsequently narrow or broaden the

focus of the inquiry. Inductive analysis has been defined as a process that looks at a set of examples or cases in order to make connections between them to form a general picture of the setting or group under study (Angrosino, 2007; Holloway 1997). In considering the researcher's instrumental role, Sparkes and Smith (2014) acknowledge that the *subjectivity* of the researcher (i.e. their gender, age, ethnicity, sexual identity, (dis)ability, religion, social class, theoretical position and previous experiences) will affect the ways in which the research is shaped, how data is collected, interpreted and reported. Moreover, Finlay and Gough (2003), argue that multiple forms of *reflexivity* have exploded into academic consciousness as a means by which researchers can transform the traditional '*problem*' of subjectivity¹⁸ into an opportunity for examining the complexity of human experience within a research process. A reflexive journal, like the one used in this research, can promote consideration of the researcher's position, perspective and presence and the effect, if any, this has on participants; thus providing a rich insight into personal responses and interpersonal dynamics within the research setting. It became a resource that opened up the unconscious and implicit motivations of my approach, and provides an evaluation of the research process, method(s) and outcomes (see chapter eight, p.299).

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is one form of qualitative research that has attracted considerable interest within the social sciences (Mishler, 2006; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Riley and Hawe, 2005). Despite its early marginal status when it began to emerge 'in the mid-1980s, it now includes a rich interdisciplinary, still-expanding corpus of theoretical and research studies'

¹⁸ Traditional research paradigms (e.g., positivist and post-positivism) have viewed researcher subjectivity as problematic. The epistemological assumptions of these paradigms determine that the researcher will be objectively detached from their research so as to avoid bias. However, social scientists of the 1970s (e.g., Willis, 1978; Pryce, 1979) acknowledged that an element of subjectivity is inherent to research. See Sparkes and Smith (2014) for full discussion.

(Mishler, 2006, p.iv). The increased interest in narrative inquiry has led to journals dedicated to the processes and product associated with it. For example, the *Journal of Narrative and Life History* (1990-1997) and *Narrative Inquiry* and *Studies in Narrative*. Indeed there are a number of commentators who believe that the social sciences community is now in a period of methodological innovation in which the 'narrative turn'¹⁹ is now well under way (Gard, 2014; Sparkes, 2002a). However, despite calls from sport scholars to develop new ways of knowing and understanding, narrative inquiry, although now emerging in more contemporary work, is still relatively 'embryonic' in sport studies (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, 2009a).

In this research, narrative inquiry is defined as a dynamic process founded on a specific set of epistemological and ontological assumptions that permeate the research design, from the formulation of the research idea and subsequent aim and objectives, to the collection, analysis and (re)presentation of data and finally to the judgment of the final text that is produced (Clandinin, Pushor and Orr, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). Considered an alternative to (post)positivist forms of research, narrative inquiry is supported by the philosophical assumptions of interpretivism (Bruner, 1990; Sandelowski, 1991; Sarbin, 1986; Sparkes, 1992). That is to say, narrative inquiry commits to the assumption that 'there is no one social reality "out there" independent of us that can be accessed and known as it is. Realities are multiple, created, and mind-dependent...and knowledge is socially constructed, fallible, and subjective' (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, p.3). Thus, researchers using a narrative inquiry seek to develop an understanding of meanings attributed to

¹⁹The term 'narrative turn' denotes the progression of narrative, as a legitimate, authentic and rigorous approach and focus in qualitative research. While some authors view there being *a* narrative turn (e.g., Atkinson, 1997), others suggest there have been multiple narrative turns (e.g., Frank, 2000; Hyvärinen, 2010; Sparkes, 2002b). The latter, also view narrative turns as form of personal and collective identity, noting that researchers who engage in narrative work tend to produce a rhetoric of belonging (i.e. 'our work is now part of the narrative turn'). As such, the narrative turn or moment(s) in social sciences might be viewed as a progressive, collective movement which spans across disciplines (Sparkes, 2002b).

particular events and contexts. Smith and Sparkes (2009a) illustrate this comprehensively in their outline of 'basic characteristics' of narrative inquiry which provide the ontological and epistemological postulates of this approach. These characteristics or philosophical assumptions have been discussed in detail previously in Chapter Two (see section on 'narrative inquiry in sport, exercise and health') and a summary is provided in Table 3 (below).

The rationale for the use of narrative inquiry in this research is formed from these assumptions and the notion that we, as humans, are natural storytellers (Smith and Sparkes, 2009a). We live in a world shaped by stories, in which narrative permeates life; people make sense of and understand their lives in and through storied narratives (Frank, 1995, 2000). As Andrews, Sclater, Rustin, Squire and Treacher (2000, p.1) argue 'if we are constructed by stories, or are storytellers by nature, or perhaps both, then narrative must surely be a prime concern of social science'. Viewed this way, narrative becomes an ontological condition of social life (Somers, 1994). Through the telling of stories about our lives and the lives of others we have an epistemological means of knowing (Bochner, 2001; Bruner, 1990; Richardson, 2000).

| Characteristic/Assumption | Summary of commentary | Corroborating scholars |
|--|--|---|
| Meaning is basic to being human and being human entails actively constructing meaning. | Being human means active efforts to interpret experience, make the world meaningful and act toward others based on meanings we construe. | Polkinghorne, (1988) Crossley (2000) Stelter (2007) |
| Meaning is created through narrative, and is a storied effort and achievement. | Meanings are, in part, constituted, modified and originate in and through narratives. They are the primary, cultural instrument of which meaning is created and communicated. Thus, storytelling is a meaning-making activity and an act of interpreting. | Polkinghorne (1988) Bochner (2001) Bruner (1990) |
| We are relational beings, and narratives and meanings are achieved within relationships. | Humans are connected and exist in relation to others. Therefore narrative perspective emphasise that it is storytelling interactions that make narrative meaningful and intelligible. | Gergen (1999a) Frank (2004) |
| Narratives are both personal and social. | Narrative storytelling gives expression to human agency, it includes distinct circumstances, identities, emotions, feelings and motivations. However narratives are not wholly personal, they do not spring from the mind of the individual or be constructed at will. They are socio-cultural constructions; stories are told by a person to someone. | Frank (1995) Gergen (1999b) |
| Selves and identities are constituted through narratives, and people do and perform storied selves and narrative realities relationally. | We make sense of ourselves and identities, and those of others, through narrative storytelling. Selves and identities are constructed through the textual resources of narratives and generated in the process of storytelling with others, over time. | Taylor (2005) Smith & Sparkes (2008) |
| Being human is to live in and through time, and narrative is a primary way of organising our experience of temporality. | Temporality is an inescapable fact of human existence. Subjective time is experienced through narratives of the past, present and future. Thus, narratives are fluid, dynamic means by which temporality and experience is structured, given meaning and communicated. | Riley & Hawe (2005) Phoenix et al. (2007) |
| The body is a storyteller, and narratives are embodied. | We come to know our and other(s) bodies through the stories they tell. Narratives are embodied and storytelling is an embodied activity. The body unfolds its personal, subjective realities onto other bodies and social spaces. At the same time, socio-cultural narratives are inscribed or infolded onto bodies. | Sparkes & Silvennoinen (1999) Sparkes (2005) Phoenix et al (2007) Smith (2007) |

Table 3. A summary of the basic philosophical assumptions of narrative inquiry.

Narrative ethnography: A methodology

Ethnography is a recognised approach for gathering data in natural settings (Staller et al., 2008) and is therefore akin to the research design outlined in Figure 3. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) define ethnographic research as the prolonged study of people (or groups) as they go about their everyday lives. They describe the researcher who enters a social setting, gets to know the people involved in it and participates in the daily routines of this setting, developing ongoing relationships, while observing all that is going on, recording observations and discussions in regular, systematic ways. Therefore, an ethnographic researcher seeks deep immersion in others' worlds in order to come to understand their experience as meaningful and important (Atkinson, 2012; Emerson et al., 1995). Some scholars argue that the degree of immersion extends to developing embodied knowledge in the researcher, because they see what the participants see, they hear what they hear, smell what they smell (Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes and Smith, 2012). In keeping with the emergent design of this research, O'Reilly (2012) acknowledges that ethnography is a practice that evolves as the study progresses, following salient findings as they emerge and considering them as the research progresses, often utilising a family of methods that include participant observation and interviews, to capture the complexity of the social world and tell rich stories of it.

In 'deciding on how to approach an ethnographic project...[researchers tend to] shape it pursuant to a variety of possible theoretical positions such as feminist ethnography, critical ethnography or autoethnography' (Staller et al., 2008, p.28). As such, ethnographic research tends to describe a methodological *approach* which draws upon a number of data collection tools, such as observation, interviewing and focus groups (Gubrium and

Holstein, 2008; Staller et al., 2008). This research is a *narrative ethnography* as defined by Gubrium and Holstein (2008, pp.261-262) as:

...an emergent method [that provides the researcher] with the conceptual and methodological tool kit to empirically discern and describe narrative structures...It provides a way of making visible the socially constructed and organised contours of these seemingly obdurate realities by featuring their storied presence in everyday life.

Essentially, narrative ethnography is much the same as traditional ethnographic studies. A researcher becomes immersed within a social setting and uses a variety of qualitative methods (observation and interviewing being most prominent) to better understand social phenomena (Alasuutari, 1995; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). However, it places more emphasis on the narrative structures and stories that are present within social interactions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008).

Gubrium and Holstein (2008) argue that by focusing upon narratives and stories within *narrative environments* or what Frank (1995) calls *institutions*, (physical locations within space and time), a narrative ethnography can provide access to the multilayered embeddedness of stories in relation to other stories and narratives. Careful consideration of the circumstances and processes in which narratives are constructed, produced and replicated is required. Narrative environments not only 'construct, reproduce and privilege particular accounts for institutional purposes' (p.253), but frame the ways in which experience is narratively displayed and told on and through the body. Moreover, some narrative environments may challenge, as well as affirm storied narratives. Thus, a narrative ethnographic inquiry observes how those under study actively call upon or respond to contexts, contingencies and narrative resources to fashion their own storied narrative. Essentially, researchers can witness myriad forms of *narrative control* being exercised by individuals. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) categorise forms of narrative control as *interactional control* (narratives emerging from conversational interactions) and

institutional control (narrative environments and/or discursive regimes that enable and constrain available narratives resources within a social setting). These forms of control are not independent of one another, there is a complex interplay within interaction and institutional control. Institutional conventions constrain, promote and shape narratives, but they do not determine how stories are formulated or what or whom they are about. Nor does interactional control take place within a vacuum.

Narrative ethnography is still a relatively new and emergent methodology in social sciences (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008) and even more so in the study of sporting bodies. The most prominent examples of narrative ethnographies are in studies of the family (Gubrium and Holstein, 1993), the self (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000a) and the life course (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000b). Gubrium and Holstein's (1993) study, for example, looked at how family discourses assign meaning to social relations through the use of an ethnographic study. Narrative studies of sporting bodies tend to use an analysis of life history data (Carless, 2008; Kavanagh, 2012; Tulle, 2008) or autobiography (Sparkes, Pérez-Samaniego and Smith, 2012), rather than ethnographic data. Yet, ethnographic studies in sporting settings, framed by various theoretical positions, have also yielded rich, in-depth contextual data that has contributed to our understanding of the body-self relationship. For example, in the study of spatial dynamics male bodies in sporting spaces (Andrews et al., 2005; Sparkes, Brown and Partington, 2010; Sparkes, Partington and Brown, 2007), women's bodily experiences in sport, exercise and physical activity (D'Abundo, 2009; Evans and Allen-Collinson, 2014) and embodied ways of knowing and learning in physical activity (Atkinson, 2012).

Sampling and access

The nature of the emergent research design meant that the sample could not be entirely determined from the outset. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted (see Figure 3 above). My connections²⁰ to a trampoline club in South Wales enabled initial access to the sporting setting, taking advantage of opportunistic and convenience sampling methods (see Table 2 above). My roles within the trampoline club were in fact multifaceted and included being a key member of the coaching staff, therefore consent to carry out the research in the club was obtained from other key gatekeepers and stakeholders representing the interests of the club and its gymnasts. A letter outlining the project was sent to the Vice Chair of the club, the Club Secretary and its two Welfare Officers requesting their consent for the project to take place (see Appendix A). All four agreed to the project without any concerns being raised. The research was then outlined in a general meeting to all parents, gymnasts and coaches who were present (7th November 2012, N=23), offering an opportunity for questions and concerns to be discussed. The main questions raised were around commitment to take part in interviews and focus group, if participants agreed to take part in the study as a whole. Clarification was made at this point, that participants in the study may opt out of any part of the research, or the study as whole, at any time, for any reason. A summary of the research aim, purposes and potential outcomes and answers to any initial questions raised in the meeting was then published in the next issue of the club newsletter (Appendix B) along with a further request to club members and parents to raise any further concerns or questions they had within two weeks. Following these procedures access to the club was granted.

²⁰ My connection to the club has been left deliberately vague in order to protect the anonymity of the club and those within it.

At the outset of this research the club hosted training sessions for 16 trampoline-gymnasts aged 9-20 years old who competed at Club I to Regional D within the national competition structure²¹. However, due to prolonged nature of ethnographic research there were constant changes to this original group. For example, seven gymnasts and one coach left the club; 20 new gymnasts joined; two gymnasts progressed to higher levels of competition beyond the original scope of the research (i.e. National C) and two existing gymnasts became coaches. These changes were used as an opportunity to add to the maximum-variation and intensity (see Table 2) of the sample, and subsequently the overall richness and breadth of the data.

Ultimately, this research drew upon the experiences within a group of 36 gymnasts aged 6-21 years old (27 female and 9 male), albeit not simultaneously, who had competed at Club I to National C at least once within the research period (November 2011 to March 2013), and seven coaches (4 female and 3 male). Profiles of the participant biographies can be seen in Appendix C. The nature of the sport lends itself to close relationships between clubs, coaches, judges and gymnasts on the competition circuit. Therefore, snowball sampling (see Table 2) enabled conversations with three judges and officials on the regional and national competition circuit, which were captured in ethnographic observations.

Data collection was ongoing for a period of 17 months, during which extensive time was spent immersed in the trampoline club and the wider trampoline community. Towards the latter months spent with the group there was a sense that no new information was being

²¹ Club I was the lowest entry point of competition in the UK national competition structure. Competition categories ascended in alphabetical order from I-A. Regional D was the highest point of regional competitions before progressing to national competition (National C). This competition structure was in place between 2008-2013 and therefore in place at the time this research was undertaken. However a new structure has since been implemented. The equivalent competition categories in the new structure developed for 2013-2016 (outlined in British Gymnastics, 2013b) are NDP (National Development Plan) 1 to 6. NDP 7 indicates entry to national completion level.

gathered, instead more examples of the same narrative were occurring, indicating something of a 'saturation point'. This, in combination with the timeline outlined for this PhD study, determined the end of data collection and a focus on completing and synthesising the findings.

Data collection

The research was systematically undertaken in using a repetitive cyclic model that mimics the emergent research design in Figure 3. This cyclic model has been illustrated in Figure 4 (below).

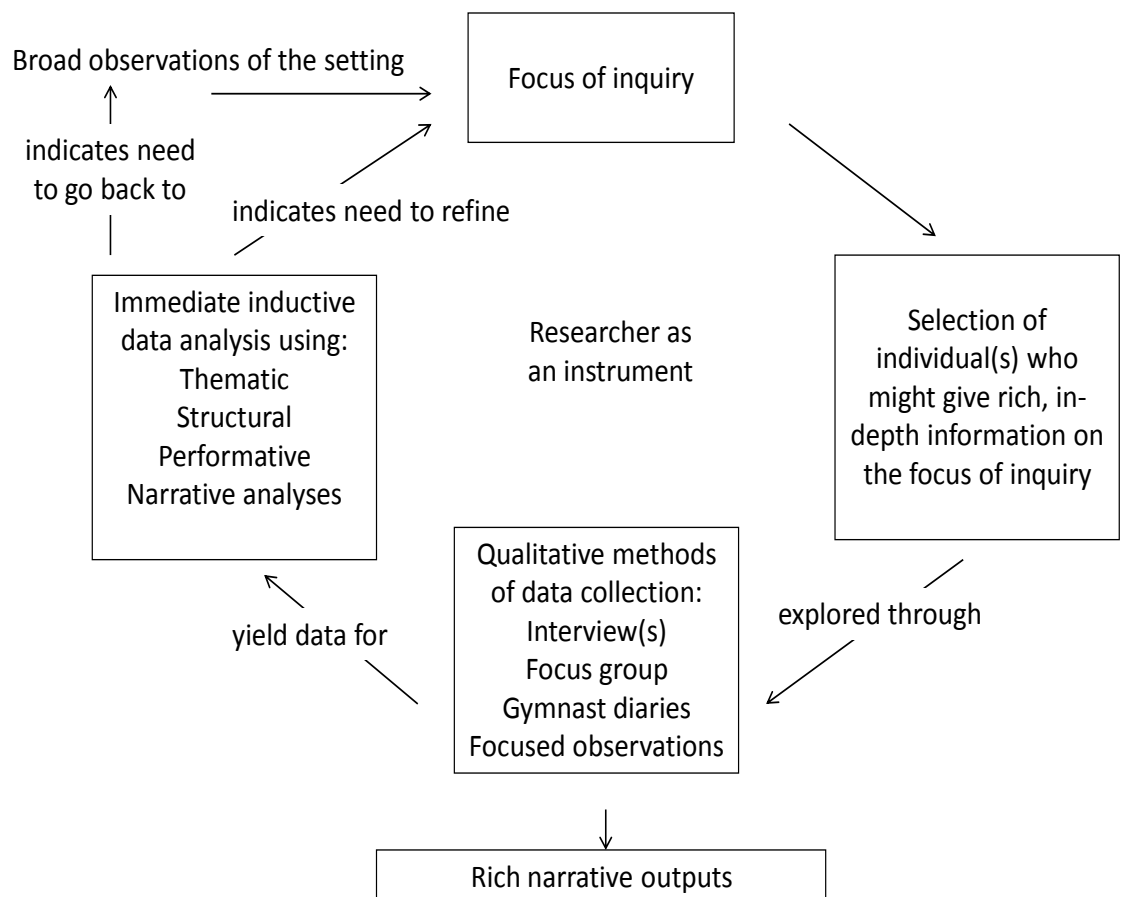


Figure 4. Visual representation of the research process undertaken.

Ethnographic observations

In the initial weeks as a researcher in the trampoline club, broad ethnographic observations were used to gather information about the day to day intricacies of the club and its members. Holloway's (1997) questions to guide observations were used during initial observations to better aid the focus of each session, as I was already immersed and integrated into the setting, having been a coach in the club for four years. In a sense, important details about the group and space which I perceived to be normal, and almost mundane, needed to be acknowledged and explained to an outside audience. These questions included:

- The 'who' questions. Who can be found in the setting? How many people are present? What are their characteristics and roles?
- The 'what' questions. What is happening in the setting? What are the actions that take place normally? What physical and/or social rules govern these actions? What are the variations in the behaviour observed, if any?
- The 'where' questions. Where do specific interactions take place? Where are people located in the physical space?
- The 'when' questions. When do conversations and interactions take place? When are activities generally timed?
- The 'why' questions. Why do people in the setting act the way they do? Why are there variations in their behaviour (between sub-groups, in different locations, over time)?

To capture these details, some focused observations were undertaken surrounding each type of question. For example, one session was spent capturing information about *who* was in the setting, and what their roles were. Similarly, a number of sessions were dedicated to sensory information within the setting (Sparkes, 2008), what was seen, heard, smelt and felt in a session, to really capture the intricacies of the setting that I had taken for granted as normal, everyday experiences. Observations were made whenever in contact with the gymnasts, their parents and club coaches. These included:

- Three club training sessions, three times per week (6 hours per week in total, 2x1.5 hour sessions, 1x2 hour session and 1x1 hour session).
- 12 recreational sessions, four times per week (12x1 hour sessions) in which some older club members voluntarily helped the coaching staff, and some younger club members attended for extra training.
- Regional grading and national competitions that took place periodically throughout the year. More specifically, four regional gradings in January, March, June and October, the British National Championships in July and the Welsh National Championships in December. Each competition was an all-day event, often lasting around 8 hours, depending on the number of entrants. In the case of national championships, these were all-weekend events taking place over 3 days and included sport-specific social activity in the evening.
- Sporadic club events such as displays, fundraising events, socials and award presentations.
- Conversations with parents that took place outside of the sporting context, via the telephone or email.

Traditionally, my role in the setting might be viewed as a participant-observer (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001; and Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). That is, the researcher establishes 'a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes in that setting' (Emerson et al., 2001, p.352). However, Atkinson (2012) and Gold (cited in Sparkes and Smith, 2014) suggest immersion into a group's natural setting is not so easy. Sparkes and Smith (2014) provide a continuum of the level of involvement a researcher/observer engages in while in research a setting, from the role of a complete observer at one end, to a complete participant at the other. Throughout the research I was an insider, and for the majority of observational sessions, took on the role of coach and researcher, never becoming a complete observer, nor a complete participant, but rather a 'participant-observer'. Sparkes and Smith (2014) define this role as a researcher who is integral to the lives of the participants; 'someone who does not participate in the lives of the people [under study] to observe them, but rather observes while participating fully in their

lives' (p.101), in this case as a coach. This dual researcher-coach role did impact on the practicality of data collection. For example, it was difficult to record observations while engaging fully in training sessions, competitions, fundraising events and social activities. Instead observations were typically recorded retrospectively in a journal as soon as possible after each of the sessions, using *jottings* as defined by Emerson et al. (1995). These were short-hand notations or abbreviations recorded in a notes application on a smart phone or iPad and later used to prompt memory recall when completing journal entries. I realised early on that making written notations in a notepad, or the journal itself distracted from the flow of everyday coaching tasks and also attracted too much attention from gymnasts who wanted to know what was being written, as did verbal notations made into a digital dictaphone. Where possible, I took on more of an observer role, when engaging less with participants but still being in the group setting. On these occasions observations were recorded directly into the research journal while in the setting. Examples of these occasions included national competitions in which the club only had a few entrants, leaving an ample amount of free-time in between coaching stints, and training sessions in which junior coaches conducted a session as part of their prescribed coaching qualification activities.

The research journal was organised, physically, into two sections by halving each page. The first section provided a description of what was seen and heard in the setting and included sketches of the scene at times. The second section, provided reflexive, analytical notes about what was being seen and heard, including the identification of emerging themes, areas of interest and people it might be useful to speak to about specific emerging interests. This journal, in this format, was an invaluable tool. It supported the focus and direction of the inquiry in a logical way, avoiding the temptation to stray away from the

main aim of the research. It also assisted the process of early inductive data analysis, characteristic of an emergent research design. This systematic way of recording ethnographic observations is outlined by Emerson et al. (1995, 2001) and supported by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). An extract of the research journal, demonstrating this systematic organisation can be seen in Appendix D.

Following broad observations and the identification of emerging themes and corresponding participants of interest, further methods of investigation were employed to delve into interesting areas (as outlined in Figure 4). These included focused observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, written accounts and the reading of gymnasts' training diaries. The exact method was determined based upon the topic being discussed, the age of the participant(s) involved and the amount of time the participant had available.

Focused observations took place in much the same manner as the broad ethnographic observations (above), only the focus of the session was more specific, honing in on one particular theme or topic. For example, having noticed in my broad observations that some gymnasts (within two specific friendship groups) used bullying-like tactics²² to reinforce sport-specific ideals in their friends and others in the training session, I spent a number of sessions observing each group in turn, focusing on the rhetoric they used in these interactions. In a further set of sessions I observed how certain instigators in these groups used space to achieve their goals. Themes or topics, such as this, arose from trying to achieve the objectives outlined in the outset of the research (e.g., how do trampolining gymnasts come to understand norms and ideals?). Other themes and topics were formed from reading the literature in relation to the objectives of this research. For example, a set of sessions was dedicated to the gymnasts perceived future selves (Markus and Nurius,

²² Although these types of behaviours were observed, I maintained a duty of care to all gymnasts in the club throughout the research. Bullying and associated behaviours were dealt with appropriately according to the club's code of conduct.

1986), as they set short and long-term goals, and how they subsequently performed their aspirations to the group. These observations were then recorded in the research journal, using the same format outlined above/in Appendix D.

In-depth interviews and focus groups

Holloway (1997) describes an interview as a conversation with a purpose in which the interviewer aims to obtain the participant's perspectives, feelings and perceptions of a particular topic. In their discussion of *qualitative interviewing*, Sparkes and Smith (2014) acknowledge four strands of interviewing - semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, focus groups and telephone/computer-mediated interviews. This research utilised all of these interview types, based upon the ability of these methods to provide participants' stories, understandings of their reality and their place in that reality, as well as the meanings they give to events or behaviours. An exploration of the pros and cons of these methods was undertaken at the outset of this research and measures put into place to counteract the associated potential limitations. These measures are described below.

In-depth interviews

In comparison to the relatively standardised, inflexible and heavily prescribed questioning of structured and even some semi-structured interviews (Sparkes and Smith, 2014), Holloway (1997) suggests that unstructured interviews begin with a broad, open-ended questions or an invitation to discuss a particular topic to better understand participants' experiences and views. Despite taking this shape, the type of interview used in this research is best described as an in-depth interview, rather than an unstructured interview. The interviews were structured to an extent that a list of topics or questions to be covered was prepared prior to the interview. However, this interview schedule (as

defined by Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) was not definitive or rigid, it provided a set of prompts of things to cover (see Appendix E for examples).

In total 15 in-depth interviews were completed over the period of this research (three with parents, nine with gymnasts, two with coaches and one with a judge). These are defined as conversations about a particular topic that were prearranged with the participant (and their parents, if applicable), at a time and location that was convenient for them. Interviews were estimated to last approximately 1 hour for adults and 30 minutes for children²³. However in situations where the participant was talking freely and adding to the data, the interview continued, so long as the participant was comfortable and willing to do so. Accordingly, the shortest interview lasted 34 minutes and the longest 1 hour and 5 minutes. Each was recorded on a digital dictaphone, and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible afterwards. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.80) suggest that an in-depth interview should last approximately 'one-and-a-half to two hours'. However, these interviews built upon ethnographic observations and informal conversations within them. An interview schedule, defined as 'a series of topics or broad interview questions which the researcher is free to explore and probe with the interviewee' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.83), was used to ensure that areas of interest to this research were discussed (see Appendix E). When the content of participants' interviews and/or focus group became repetitive and was not adding new data, but instead just revealing further examples of the same findings, no further interviews or focus groups were undertaken.

²³ Adaptations were made to the timings of interviews as result of the ethical considerations made at the outset of this research. See the section on ethical considerations, below, for more information.

Focus groups

Much like interviews, focus groups provide participants' stories, understandings of reality and the meanings they attribute to events and behaviours, but due to a group setting participants are able to converse with one another, commenting on others ideas and opinions. Sparkes and Smith (2014, p.85) state 'a focus group involves a number of people collaboratively sharing ideas, feelings, thoughts and perceptions about a certain topic or specific issues linked to the area of interest'. As with in-depth interviews, an evaluation of the pros and cons of focus groups was undertaken at the outset of this research and measures taken to reduce the associated challenges or potential limitations. For example, one of the main challenges of conducting a focus group is trying to ensure that participants do not talk over each other, rendering the resulting audio product difficult to hear. In this research, focus group participants were reminded of this issue and asked to refrain from talking over one another when possible.

A total of four focus groups were undertaken over the research period, each on a different topic:

- Coaches' experiences of trampoline-gymnastics: Becoming coaches, experiences of working with gymnasts and experiences of the governing body rules and regulations.
- Gymnasts experiences of weight-control behaviours.
- Female gymnasts' experiences of uniform regulations in trampoline-gymnastics.
- Male gymnasts' experiences of uniform regulations in trampoline-gymnastics.

The time and location of each focus group were prearranged with the participants, but usually scheduled before or after a training session, in the training facility. Focus groups lasted approximately one hour. However, as with the interviews, in situations where participants were talking freely and adding to the data, the discussion continued as long as

they were comfortable and willing to do so. The shortest focus group lasted 1 hour and 3 minutes, the longest 2 hours and 41 minutes. Each focus group was recorded using a digital dictaphone and transcribed as soon as possible afterwards. An interview schedule was used to ensure that areas of interest within the topic were discussed (see Appendix E). The use of focus groups was found to be a particularly advantageous method in this research, particularly given the age of some of the younger participants. One of the recognised uses of focus groups is to encourage conversation and responses to others' opinions to a particular topic or question (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), a partial rationale for their use in this research. However, this method was particularly useful in overcoming the challenges of power relations in these research situations (i.e. the coach-researcher, interviewing their [young] gymnasts). The use of this method allowed participants to converse with each other, rather than me (their coach/the researcher) revealing important and useful insights into their lived experiences. For example, in the focus group discussing weight-control behaviours, the two gymnasts engaged in prolonged discussion with each other about the lengths they had taken to hide their behaviours and how they had used each other to do this.

Computer-mediated interviews

Sparkes and Smith (2014, p.88) describe computer-mediated or online interviewing as 'a form of data collection conducted through the medium of the internet' in either an *asynchronous* way (not requiring the researcher and the participant to use the internet at the same time, e.g., email) or an *synchronous* way (requiring both parties to use the internet in some form of real-time chat, e.g., FaceTime, Skype).

Only one online interview was conducted with a female gymnast/coach (aged 20 years old) in the form of a Facebook instant messenger conversation. This interview was

not planned, or prearranged, but an informal chat with a colleague about club matters which developed into a discussion about of coach-gymnast/ coach-coach/ gymnast-gymnast relationships that we had experienced or been aware of and how these had impacted the dynamics of training sessions and competition areas. The participant acknowledged how these might be interesting to this research, having already discussed some of these issues in an earlier focus group. With her retrospective consent, this conversation was saved and used as data. This interview is another example of the opportunistic sampling method utilised within the purposive sampling strategy in this research (see Figure 4).

Diaries and written accounts

Several researchers have used personal writing of their own experiences as the basis of their research (e.g., Markula, 2003; Sparkes, 1996; Tsang, 2000). However, there is little precedent in the sports-based literature, for asking participants (especially children and adolescents) to craft narrative accounts of their experiences, particularly of their *felt body*. This research used written tasks, in addition to the methods discussed above, to capture participants' personal narratives and experiences. Plummer (2001) suggests autobiographical accounts are a useful data source to which various forms of analysis can be applied. In addition, Smith and Watson (2011) highlight that in the construction of a written account of a personal experience, an individual draws upon socio-cultural constructs and context (e.g., language, history) to interpret and their experiences. Thus, autobiographies are not only personal, but social, and provide stories that have already been analysed and interpreted by the teller.

The lack of guidance within the literature on getting (young) participants to engage in useful and meaningful writing tasks meant that this method was only reported upon when a participant, often in their mid-teens or adulthood, found it difficult to verbally

communicate their thoughts. For example, when one gymnast (aged 20 years old) was asked in an interview if she could talk about how her body felt when she wore a leotard, she said it was difficult to describe, but she could probably write it down if she thought about it. Therefore she was asked if she could *write* her account of that experience and happily obliged. Written accounts were also utilised on occasions when participants wanted to talk about something that they thought I, as a coach, would not approve of. For example, two parents wrote an account of the types of conversations that took place amongst a group of parents who sat in the canteen area of the training venue while waiting for their children. Although these accounts were created on request, explicitly for the purpose of this work, separate consent was sought and received before data analysis took place. In total, 16 written accounts were received from gymnasts, parents and coaches about various topics.

Written extracts were also taken from the gymnasts' training diaries and used as data. These diaries were used by gymnasts in every training session to enable them to record their progress toward their performance goals and achievements and their activities outside of training, including additional conditioning exercises performed at home, and periodically a food diary. Diaries were co-constructed and monitored by coaches and parents. Coaches set the nature of the writing task (e.g., to record all exercise activities undertaken outside of training or to write down all food and drink consumed during the week). Parents helped young children complete the task, or in the case of teenage gymnasts, ensured that the work was completed. Coaches would then check the diaries in training sessions and address any perceived issues. These diaries were not created for the purpose of this research, but primarily for training purposes. However, the information in them was at times useful and therefore utilised as data.

The data collection period took place over a 17 month period between November 2012 to March 2013 and included approximately 1,600 hours of contact time with the gymnasts inclusive of training sessions, competitions, club events, sporadic conversations with gymnasts and/or their parents outside of club time, interviews and focus groups.

Data analysis

Data analysis was not a distinct and separate part of the research process. It started immediately and was ongoing, as outlined in Figure 4. When writing observational notes, inductive analytical comments were written alongside them (see Appendix D), and interviews and focus groups were analysed as soon as possible to inform further data collection attempts. Angrosino (2007) and Holloway (1997) define inductive reasoning as acknowledging the general in the specific. In the case of this research, this meant making links between specific conversations and events, to the (theoretical) literature and other wider events.

This research utilised multiple forms of narrative analysis to organise and interpret the multi-faceted, myriad layers of embodied, narrative experience captured in data collection (suggested by Frank, 2000; Gubrium and Holstein, 2000 and Smith and Sparkes, 2009b). There are multiple definitions and interpretations of what narrative analysis is, but it is considered an umbrella term for a set of analyses that take the story itself as the object of inquiry, rather than a report, transcript or notations (Smith and Sparkes, 2009b). Similarly, Riessman (2008, p.11) argues 'narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form'. As an approach, it seeks to interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, perform social actions and make sense of their world (Jowett and Frost, 2007) in specific contexts, examining both the time and space in which stories are told (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

Smith and Sparkes (2009b) provide a discussion around the conceptual ideas of narrative analysis in the context of research in sport psychology which they argue are an essential prelude to undertaking any form of narrative analysis, and enable researchers to make informed and responsible choices about when, why and how to use various forms of narrative analysis (supported by Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The conceptual basis of narrative analysis stems from two broad standpoints - *story analysts* and *storytellers* (Frank, 2000). *Story analysts* consider stories as data to be analysed (Polkinghorne, 1995). The researcher steps back from the story and applies rigorous, systematic forms of analysis (e.g., structural analysis, content analysis, performative analysis) in order to scrutinise and explain social phenomena. Often story analysts present their findings in the form of realist tales²⁴.

In contrast, the *storyteller* refrains from adding additional layers of analysis and theory to a story, instead treating the story as theoretical and analytical in its own right. Taking the standpoint of storyteller, Ellis (2001, pp.195-196) argues that 'when people tell their stories, they employ analytic techniques to interpret their words'. She suggests that good stories have an evocative and embodied quality, which evokes theoretical questions and responses in the reader. Subsequently, storytellers allow characters to reveal things about themselves to the reader, who may then interpret them in various ways. An effective storyteller can craft an evocative story that *shows* a particular theory and analysis through written, oral, visual and theatrical performances to present their findings (Smith and Sparkes, 2009b). Richardson (2000) coined an umbrella term - *creative analytical*

²⁴ Realist tales, as defined by Van Maanen (1988) and discussed by Sparkes (2002b) are characterised by the absence of the author-researcher from the text. Only the words, actions and thoughts of those under study are visible. Often in the sport-based literature, realist tales are extracts from interview, focus group and/or observational data.

practices (CAP), to capture these various outlets which include, ethnodrama, creative (non)fiction and poetry.

Although there are significant differences between the two branches of thought, and some scholars argue the case of story analyst (Atkinson, 1997) or storyteller (Frank, 2000) as privileged, I, like Smith and Sparkes (2009b), argue that these conceptual standpoints should not be viewed in a dichotomous way. Both standpoints are concerned with the stories people tell and there is no best way to undertake narrative analysis. Neither a story analyst nor storytelling standpoint is privileged, but instead have various purposes and uses. In taking this stance, they look toward ways of combining both forms of analysis in order to explore the myriad layers that narrative can offer. Similarly, Frank (2000) acknowledges that both stories and narratives are important. He claims that narrative 'structures are real and interesting, but exclusive focus on them risks leaving out what may be most important to the storytellers themselves' (p.354). To include both a storyteller and story analyst standpoint in combination, Gubrium and Holstein (2000) suggest that narrative researchers engage in the process of *analytic bracketing*, in an attempt to overcome the inescapable dual tension of stories. Analytic bracketing is a:

procedure for alternatively focusing on the *whats* and then the *hows* of interpretive practice (or vice versa) in order to assemble both a contextually scenic and contextually constructive picture...The objective is to move back and forth between discursive practice and discourses-in practice, documenting each in turn and making informative references to the other in the process. (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000, p.500).

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) also support the need for analytical diversity. They argue that qualitative researchers should consider their data from different viewpoints and use a variety of analyses in order to understand data in different ways. Thus, the literature supports the implementation of the diverse narrative analysis approach used in this research, which explored the content and structure of participants' storied narratives.

As Sparkes and Smith (2014) note, unlike some forms of data analysis (e.g., grounded theory or hierarchical content analysis), descriptions of narrative analyses cannot be treated in a codified way, there are not discrete steps or a formula to follow. Instead narrative analysis is an art or craft that invites layers of thought, consideration and interpretation (Frank, 2012; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Therefore the three forms of narrative analysis undertaken in this research drew upon descriptions provided by Sparkes and Smith (2014) and Smith and Sparkes (2009b), and examples of how these forms have been applied to other work. Before these analyses were applied, interview and focus group data was transcribed and observational journal entries, participants written accounts and extracts from training diaries were word processed, so that they could be replicated and each type of analysis applied separately if appropriate/necessary.

Thematic narrative analysis

This form of analysis focused on the content (the what) of participants' stories, whether told or performed, identifying key themes through the recognition of commonalities in the content of participants' stories. Thematic threads became evident when reading the data; stories, or pieces of stories, were similar over the experiences of one participant, or among a number of participants. These threads were coded using coloured markers. For example, female gymnasts' experiences of discomfort while wearing a leotard were identified using a yellow highlighter, while gymnasts experiences of entering the sport were identified using a blue marker. These coloured threads were then grouped together and narratively named (e.g., 'my body hurts', see chapter seven, p.255). At this point, interpretive notations were made based on a series of questions suggested by Sparkes and Smith (2014). They include: What is going on here? What does this theme mean? What are the assumptions underpinning it? What are the implications of this theme? What

conditions are likely to have given rise to it? What is the overall story? Are there anomalies? Why do these occur? Following this (micro) level of analysis, identifying multiple themes across the individual and group data sets, connections were then made between themes and links made to theoretical perspectives, in order to make sense of what was going on in the setting. An example of this process is in Appendix F.

Structural analysis of narrative types

This form of analysis was used to identify and make sense of *how* participants' stories were put and held together, or what narrative resources are drawn upon to construct the story being told or performed. In order to do this, common plots or storylines across participants' stories were identified, colour-coded, clustered together and named based on the underlying central theme of the narrative. For example, the narrative characterisation of 'cuties' (see chapter five, p.180) were held together by their body appearance, bodily performances and others' recognition of these qualities and subsequent assigning of this narrative label.

A series of questions, again presented by Sparkes and Smith (2014) were used to aid additional notations about these narratives. For example, 'what narratives "out there" in culture shape how the story is being told? What kinds of narratives are being imposed upon the individual? What kinds of narratives are being withheld? What mechanisms allow the dominant narratives to be imposed and other narratives withheld? In doing so, links were made between narratives and theoretical perspectives to make sense of these structures. An example of this process can be seen in Appendix F.

Performative analysis

Performative analysis examines the '*hows*' of talk and interaction. As such, this form of analysis was undertaken on observational notes and additional notes made about the behaviour of participants in focus groups (i.e. how participants interacted with one another) and interviews. This required close observation of participants' body language, use of space and speech, in relation to a specific, notable audiences (e.g., peers, parents, coaches, judges etc.) while in the setting. Analysis was performed by first identifying descriptions of participants' performed behaviours and notations made on a number of considerations - are these common patterns of behaviour among the group? How is this learned? Is this how storied narratives are performed? Are these performances genuine? Or falsely acted? Do these performances confirm and reproduce socio-cultural narrative? Or do they challenge them? Female gymnasts private narratives of puberty were perhaps most notable through this type of analysis (see chapter six, p.226). Rarely discussed, gymnasts were found to manage their bodies and conform to wider, traditional social narratives of how the female body should be managed during menstruation.

As a final step in analysing the data, a summative, overarching process of analysis was undertaken, by constructing a picture board of interlinking research findings to better understand what was going on in the setting and how best to organise and present the findings to the reader. This can be seen in Appendix G.

Data representation

Qualitative inquiry has received a great deal of attention due to questions or concerns about the ways in which researchers capture the lived experiences of individuals, termed the *crisis of representation* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Sparkes, 1995, 2002b; Sparkes and Smith, 1994). Thus, there is an increasing concern about how authors write themselves and others in and out of their texts.

Traditionally, qualitative work has used realist tales to represent the research findings. These tales are characterised by foregrounding the voices of the participant(s), allowing the reader to gain important insights into the perceptions and meanings attributed to particular issues and events, often in the form of extracts from the raw data. They operate within conventions of '*experiential author(ity)*'; *the participant's point of view*; and *interpretive omnipotence*' (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p.155 original emphasis). However, the construction and theoretical framing of these voices is often by a disembodied author, a convention that resonates with the traditions of quantitative research. Thus, against the backdrop of the crisis of representation, scholars have come to realise that form and content are inseparable (Richardson, 2000). Eisener (2008, p.5) argues that 'not only does knowledge come in different forms, [so do] the forms of its creation'. As such, many scholars have come to acknowledge writing as a form of analysis and representation. For example, Richardson (2000, p.923) writes:

I consider writing as a *method of inquiry*, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic. Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling", about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of the research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing"...By writing in different ways we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.

Experience is now taken to be created or crafted in the social text of the researcher. CAPs such as confessional tales, poetic representations and ethnodramas have been developed, allowing authors to move outside of conventional scientific writing forms and are now

considered legitimate ways for qualitative researchers to represent their findings (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). When used alone, or in combination, these forms of representation can contribute to deeper level of understanding of the phenomena under study (Sparkes, 2002b).

The storied narratives that were told and performed in this research, lend themselves to narrative forms of representation. This research used a combination of confessional tales²⁵, realist tales, and creative non-fictions²⁶, woven together to tell a story of trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of their sporting and social world and the stories of those who are integral to those experiences. Sparkes (2002b) suggests these tales, when well *crafted*, can provide compelling and detailed accounts of complex lived experiences.

Moreover, Pitney and Parker (2009) note that when crafting the research text, the researcher should make clear decisions about the extent to which their voice and the voice of their participants is heard and interwoven with researcher observations and experiences. They suggest the following combinations in which voices are presented in qualitative research:

- High researcher voice - low participant voice
- High researcher voice - high participant voice
- Low researcher voice - low participant voice
- Low researcher voice - high participant voice

This research has both a high presentation of the researcher's voice and a high presentation of participants' voices. In places I have taken on the role of storyteller (as defined by

²⁵ Confessional tales (as defined by Van Maanen, 1988) are characterised by the foregrounding of the *researcher's* voice 'in a way that takes us behind the scenes...[providing a] highly packaged and focused account of the culture studied (Sparkes, 2002b, p.57).

²⁶ Creative non-fictions are often used to protect the participants of a study (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Sparkes, 2002b) by disguising individuals and collective groups within a literary crafting of a story. Pseudonyms are used in place of individuals' names and geographical locations, and non-essential details are falsified.

Frank, 2000), drawing upon participants' realist tales (i.e. direct quotations from interviews and focus groups, written extracts and observations) to bring to life the stories and voices of the participants. Sparkes and Smith (2014) consider the outcome of this storytelling role as a confessional tale, characterised by the traditionally disembodied voice of the author, becoming replaced by the personal voice of the researcher-author who announces their presence within their work. Douglas and Carless (2010) explain that representing analyses and interpretations in this way communicates the richness and complexity of what the researcher has seen, heard and experienced.

Participants' voices will be heard in the form of modified²⁷ realist tales, extracted from interviews, focus groups and observations, and through the crafting of creative non-fictions (chapter four only). A number of scholars have made the case for creative non-fiction as a productive, valuable and sometimes necessary form of expressive communication for research findings (e.g., Denison and Markula, 2003; Smith 2013; Sparkes, 2002b; Stewart and Lord, 2010; Watson, 2011). Creative non-fiction takes the real, messy, complex lives and experiences of participants and presents them using fictional literary techniques such as characterisation and dialogue within a setting and plot. Sparkes and Smith (2014, p.171) state:

Readers of creative non-fiction can presume that the events actually happened but that factual evidence is being shaped and dramatised using fictional techniques that provide evocative and metaphoric language techniques (for example, vernacular language; composite characters; inner dialogue; flashbacks and flash forwards; tone shifts and so on) to provide a forceful, coherent rendering of events...

The decision to engage with these literary techniques was taken at the outset of this research, based upon three key principles. First, its compelling vibrancy which invites emotional responses and additional interpretation from the reader (Barone, 2000; Carless

²⁷ Some details within participants stories have been modified, omitted or adapted to protect their anonymity and the anonymity of those in the story. For example, pseudonyms have been used for all those mentioned in participants' stories, including venues. Where possible adaptations and omissions have been indicated in the text.

and Sparkes, 2008). Second, its provision as an ethical tool to better disguise the identity of storytellers and the identities of those they told stories about (Angrosino, 2007). Many of the stories told and performed in this research were not only of children and young people, but also from and about coaches, parents and governing body committee members who might be easily identifiable in other forms of writing. Third, the usefulness of this approach in presenting taboo, silenced and sensitive topics within the sport, such as disordered eating and menstruation, which were discussed in confidence.

This approach to data (re)presentation was made on the basis that I took on an insider role within the setting, often being a participant. In the role of a coach, I was integral to the lives of the participants and therefore formed my own opinions and interpretations of events and issues, rather than drawing solely upon those of the participants. Moreover, I felt compelled to give the participants an opportunity to voice their own experiences and perceptions which are often not heard in the sport. In taking this position, I have addressed representational issues by exposing my background and autobiographical positioning in relation to the sporting setting (see chapter one, p.1). I have also been reflexive throughout the research process, recognising the need to analyse the "baggage" I carry in terms of my social and personal experiences (as suggested by Sparkes, 1995) and have dedicated a summative section for this in chapter eight. In doing so, I recognise that I tell a story from the perspective of a 27 year-old, female, white, working-class, trampoline coach.

A summary of the research process

Within the context of an emergent qualitative research design outlined in Figure 3, this research used a narrative ethnographic methodology which utilised ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews (face-to-face and computer-mediated), focus groups and requests for written accounts and extracts from gymnasts' training diaries to collect rich, detailed data about the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts and those who are important to them. These methods were employed in a systematic way (see Figure 4). The data were inductively analysed using three forms of data analysis - a thematic narrative analysis, a structural analysis of narrative types and an analysis of narrative performances, to better understand the *whats* and *hows* of participants' storied narratives. Following the end of the 17 month data collection period, a summative data analysis was undertaken to link themes, narratives and ideas together, to better understand what was going on in this sporting group (Appendix G). This research has presented the findings in the form of a confessional tale interwoven by participants' modified realist tales and creative non-fictions crafted to capture their experiences. Thus, there will be a high representation of both my voice as the researcher-coach and the participants of the research.

Judgement criteria for qualitative research

This research acknowledges the paradigmatic shift towards the legitimisation of qualitative research and the subsequent re-thinking and re-working about how qualitative and/or narrative work should be judged (Sparkes and Smith, 2009). Traditionally, judgments about the quality of (quantitative) research centred on the criteria of objectivity, reliability, generalisability and validity which are neither akin to the philosophical

assumptions of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010), nor do they correspond to the aim of this study.

Traditional judgment criteria have become the subject of re-thinking in recent years. A number of scholars have provided an alternative, legitimate way of judging the quality of qualitative research. For example, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) provide criteria for narrative inquiries, and Manning (1997) suggests an authenticity criteria for various forms of qualitative research. Many of these debates or alternative sets of criteria are rooted in the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and are based on non-foundationalist epistemological assumptions. In sum, these arguments suggest judgments of qualitative research should be made on a different set of broad principles that are not fundamental requirements, but criteria which can be applied to various aspects of the inquiry and are exercised through reasoned debate between scholars (Sparkes and Smith, 2009).

What I present below is a set of criteria (Lincoln, 1995) or guiding ideals (Schwandt, 1997), drawn from Tracy's (2010) eight criteria for judging excellence in qualitative work and Richardson's (2000) posed questions for judging qualitative work. This list is not fixed, but can be drawn upon selectively at different points in the reading of this thesis.

- Worthy topic - The topic should be relevant, timely, significant, interesting and/or evocative. Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions, move me to write, move me to try new research practices, or move me to action? Does this piece of work contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? How has this perspective informed the construction of the text?
- Rich rigor - The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate and complex theoretical constructs, data and time in the field, sample(s), context(s), and data collection and analysis processes.

- Sincerity - The study is characterised by self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases and inclinations of the researcher(s); and transparency about methods and challenges. How did the author come to write this text? Are there ethical issues? How has the author's subjectivity been both producer and product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements about the point of view? Do authors hold themselves accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people they have studied?
- Credibility - The research is marked by thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (non-textual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling; triangulation, crystallisation; multivocality; and member reflections. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? Does it seem true - a credible account of a cultural, social individual, or communal sense of the "real"?
- Resonance - The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of readers through aesthetic, evocative representations; naturalistic generalisations; and transferable findings. Rather than reducing standards, another standard is added. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative analytic practices open up the text and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying and complex?
- Significant contribution - The research provides a significant contribution conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically and heuristically. Does this piece of work contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? How has this perspective informed the construction of the text?
- Ethical - The research considers procedural ethics; relational ethics; and exiting ethics.
- Meaningful coherence - The study achieves what it purports to be about; uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals; and meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings and interpretations with each other.

For me this thesis as a whole, meets all of these criteria in some way. The nature of the contributions and potential impact of this research are discussed in chapter eight.

Ethical considerations

Stringent ethical considerations were made throughout this research. Ethical consent was sought and granted from Cardiff Metropolitan University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) prior to sampling and access procedures commencing. However, as Wolcott (2002, p.148) notes, 'ethics are not housed in such procedures', but a set of moral principles or values that are carefully considered by the researcher throughout their project(s). This is supported by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) who stress researchers exercise their moral values and skills in reflexively negotiating ethical dilemmas. Often described as *aspirational ethics*, this set of principles goes above and beyond the minimum requirements of procedural ethical considerations, and recognises variations in culture, values and morals which can be judged and processed internally by the researchers' moral judgment with little or no procedural checks (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Therefore this research acknowledged that ethical considerations were not 'over and done with' when approval was granted, but instead unexpected, subtle and nuanced ethical dilemmas were debated and the best course of action taken as and when they emerged. As such, a number of overarching ontological ethical positions, outlined by Sparkes and Smith (2014), were consistently considered throughout this research:

- Virtue ethics - Ethical behaviour is both contextual and situational and not the application of abstract procedures. Instead the researcher exercises reflexive moral skills when negotiating ethical dilemmas, acting with integrity, honesty and humility.
- Relational ethics - This approach values dignity, mutual respect and connectedness between the researcher and the researched, and/or the researcher and the communities they operate within. Relational researchers balance their aims and objectives with their obligation of care toward those who participate in their research.

- Reflexive ethics - Reflexive researchers need to:
 - a) Be sensitive to the interactions between themselves, others and within situations.
 - b) Recognise the reactions to a research situation and adapt in a responsive, ethical and moral way to ensure participants safety, privacy, dignity and autonomy are respected.
 - c) Recognise possible power imbalances between themselves and the participants.
 - d) Use available forms of representation as a tool to be transparent, making clear not only what was discovered in their work, but how it was discovered.

In the context of these positions, the main ethical issues and dilemmas associated with this research are discussed below.

Voluntary informed consent

Voluntary informed consent (VIC) in research with human participants is considered fundamental through multiple codes of practice. For example, in the British Sociological Association's (BSA) *Statement of Ethical Practice*, the Social Research Association's (SRA) *Ethical Guidelines*, in research guides for sports studies (e.g., Gratton and Jones, 2004; McFee, 2010; Sparkes and Smith, 2014) and commentary on research ethics in general (e.g., Franklin, Rowland, Fox and Nicolson, 2012). VIC is based upon the notion that, as far as possible, research should be based on the freely given consent of those being studied (McFee, 2010). Participants should know what the research is about, why it is being undertaken, who is undertaking and financing it and how it will be used (BSA, 2011). Moreover, it should be made clear to participants that they have the right to withdraw from the research, in part or in full, at any time, for any reason (McFee, 2010; Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

This research sought VIC from all possible gatekeepers and participants before data collection began (as suggested by Sparkes and Smith, 2014). First, a letter was sent to the Club Secretary, Vice-Chair and two Welfare Officers outlining the aims, purposes and

possible outcomes of the research, and requesting that they forward any questions or concerns to the researcher or if they had none then to formally provide access to the club (see Appendix A). Second, the research was outlined in a general meeting of the club, to all parents, gymnasts and coaches in attendance (N=23), giving them the opportunity to raise any concerns or questions. A summary of this was provided to all members of the club in the following issue of their newsletter (see Appendix B). Finally, VIC packs were sent to all coaches, gymnasts and their families. These packs provided an information sheet using age-appropriate language outlining the aims, purposes and potential outcomes of the research; a VIC form for parents and/or coaches as participants in the study, a VIC form for parents to consent to their child taking part in the study and an assent form for children to complete (see Appendix H). A two week period was given to read the information and ask any questions members, parents or coaches might have. Despite a three week delay in the returning of some of the forms, due to various reasons (i.e. loss of the forms enroute home, illness/absence from club, the general "busy-ness" of daily lives) all members, parents and coaches agreed to take part in ethnographic observations for an 18 month period. Any newcomers to the club after this point were given these forms as part of their membership pack.

Sparkes and Smith (2014) argue the emergent and often prolonged nature of qualitative research means that VIC can rarely be accomplished in a singular event at the outset of the research, but instead needs to be (re)negotiated on a regular basis throughout the study. As such, this research used pivotal points and requests for additional participation in the research to re-establish VIC. For instance, participants who took part in interviews and/or focus groups were required to complete a separate VIC form (see Appendix H). In addition, VIC was gained retrospectively for diary extracts, one

computer-mediated interview and from judges and officials with whom I had conversations during competitions, when their words were reported (see Appendix H). Where written accounts were requested from specific individuals about a specific topic or issue solely for the purpose of this research, the writing of the account and giving it to the researcher was considered consensual, although VIC forms were also issued when the researcher was in receipt of the extract. Also, as explained above, this research took advantage of unexpected and emerging opportunities for data collection outside of the general research design that is a computer-mediated interview. In this instance VIC could not be sought in advance, and was instead gained retrospectively. Similarly, in cases where useful written accounts were taken from training diaries, a common tool used in trampoline training, additional VIC was sought (see Appendix H). A further example, of the renegotiation of VIC was when new members were introduced to the group (see Appendix H). New coaches, gymnasts and their parents were provided with an information/VIC consent pack, which was attached to their club membership pack. This strategy worked well, VIC was obtained from all members of the trampoline club for all aspects of the research, although this was no easy task, requiring a great deal of communication between coaches and gymnasts, gymnasts and their parents and subsequent chasing of forms to be returned on occasion.

Disclosure and anonymity

The topics discussed in interviews and sometimes focus groups were often of a sensitive nature. For example, some conversations addressed issues of menstruation in young female gymnasts, others discussed experiences of distressful or uncomfortable situations and interactions, and on occasions an awareness of sexual activity between gymnasts and between coaches and gymnasts (over the age of 16 years-old) was highlighted. Although some of these topics were unexpected, some were planned. In such

situations interviews were arranged providing an enclosed, more private environment than a focus group (as suggested by Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Any questions asked about topics of a sensitive nature were worded with appropriate and tactful language in order to respect the integrity of the participant (as suggested by the BSA, 2011). Physical and verbal responses to these questions were gauged, but at no point were there obvious signs that the participant(s) felt uncomfortable or did not want to answer the questions (e.g., shaking of the head, a long pause, a worried, scared or tearful expression). In the main, conversation flowed well throughout all interviews and focus groups, leading to in-depth rich accounts of participants' experiences, perceptions and ideas. In addition, it is worth noting here, that these environments were identified as a potential source of 'guilty knowledge', in the ethics application to the University's REC. That is, sensitive information that reveals illegal activity or issues surrounding the welfare of a vulnerable person. Participants were informed and reminded at the beginning of the data collection attempts that confidentiality could not be offered in these circumstances. However, no such information was disclosed as a result of the study or exclusively within the research environments.

All participants were assured of their anonymity, as well as those mentioned in their storied experiences, in accordance with BSA guidelines (2011). However, this is not a simple task within the complexities associated with narrative research in a very specific sporting setting²⁸ (also outlined in Mellick and Fleming, 2011). A number of stringent steps was taken to assess and minimise the risks to participants, and those who are associated with them, being identified in this research. Pseudonyms were used in the recording and reporting of all names of individuals, clubs and locations (as suggested by

²⁸ The trampoline community in Wales is a relatively small and it would be possible for insiders in this group to guess who individuals might be, leading to a breach in anonymity promises or misidentification of individuals.

the BSA, 2011). A consistency document was kept on a password protected laptop which provided the real identities of all pseudonyms, also enabling the reader to track individuals through the thesis and over time. Linked to this point, is the use of creative non-fiction and modified realist tales (defined and discussed above) to disguise individuals (e.g., judges) which might otherwise be disclosed in other forms of writing. A number of researchers have commented on the ethical virtues associated with narrative inquiry in relation to maintaining the anonymity of individuals and groups (e.g., Bochner, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Smith and Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b). This has been discussed above (see commentary on data representation).

Working with children and young people

This research was concerned with the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts who are mostly children and young people in their mid-late teens (see Appendix C). Copious amounts of time were spent with these young people in various settings presenting multiple, interlinking and complex ethical dilemmas.

First, I acknowledged the intellectual and maturity differences between children, young people in their mid-late teens and adults, and considered how these differences should inform adaptations to the research design (as recommended by Graue and Walsh, 1998). Adaptations included the use of age appropriate wording on information sheets, VIC forms and explanations of the research. Special consideration was given to how to simplify the important terms of *confidentiality*, *anonymity* and *discretion*, and potential research outputs such as journal articles. Furthermore, the suggested amount of time required to conduct an interview or focus group was shortened. A period of half an hour was suggested for children and teens, although often those gymnasts in their teens held conversation to similar lengths of time as adults.

Second, working with these vulnerable populations presented some very real potential risks to integrity and perceived professionalism of the researcher, and the mutual trust relationship between the gymnasts and their coach. That is to say, this research had the potential for multiple interpretations of the dual coach-researcher role to be made by gymnasts, parents and the "other". In this instance, the "other" is considered to be an individual outside of the trampoline group, someone who is not aware of researcher role. For example, a mutually agreed interview (between researcher, gymnast and parent) might seem strange or even inappropriate to an outsider who might view the situation as a coach having a one-on-one conversation with a young gymnast in a relatively private place, discussing sensitive topics. This is just one of the many possible, wide-ranging scenarios and subsequent interpretations of these types of situations which were considered at the outset of this research. Another example considered was the potential for the researcher role to be misconstrued by young gymnasts and viewed as an opportunity to disclose sensitive information under the (mis)assumption that a researcher has to keep it confidential. This scenario had the potential for any subsequent need to take action to be viewed by a child or youth as promise of secrecy that has been betrayed. In order to minimise the risks to both myself, as the researcher, and participants a number of measures and guidelines were put into place at the outset of this research. As the researcher, I ensured that their various Criminal Records Bureau checks (already undertaken by Cardiff Metropolitan University, the trampoline club and BG) and child protection qualifications (i.e. Safeguarding and Protecting Children, and Time to Listen) were maintained throughout my time in the field, as recommended by the BSA (2011) when working with vulnerable populations. Furthermore, interview and focus group environments were selected within the confines of the club training venue, rather than participants' homes.

These environments offered familiar, relatively private and quiet surroundings, but were also visible to members of the public, staff from the leisure facility and parents should they wish to watch from a distance. A versatile "community suite" was utilised for focus groups and interviews on a number of occasions. This offered a quiet space accessed via a set of glass-paned doors opposite the main entrance to the frequently used sports hall and within a publicly accessible corridor. On the far-side of the room was a continuous set of windows that looked out onto the busy public car park of the leisure facility. Finally, to minimise the potential for misinterpretation of the researcher role by child/teen gymnasts, clear definitions of and differences between the terms anonymity, discretion and confidentiality were made at least three times. First, in the general outline of the research; second, in the information sheet attached to the VIC form for the respective interview or focus group and finally, before initiating the data collection attempt.

A summary of the ethical stance

A combination of aspirational ethical stances was taken to make informed, moral decisions about the ethical dilemmas presented at various point in this research. That is, virtue ethics, relational ethics and reflexive ethics. The participants in this research were people I worked with as a trampoline coach - gymnasts, parents, coaches, competition organisers, judges and officials. These relationships require a great deal of trust and mutual respect which if misplaced may have negatively impacted upon my personal character, my perceived professionalism as a coach and researcher, and ultimately on my source of employment (as a coach). Therefore it was important to maintain a great deal of discretion about the information participants chose to share with me. Particular emphasis has been placed on procedures to ensure the aims, purposes, guarantees and restrictions of the research were communicated to participants of various ages, at different stages of the

research. This in part provided suitable and safe research environments for participants to share their lived experiences and enabled the effective recording and reporting of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

SETTING THE SCENE

This purpose of this chapter is to provide the contextual landscape of this ethnographic work to orientate the reader to the subsequent chapters of this thesis (as recommended by Emerson et al. 1995, 2001). To do so, I present my mapping of trampoline-gymnasts typical routes into, through and out of this sport, as well as identifying the key social actors and stages (Goffman, 1990a) that were central to their lived experiences. Using this map as a basis, this chapter provides a descriptive overview of key 'front stage' regions (Goffman, 1990a) to enable understanding of the discussion of career phases in the following chapters. Creative non-fictions (see chapter three, p.122) and sketches of the physical space have been used to bring these stages to life. Also, within this chapter there are a number of trampoline terms that have been highlighted in **bold** and can be found in the glossary.

Journeying through trampoline careers

Athletic careers and athletic identity are intricately linked (Lavallee and Wylleman, 2000). Gymnasts have been a particular focus of studies exploring the athletic career-identity link (e.g., Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavallee and Robinson, 2007; Warriner and Lavallee, 2008). However, these studies have focused on the experiences of elite female artistic gymnasts who have retired. Trampoline-gymnasts, both male and female, have been neglected as have other career transitions. Studies of other athletic identities, swimmers (Stevenson, 2002), rugby players and climbers (Donnelly and Young, 1988), for example, have detailed the intricacies of athletic careers, their complex relationship with

individuals' sense of self and identity and how these changed over time. Specific transitions, processes and moments within trampoline-gymnasts' career contributed greatly to the embodied narratives they drew upon and/or produced and subsequently their lived experiences of being in the trampoline club.

The time spent immersed in this trampoline club enabled me to plot a map illustrating the common route(s) into, through and out of trampoline careers (Figure 5). The map highlights the key processes, social actors and stages (Goffman, 1990a) that were central to the lives of these trampoline-gymnasts. There are clear overlaps with Donnelly and Young's (1988) career model within this map. For example, the four career stages they discuss - pre-socialisation, selection and recruitment, socialisation and acceptance/ostracism (see chapter two, p.59) are all evident within the ideas presented. However, the nuanced stories of how these trampoline careers are experienced are significantly different to Donnelly and Young's (1988) study of *adult* rugby players and rock climbers. Trampoline-gymnasts tend to be children (under the age of 16 years old, BG, 2013) and do not have the same resources and opportunities as adults. In addition, early exiting, looking to retirement and actually retiring were all notable processes in this group that did not feature in Donnelly and Young's model. Thus Figure 5 and this ethnographic work more generally, provide an extension of Donnelly and Young's (1988) model, but for the purpose of this chapter it is drawn upon as a platform to set the scene and embed the reader into the trampoline world. Likewise, the intricate nuanced experiences of moving through this map will be discussed later in chapter five (entering the trampoline group), chapter six (being in the trampoline group) and chapter seven (looking to retire). However, to put these discussions in context I wish to detail the stages (Goffman, 1990a) which inform trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of these career processes.

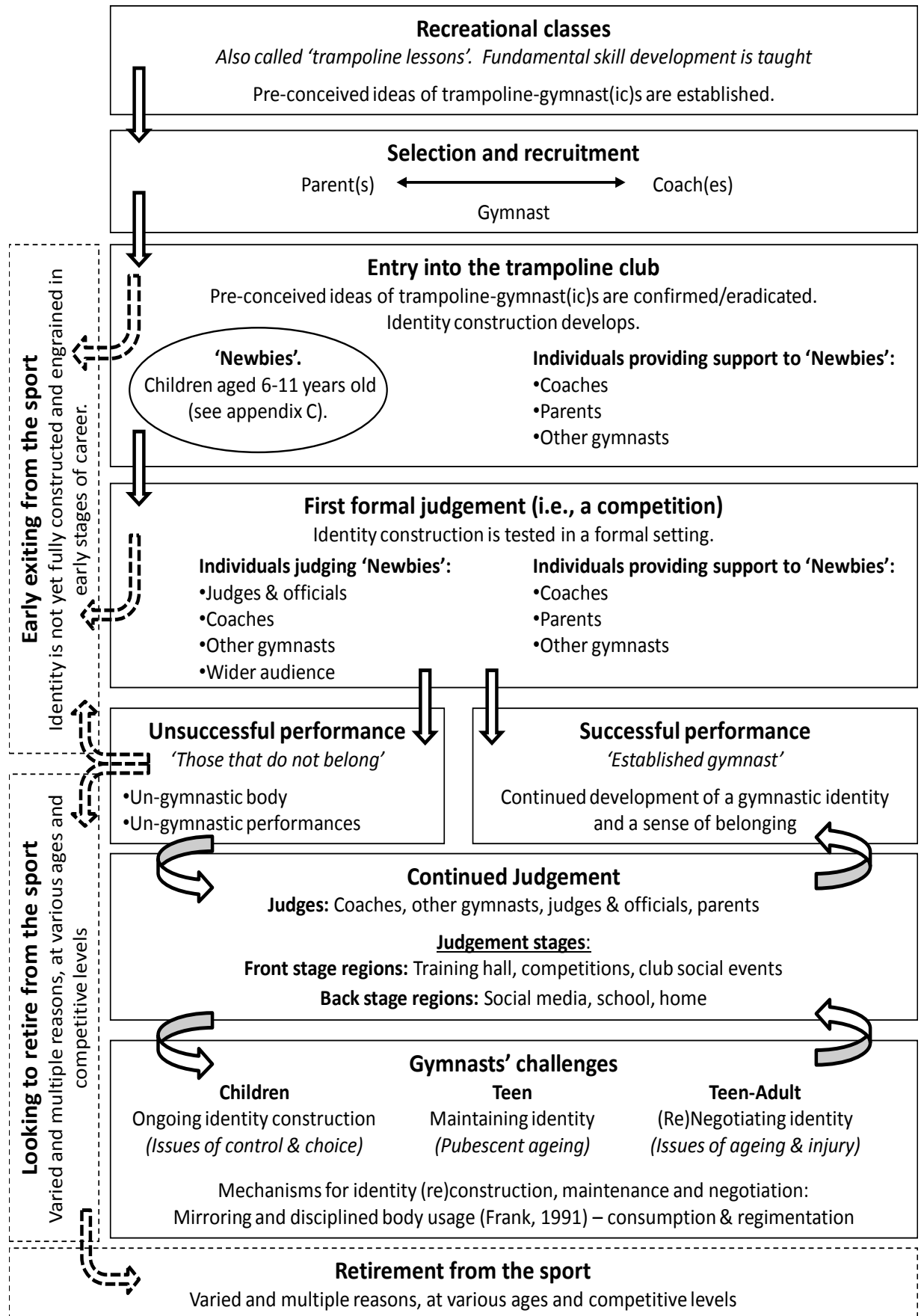


Figure 5. Researcher mapping of typical trampoline career processes in this group.

Recreational classes

Pre-socialisation is the first stage of identity construction in the career process. This is when an individual gathers information about the specific sport they are interested in from a number of sources, including media, family, friends and (in)direct contact with established members of the group, *before* they participate in the group. Many of these trampoline-gymnasts formed ideas about what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast before they started recreational classes, often through indirect contact with the group as they were taking part in another leisure centre activity (e.g., swimming or gymnastics). However, many were completely new to this group until they began recreational classes, registration for which was instigated by parents. These recreational classes formed the main basis for their initial ideas about what trampoline-gymnastics was and what a trampoline-gymnast is. Even though they were in direct contact with the competitive trampoline group, individuals still formed tenuous knowledge and stereotypical notions of this group, littered with misconceptions.

Inaccuracies were likely formed by the norms and values associated with recreational trampoline-gymnastics in this group. The dramaturgical stage on which recreational sessions were played out (Goffman, 1990a) was defined by notions of non-competitive trampoline practices. Emphasis was placed on fun, enjoyment and teaching of fundamental skills required in the sport (e.g., how to get on and off a trampoline safely, how to bounce in the same place). Trampoline lessons were available to all ages and abilities, although adults (aged 16 years old or older) were taught separately in a later time slot and on a flexible 'pay-as-you-go' basis rather than the 10 week course offered to children.

Much of the focus of this work was not in these recreational settings, but the trampoline-gymnasts who feature in this work, experienced and performed on this stage. Therefore I present a storied narrative of an 'average day at work' to better convey the intricacies of this front stage region (Goffman, 1990a).

An Average Day at work

The slow paced clock reads five-past six and only four children have arrived. "If you guys are in this session you need to come and sit down on the mats over here please!" I call in frustration at the children and parents who are hovering around the entrance to the hall. A few small children come running over and sit eagerly on the mat. Another appears to be being dragged into the hall by her mother. I head towards them, trying not to roll my eyes. "She is saying that her stomach hurts" Megan's mother explains as she continues to struggle with her. I bend down so I am in eye line with Megan, who is trying to avoid eye contact. "Right Megan, why don't you have a little go on the trampoline and if your stomach hurts you can tell your coach and come off straight away" I suggest. Megan, who has only attended two sessions, drops her bottom lip in defeat. "Okay" she nods. She takes my hand and I lead her to the mats, where there are now seven children sitting, waiting to start their lesson.

Those who attend regularly are looking frustrated and annoyed about the delay, eager to start their session. I take the register quickly, placing crosses next to the numerous names of children who have yet to attend a single lesson in this ten-week course. I do my usual scan of the children's clothing and check for jewellery and as usual there are immediate problems. "Have you got any socks²⁹ with you lovely?" I ask a little girl with blonde pigtails.

"I'll ask my mum" she mumbles, stumbling to her feet and running toward her mum who is reading her book in the corridor. I watch as her daughter explains the problem. The parent digs around in her handbag retrieving a pair of socks and ushers the little girl to go out of the hall and put them on. I move on to the next problem. "Emily, have you got leggings or shorts on underneath your dress?" I ask.

"I have some but I don't want to put them on. My dress is pretty and the leggings don't go, my mum made me bring them!" she explains, with a slight sneer toward her bag, where I assume the leggings are. Emily is a character. She has been attending these sessions for months. Her precociousness and elaborate dress sense has led us [the coaches] to nickname her 'Emily in pink' on account that there are several Emily's in the group and this Emily is exceptionally 'girly' and often wears bright pink sparkly cowgirl boots into the hall, with a pink bag that usually contains her princess colouring books for use when she is not on the trampoline. I look at Amy, one of my older gymnasts and recently qualified coach who rolls her eyes in a silent communication of 'here we go again'. "Emily, you need to put your leggings on if you want to go on the trampoline" I state in my calmest, nicest matter of fact voice. "Oh, okay" Emily huffs and sulks towards her bag, pulls out her neatly

²⁹ Socks must be worn on the trampoline for safety and hygiene purposes.

folded flowery leggings and heads toward her mum who greets her with an 'I told you so' expression.

*"Ok guys, if Megan, Nia and Owen go on the blue trampoline with Amy and Peter, Phillipa, Siobhan and Emily, when she comes back, can go on the red trampoline with Leon to start **warming-up**" I call. Leon has been training in club for over five years and when he turned 13 he asked if he could help out in the recreational classes. He's a competent gymnast so I tend to let him take the warm up under my supervision, which he seems to enjoy. Michael, another of our volunteering gymnasts, gathers the children's **award** sheets from a file. The session begins to flow, but I notice that one of the parents has decided to come into the hall and sit on a pile of spare mats to feed their toddler. Crumbs and grease from crisps litter and sheen the top mat when I arrive with slight dread at having to ask him to go outside the hall. "I'm really sorry, but I'm going to have to ask that you step outside the hall and watch from the corridor or the balcony upstairs" I ask politely. "Oh right, why's that?" he replies.*

"Well, if we allowed every parent to stay in the hall it would be a real distraction for the children and when parents stay the children tend to leave the trampolines all the time to speak to their parents or to get drinks and food which is against the rules we set" I explain irritated. I have the same conversation every week with one parent or another. "No problem" he replies, "I'll just do her hair and then we'll move."

When I return to the trampolines, four more children have arrived. Amy has already allocated them to a trampoline, splitting them between her novice group and my advanced group. I move to stand behind Leon who has gathered the sheets Michael left on the side of the trampoline for me and begun to call out moves that the children have already had ticked off, testing them to see if they can remember how to do them. A clammy hand taps my arm repeatedly. Cai is looking up at me, on tip toes, "Can I go in your group?" he asks. Cai is one of the children who really wants to be here, he wants to learn and join the club. His mother has approached me several times, enquiring about his readiness and available spaces. He is very lively and doesn't usually listen to instructions, but against my better judgement I agree. "Yes!" he exclaims punching the air and skips happily toward the group. Leon looks back and makes a mock angry face; Cai annoys him. "Are you okay with that?" I ask Amy. "Yeah that's absolutely fine" she laughs, "rather you than me, good luck!". I laugh back.

"Have you all had a warm-up bounce?" I ask my group, already knowing the answer. They all nod. "Okay then, we are going to work on your awards today, who's first?" I ask. With that Peter and Cai immediately jump up onto the trampoline, dangling by their bellies, wrestling and kicking each other to get on first. Emily tries to contend with them, but quickly gives up. "Boys!" I shout, resulting in them both dropping to the floor and looking sheepish. "Who was first in the hall?" I ask.

"I was" Siobhan steps forward raising her hand. No one argues with this and the two boys move out of the way to allow Siobhan to alight the trampoline. "You know the rules guys, you go in the order that you arrived in, so it's fair" I remind the group as whole, so as not to single Peter and Cai out.

I watch each child in turn, offering remedies to failed attempts, corrective feedback and getting them to copy demonstrations provided by myself and Leon.

Cai however offers continuous disruption, performing cartwheels and handstands on the mats and swinging underneath the trampoline. "Cai, no swinging underneath the trampoline please, it's dangerous. You don't want someone to bounce on top of you do you?" I call to him frequently. He discontinues for a few moments before attempting it again. I feel drained and I'm only half-way through the session. I glance at Amy's beginners group, most of whom are rolling around on the mats, playing a game with Michael. Behind me 'Emily in Pink' has emptied the contents of her rucksack onto the mats and is busy colouring in a picture that will be destined for one of the coach's fridges by the end of the evening. Two children run into the hall, skidding to halt at the side of the trampolines and kick their shoes off to join the session. They are consistently late, every week, without explanation or even so much as an apology. Amy looks at me in clear frustration, rolling her eyes openly and begins hunting for their award sheets frantically.

*The session continues, and both Amy and I work our way through the various skills on the children's respective award scheme sheet. I notice that some of the club gymnasts have started to arrive and begin pulling mats off the pile in the corner to begin warming up. They are early, but I feel a sense of relief because their arrival signals that the recreational session is nearly over. When Cai's finished attempting a **front landing** with mixed success, I ask the group which game they would like to play. They agree on **genie**. Peter is elected to be the bouncer and the game begins. When each person is out, they leave the trampoline and put their shoes on, ready to go home. The game finishes at 6:57pm. Perfect timing! Amy is busy helping each of the children off the trampoline. "Emily, can you pack your colouring away please" she yells at Emily in Pink, who has returned to colouring instead of putting her shoes on.*

The club gymnasts immediately spot that my bed has cleared and run over to get on. As the children from the recreational class are collected by the parents, they watch in awe as the club gymnasts start to bounce on the trampoline. The height and form of their jumps clearly demonstrates the technical differences between them. Megan stops and stares at them open-mouthed and her mum allows her to watch them for a little bit in the corridor.

Although this story is typical of a recreational class there are some clear and important features that highlight the differences between this setting and those that trampoline-gymnasts experience later on in their career. Class numbers varied from week to week, commonly ranging from eight to 16 children, between the ages of 5 and 14 years old. Although bookings were made for a set of 10 one hour sessions, this is often viewed as a transient arrangement for some children and parents. Some children would not attend for a number of weeks and then reappear for a number of sessions, or only attend one session and never come back. However, many children (and their parents) would attend

consistently and regularly, despite mild illnesses and injuries, over prolonged periods of time.

Generally, each mixed ability class was divided into two broad ability-based groups. The more experienced, more qualified coach tended to work with the more advanced children, and the junior coach(es) tended to work with the often younger and less experienced children. Experienced gymnasts from the trampoline club voluntarily assisted the coaches in these sessions, undertaking admin tasks, demonstrating skills on the trampoline and delivering small, coach-prescribed floor activities to small groups of children.

Both children and their parents needed continuous reminders of the health and safety regulations, child protection procedures and normative rules associated with the sport. For example, children in these sessions would often wear inappropriate, hazardous clothing (e.g., girls would wear skirts), jump from the trampoline rather than safely sliding off and run around the hall in their socks as boredom set in in-between turns on the trampoline. Lateness, often in excess of 20 minutes, was common and caused disruption to the running and structure of the sessions.

Aligning these classes with the goals of children and their parents was difficult as motivations for participating were fluid, changing and varied. They ranged from engaging in a fun and enjoyable activity, socialising with other children, performing general exercise to assist a healthy and active lifestyle, learning new skills, obtaining extrinsic awards (e.g., badges and certificates provided by the governing body award scheme) and using the classes as a 'stepping-stone' to enter competitive trampoline clubs. Those who had the latter motive tended to attend more often, take a keen interest in developing their skills on the trampoline and engage positively with those who were seen as trampoline club figures,

held in high regard on the perceived hierarchal scale (e.g. established, experienced gymnasts volunteering in the sessions and coaches conducting the classes).

The main focus of data collection was not within these recreational settings. However the majority of trampoline-gymnasts and their parents have transitioned from this setting and have therefore experienced it. It is a space that informs the initial foundations of what it is to be a competitive club gymnast by establishing normative rules associated with the sport. Contact with club coaches and competitive gymnasts allowed recreational participants to form ideas about what it is to be a trampoline-gymnast. Thus, this space corresponds to Donnelly and Young's (1988) pre-socialisation stage within their model of identity construction in sporting careers. It recognises the process of individuals gathering information about a sporting group and forming ideas about what it is to be a group member.

The latter stage of a (competitive) gymnast's time in recreational sessions concludes with selection and recruitment into the trampoline club. These two processes were dominated by decisions made by coaches and parents, because the gymnast selected was usually so young (aged 6-11 years old, see Appendix C). Coaches within the trampoline club would select appropriate children and recruit them through negotiations with their parent(s).

Trampoline club

The social space that is the trampoline club and its physical setting, the sports hall, form the main front stage region (Goffman, 1990a) in this work. This was gymnasts' 'home away from home' where they spent much of their training time from entering the club through to considering retirement (see Figure 5). Thus much of the observational work in this research took place in this setting and the values and practices contained within it will

feature greatly in chapters five, six and seven. Figure 6 provides an illustration of the typical trampoline set-up in this club, highlighting key areas that were occupied by specific people.

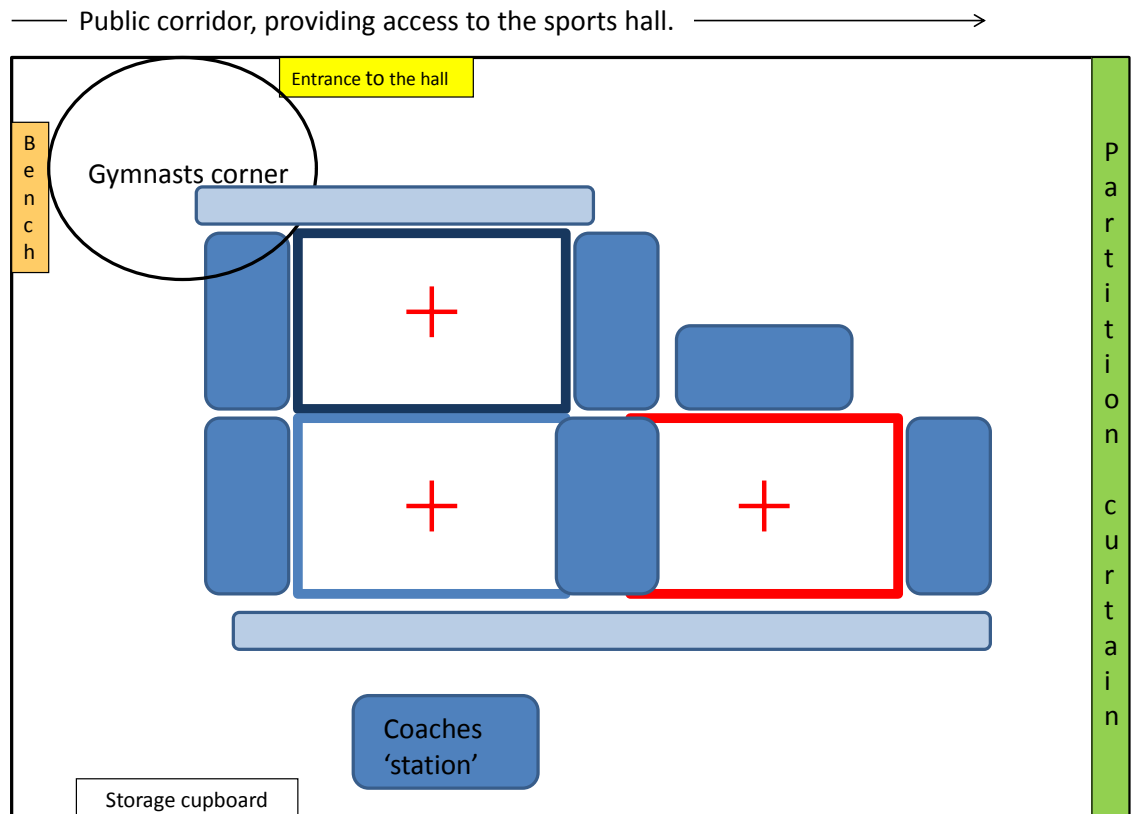


Figure 6. A sketch of a typical trampoline set-up in a club session.

Home away from home: Club training

Although Leon, Amy and Georgia had helped in the initial set up, they had skulked off to the corner of the room and were engrossed in conversation. "You three", I called to get their attention. They spun around in my direction. "Can you help those guys with the mats" I point toward Ryan and Sarah the smallest gymnasts in the club, who are trying to wrestle a mat into position. They hurried over and helped the little ones with the remainder of the mats, playfully teasing them by standing on the mats while they are trying to pull them along the floor, but ultimately slotting them neatly into place.

Occasionally, parents wave at me but then disappear. The younger, newer gymnasts arrive dressed in their club kit - a black t-shirt with the club logo on the

front and their name on the back; the girls wearing gymnastics shorts or black leggings and the boys sports shorts or jogging bottoms. They place their drinks, bags and outdoor clothing in the corner in which they all seem to congregate or on the adjacent bench. Although the older gymnasts are now dressed in their club kit for training, Georgia arrived in jeans and a rather revealing top and changed into her kit. Luke always seems to arrive wearing a baseball cap and has multiple piercings that he removes.

It seems an almost seamless process, as soon as the equipment is set up, the gymnasts split themselves into their friendship groups and jump onto the trampolines, in some order that they decide and begin their **warm-up**. Those arriving a little late join in, without instruction. A mixture of **basic skills** and **play moves** are performed across the trampolines and the gymnasts get on and off the trampoline every two minutes or so without argument. Those off the trampolines are **spotting** and chatting about their days. Jess and I chat briefly about our day, breaking abruptly to comment on a skill we've seen one of the gymnasts do, how it has improved or how it might be made better.

When the movement on the trampoline stops, this indicates that each of the gymnasts has completed their warm-up. It becomes noticeably quieter as the **beds** make a rhythmic banging noise when they are in use. I do a quick calculation of numbers, working out that there are five gymnasts on two of the beds and six on the other. "Ok then you guys, can you do ten straight jumps, squeezing your body as tight as you can, you should almost stop in the air at the **top**, then ten **tuck**, ten **pike**, ten **straddle** really working on getting them at the top of your jump and squeezing into nice tight shapes please. Make sure you come off in-between each set. On the floor can we have one of you doing **burpees**, one doing **tuck-line-outs** and the other person doing **v-sits** and **straddle-sits**. At least one person should be spotting, and remember you also have to record this in your training diaries so get them out of the box before you start. Has anyone got any questions?" There's a pause of silence, which I interpret as a mutual understanding of what is expected. "Off you go then!" They burst into action, some getting on the trampoline straight away, others organising what order they are going to go in and some collecting diaries from the box next to me and Jess. We are sat a little way from the trampolines on top of pile of mats so we can see the gymnasts without craning our necks. As the warm-up progresses we give feedback, asking gymnasts questions about their performance, "good tuck shape Ella, but was it at the top of your jump?" and occasionally prompting gymnasts to ensure they are maintaining a good work level or help them a little with their technique on the floor.

As the warm-up reaches a natural conclusion Jess and I finalise who will be placed on each trampoline and what tasks they will be focusing on for the remainder of the session. I look up to see two of the beds have finished their warm-up and the gymnasts on those respective beds are now performing play moves. "When you've finished can you come over here please and sit on the mats" I call to them. The two groups who have finished wander over towards us, the remaining group hurries over when the final gymnast has finished. "Okay guys, so we are almost a week away from **grades**, so I want you to spend some time working on your **routines**, while me and Jess go through this paperwork and workout your times for the competition. You all know your routines, and you all know what needs to be improved, so use this time to try and make those changes. Make sure that you

are doing all of your moves at the top of your jump, that they all have good, sharp line-outs. Everybody understand?" I ask. Silence again. "Okay" there's a sudden jerk of movement and scramble toward the trampolines, "wait a minute, I haven't finished, you're not going to be working in the groups you were just in". There's a big groan. "If you work with people in the same grade you can help each other, you're supposed to be a team!" I shout in retaliation. "Ok, those competing in **I** and **H**, put your hands up". I look up to four raised hands, "what about you Ryan?" I ask.

"Oh yeah, sorry" says Ryan, quickly putting his hand up, embarrassed at being caught talking instead of listening. "You five will be on the light blue bed. Can I have the **Gs** and **Fs** over on the dark blue bed and the **Es**, **Ds** and **Cs** over on the red bed please". Everyone moves toward the trampolines. "Wait!" I shout again, and they shrink back. "You will be performing your routines in front of everyone after the break, so make sure you do what you have been asked to do. If you're not on the trampoline you should be spotting or doing the **conditioning** sheet in your diary". They wait for another instruction, but when it doesn't come they move toward their respectively assigned trampolines and begin performing their routines.

"Okay, last bouncer and then break!" I call to signify that they can have their five minute break. Most clear the beds immediately and hurry over to their bags to get their drinks and snacks or money if they have been given any. They gather in their friendship groups delving into their drinks and snacks. Some congregate in the corner furthest away from the trampolines and us, but more recently the older gymnasts tend to hover around me and Jess at the mat pile, and one or two sit on their own. The conversation centres on the forthcoming competition. I feel harassed with the continuous stream of questions, while I too am trying to have something to eat and drink. "What time am I competing?", "what time are we leaving", "who's judging me?", "how many people am I against?".

"I'll tell you later." I answer in frustration, "When you're all together, it's fair then."

"Right then you guys, get back on please, you've got five minutes to go over your routines before me and Jess mark them. Remember to practice presenting and stopping properly at the end". The gymnasts scramble back toward the trampolines and Jess rummages in the diary box for paper and pens.

Five minutes pass and I call to the group "Ok, stop there then. If some of you can grab that mat that's against the wall and you can sit on that until it's your turn to present your routine". Luke and Leon run over to the mat, pull it down and slide across the floor on it. Giggles echo from the rest of the group. Luke and Leon get off it and join Amy and Georgia who seem to think because they are older or in Leon's case more experienced that they are exempt from that instruction and perch themselves with us on the pile of mats. "First three up then please" I call to the group indicating for three gymnasts to volunteer. No one moves, some look at me hoping they will not be picked, some look away assuming a lack of eye contact means they will not get chosen, others are engrossed in conversations. "Don't make me pick on people" I warn them. Still no movement. "You four might as well go first anyway because you have different **vols**" I pick on the older ones. They don't look happy to have been 'picked on' but they wander across to the trampolines. Amy gets on first, Luke and Georgia spot for her and Leon, the smallest and youngest of the four, hovers in the background. She stands poised on the trampoline, turns to us, steps forward and presents elegantly, arms stretched

upward with hands turned out, turns forward again and begins to build height in her initial jumps, setting the rhythmic motion of the trampoline. Her routine is performed to her usual high standard as Jess and I scribble our scores for each move down onto the paper in front of us. The gymnasts clap when she finishes, landing gracefully and holding the bed still. "That was nice" Jess comments, still scribbling away on her paper, toting up her scores and adding some comments. "7.6³⁰" Jess whispers.

*"Cool almost the same then" I note finalising my **score** as 7.5. Leon has already got on the trampoline and is looking to begin when I look up from my piece of paper. "Ready?" I ask Jess. "Yeah" she replies.*

"Off you go then Leon" I call to him. He stands still, holds his arms out horizontally to present and begins.

*The process is repeated for the whole group, taking around twenty minutes; although concentration and congratulatory claps from the gymnasts acting as an audience lapses gradually and they have to be told to watch the routines on display. After we tot up our scores, Jess and I go over to the mat, where all of the gymnasts sit waiting. "Ok guys, not bad at all, one or two of you have got a few things to work on, but Jess has written them down for you. So, Amy 7.5 and keep working on the **BOB**, make the tuck tighter and kick out sooner and faster." I read off my paper. "7.6, same as Rhi with the comments about the BOB and maybe a little more work on your pike as well, you need to get out of it faster so it's done at the top" Jess says.*

*"Leon 8.7, good job. A little more work on your **full**, but it's getting there." I add. As we continue some look very happy with their results, and others disappointed. "Okay, I want you to get back on the trampolines, in your groups, do two routines and off, but work on those things we've talked about for the next ten to fifteen minutes please. Me and Jess will be around to help you" I instruct. They disperse once again to their assigned trampolines, performing two routines before allowing the next person to get on. Jess and I wander from trampoline to trampoline separately, making comments and suggestions as we go.*

Club gymnasts attended at least two club sessions per week consistently over time.

Each session lasted between one and a half to two hours, depending on the training slot allocated. Class sizes were generally smaller than recreational sessions with around five gymnasts per trampoline. As a result of the extensive time spent with the group, complex working relationships had been established between the coaching staff, gymnasts and parents. The motivation of competitive success determined a distinguishable work ethic within this group. This ethic required substantial discipline and effort. Gymnasts

³⁰ Each trampoline routine is scored out of ten.

experienced fun and enjoyment from the social aspects of belonging to a club and having a unique set of friends who shared similar values and experiences, whilst recognising that they must achieve prearranged and mutually agreed goals. Learned behaviours or performances (as termed by Goffman, 1990a) were required to create and maintain this space. These behaviours were at times unique to the sport, and at other times generic to the age of person performing them, but all performances were continuously judged, evaluated and reinforced. Donnelly and Young (1988) refer to this process as 'socialisation' (see chapter two, p59). In addition, their notion of acceptance or ostracism (see chapter two, p.60) is also played out on this stage.

It was rare for 'new' or unknown gymnasts to enter this group, an occasion reserved for a dedicated induction day. Throughout the research period there were two induction sessions, in which a number of new members, invited by the coaching staff, joined the group. In this process, all established gymnasts were aware that it was 'induction day', and activities were planned around integrating these newcomers into the group. Similarly, parents of club gymnasts rarely entered the hall unless they had a specific message about their child's health, questions about their child's development or an event, or had fees to pay.

Within the session gymnasts acted under the direction of coaches' instructions, but they knew the requirements of exercises given (e.g., warm-up and practising routines) and the health and safety regulations they had to follow (e.g., spotting). Warm-ups tended to reinforce and develop basic, fundamental skills on the trampoline and on the floor, such as straight jumping, shaping and body landing activities on the trampoline and core stability, flexibility and strength work on the floor. The activities that followed this warm-up were based upon the club agenda at the time. For instance, routine construction and rehearsal

tended to take place in the weeks leading up to a competition and skill development in 'down-time' between events. However, the gymnasts had their own individual goals to achieve within this larger club framework. All activities were closely monitored by coaches; quite often the gymnasts got distracted from given tasks, although social discussion of their lives was accepted and encouraged throughout these activities. The atmosphere created was not overly disciplined, although aspects of this did exist for the purpose of effective learning and safety (e.g., anyone bouncing on a trampoline must have at least one suitable spotter). Instead this was a generally relaxed working environment that was an enjoyable place to be. The final ten minutes of each session were usually allocated as 'free-time' to spend on the trampoline, although recreational games such as 'genie' were rarely played. Instead other games, of a more challenging and technical nature were played, such as **add-a-trick**.

Competition arenas

Competition arenas are the epitome of front stage regions; they are where formal judgement of gymnasts' technical trampoline ability takes place (see Figure 5.). The values and practices associated with trampoline clubs (e.g., wearing club kit, safety awareness) were still maintained here, but were built upon and formalised. The typical spatial arrangement for competitions is shown in Figure 7. and experiences of this are presented in the story below.

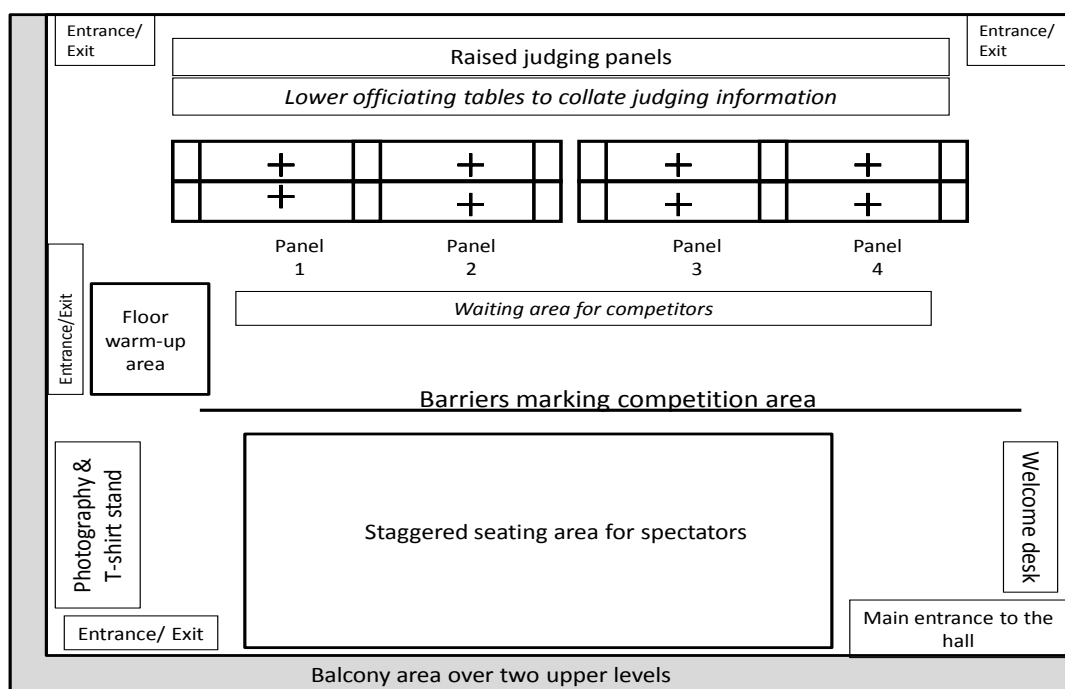


Figure 7. A sketch of a typical competition set-up.

Competition Day

The hall is already abuzz and we are greeted by Terry, a national judge and coach for High Flyers Trampoline Club. He is flicking through some paperwork on the welcome desk. "Terry, how are you?" I ask.

*"Ah Rhiannon, very well thanks. How're things with you?" he answers, handing me a copy of the programme. This isn't a general question about my life, but rather a question about how things are with the club. "Fine thanks" I reply, "Same old, same old. A few new gymnasts which is good, but other than that pretty much the same. We are hoping for some **qualifications** today though" I reply.*

"I'm sure you will and it's always good to get some new blood in. What time did you leave?" he asks.

"6.30" I reply.

"Ouch!" he sympathises. He gestures to the right hand corner of the room "there's tea and coffee by panel 4. Christopher won't mind".

"Thanks Terry, will do" I reply. These teas and coffees are supposed to be for judges, but quite often coaches also will help themselves to one or two throughout the day, as well as the biscuits on the judging tables and Christopher, the competition organiser doesn't seem to mind. Jess and I head over to the refreshment trolley and begin to pour tea into paper cups. "Helping yourselves to the judges refreshments are you ladies?" Christopher chuckles behind us "I'll have coffee too".

"Starting a competition at this time of day is ridiculous Chris! What do you expect?" Jess laughs in retort. I pass Christopher his coffee and leave them to talk; they went to university together and are still good friends.

I head toward the stands, passing Terry and Stanley, another national judge, who are deep in discussion about today's expectations for qualifications. I can see Amy, Luke and Leon at the top of the stands spreading their coats and bags across a cluster of seats, indicating that'll be our area for the day. I head in their direction. A few gymnasts from other clubs have started to arrive with their parents and are noisily clambering up into the stands and reserving seats for their respective clubs. A mother is busy standing over her daughter, tugging her hair into a tight bun, whilst another a few seats away creates a cloud of hairspray to seal a braided style into place. "Okay?" I ask as I arrive at our camp.

"Yeah" replied Leon indifferently.

"I feel sick" Amy admits.

"You'll be fine" I respond automatically.

"Yeah you'll qualify no problem" Luke reassures her.

"Georgia's here somewhere as well, I think she's gone to the toilet" Amy says, changing the subject. "And I've seen Ryan and Linda in reception, I told them it was down here but I don't know where they've gone" Luke adds.

*"Ah good, give them a few minutes and then maybe go and look for them" I suggest, but within a few seconds I spot them gazing into the stands looking for someone they recognise. I wave at them using a two-armed gesture. Linda spots us and points us out to Ryan, who looks exceptionally pale. Nevertheless he runs up the steps towards us, his mum following behind. "Testing, testing one, two, three" I hear Terry's voice over the speaker system, "judges and officials to **panel** two please" he calls, indicating the judges meeting is about to start and we have about 15 minutes until the first **warm-up** starts. "I'm going to go and sign us in" I indicate to the group as I get up to leave.*

The welcome desk has become a hive of activity, parents and gymnasts are queued up to pay spectator fees, buy programmes and raffle tickets. "Hi, can I help?" asks a parent behind the desk. "Yes, can I sign my club in please?" I ask. "I'll just look for your signing-in sheet" she smiles back, shuffling a pile of papers, quickly finding it and handing it to me with a pen. I presume she knew which club I was from given the club kit I am wearing. I fill in the sheet quickly, ticking off all of the gymnasts who have confirmed that they are attending, crossing through names of those who have pulled out last minute and providing my signature together with my British Gymnastics membership number to confirm that I am responsible for the gymnasts on this list. "Thanks" I say, returning the list to the parent who is eagerly waiting to file it again.

I return to the stands to find several more of our gymnasts have arrived and are sitting nervously in silence. Their parents are deep in conversation. I grab my programme and try to visualise who needs to be where and when. The youngest and lower-level gymnasts are always first to compete at these events. They have little experience of what to do and how things work so the morning session always seems to be organised like a military operation. As the day progresses, the timetable tends to become skewed as categories overrun and so we just tend to go with the flow of day. Jess arrives. I show her the programme, "do you want to look after Lacy and Imogen on panel one? And I'll take Ryan and Sarah on panel two?" I ask her.

"Yeah that's fine, I'll come over and help when we are done, because I'll have a 20 minute break until Emma, Eva, Elin, Lola, Claire and Hannah are on panel four"

she says pointing out our next move. "Cool" I say in agreement. Turning to the fairly sizeable group who have now assembled I start "Right guys, can you listen in a minute please?". The parents stop talking and turn to face me in anticipation. Jade continues to brush Eva's hair into a long ponytail, both listening intently. "When you are called, Lacy and Imogen you are going to go with Jess to panel one and Sarah and Ryan you will come with me to panel two. Are you ready to go?" I ask, quickly scanning them. Ryan excitedly lifts up his t-shirt, revealing his aqua blue, white and black panelled leotard in answer. The girls nod silently, **buns** bobbing, as they sit dressed in their black leotards streaked with fuchsia and aqua blue which twinkle in the light as they move. I turn to the older gymnasts, "It'd be nice if you guys can help coach them. Maybe one of you go with me and one with Jess and then maybe one of you run back and forth between the two panels so if we have any problems there's an extra person. I also need one of you to **marshal** on panel 4". "I'll go" offers Leon eagerly. Luke, Amy and Georgia look relieved that he's offered. Although Leon is only 13 he is an experienced national gymnast, who has passed through these regional competitions, he knows how they work and what to do. "Okay, thanks Leon. Do you want to go down to the panel now then to get the **running order** and a pen?".

Everyone seems to be rummaging around in their bags, fussing with their hair, pulling on extra socks to keep their white competition socks clean, but Sarah sits on her own staring down at the competition area. Sarah's mum, Katherine, notices me considering Sarah's mood and mouths "she's scared". I awkwardly step down over a row of seats and sit next to her, ready to deliver a motivational speech when Ryan rushes down the row. "Are we going down now Rhi?" he asks in a panic. "No not yet Ryan, just have a seat a minute if you're ready and try and stay nice and calm, don't panic, there's plenty of time. Like I've said guys this is your first competition, so I just want you to get on and give it a go. You can do the routines, you've done them hundreds of times now, so just pretend you're in training and you'll be fine. Katherine and Linda look on, just as nervous as Sarah and Ryan. "They'll be fine" I reassure them.

Terry's voice booms over the speaker system, "Good morning everyone and welcome to the January regional grading. For some of you this might be your first competition so just to let you know or remind all those who have been before that only gymnasts, coaches and of course the judges are allowed in the competitions area. Also there is to be no flash photography. It is very dangerous if flashes go off when gymnasts are competing so please turn them off. It's now just gone nine o'clock so can we please have the under 11 girls H to panel 1 please, that's under 11 girls H to panel 1, the under 9 boys and under 9 girls H to panel 2, the under 9 girls and boys I for panel 3 and the under 11 girls I to panel 4 please". "Come on then guys, let's go" I say to Ryan and Sarah. As we get up to go I notice two black socks protruding from Ryan's **stirrups**. "Have you got white socks Ryan?" I ask in the calmest manner possible. He looks at his mum panicked. Linda looks equally horrified from Ryan to me. "I didn't know" she said, "I didn't see it on the letter". "It's okay" Jade calls having heard the commotion "I've got spare pairs, I thought somebody would forget, it's always an issue". She rummages in her bag and retrieves a new pair of white socks and hands them to Ryan. He quickly slips his feet out of his stirrups, pulls off his black socks and replaces them with the new white ones. "I'm so sorry" Linda says, "I just didn't think".

"It's not a problem, I've always got spares in my bag anyway" I reassure her. As we disappear down the steps Linda is repeatedly thanking Jade.

*I usher Ryan and Sarah into seats when we get to the waiting area. The marshal stands in front of the group of gymnasts and starts reading off their names to check that they are there. "Ok, you have 30 minutes to warm up, make sure you've got spotters at all times, off you go" the marshal calls. Georgia and I lead Sarah and Ryan to the trampoline nearest the judging panel which is empty. "Up you go then" I instruct Ryan. He jumps up with his t-shirt still on and performs a very messy routine, looking very disappointed when he alights and swaps with Sarah. "It's okay, it's just the first one. These beds are a little bit different to ours as well" I try to reassure him. He just nods. Sarah performs an equally awkward routine jolting in the air. I give her the same feedback when she jumps down. A gymnast from another club jumps up, begins to jump and **over-rotates** her front landing, the first move in her routine, landing high on her chest. It looks and sounds as though she has winded herself. She looks to her coach in desperation, seemingly struggling to take a breath, tears in her eyes. The High Flyers coach accompanying her holds out her arms in a gesture for the little girl to come off "come off Annie, you're ok, come here" she lifts her off the trampoline and onto the mats where she begins to sob. I gesture a sad face to her coach who comforts the little girl at her side, rubbing her back, she returns a smile. Ryan jumps on and repeats his routine, performing much better. Both his and Sarah's routine improve as the warm-up progresses. "One more each and then they can sit down" I suggest to Georgia. "Yeah otherwise you just get too comfortable. You need some adrenaline" she agrees.*

"Sarah Jenkins!" the marshal calls. "Come on then Sarah" I nudge her gently. As we walk to the trampoline I give last minute advice, "remember it's just the same as what you've just done, but remember to present like you do in training and stop nicely at the end ". She still looks nervous. "You get extra points for smiling as well" I tease. She gives a little smile and jumps up onto the trampoline. I stand in at one corner of the trampoline to spot and Georgia at the other. Sarah sits in the middle waiting for the Terry to come over. "Sarah?" Terry asks in his friendliest voice. She nods. "Alright then, when you're ready you may begin. Near bed judges" he calls to them to ensure they are looking and moves to my side to watch. Sarah stands, turns to the judges and stretches her arms gracefully above her head and smiles nervously. She performs a lovely routine, stopping neatly. There's an eruption of applause and cheering from our camp in the audience stands. She turns to the judges and presents again with a beaming smile that is echoed by both me and Georgia.

The formality and occasion of this front stage region (Goffman, 1990a) created a sense of nervousness in many gymnasts and their parents, particularly in those competing in the lower grading categories who were unfamiliar with the competition practices, processes and being watched by a relatively large audience (approx. 300 people). However, some of the more long-standing, established gymnasts competing in the higher grading categories were well-acquainted with these environments and often knew many of the gymnasts, coaches, officials and judges, making them slightly more relaxed. That said, in competition that required particular results or qualifications to progress or remain in a particular group, gymnasts' stress levels often peaked, leading to a different sense of nervousness. Despite familiarity with their surroundings there tended to be little interaction between gymnasts and key figures outside of their club. Instead they would generally only talk to those from their own club, their coaches and their parents if they had come to support them. Exceptions were restricted to conversations with school friends who were competing for another club or speaking to a coach, official or judge when spoken to, and in the main these were formal interactions. For coaches, this space is a rare opportunity to speak to other coaches and judges from other clubs who they only tend to see at other trampoline-related events such as coaching and managerial courses. These interactions are generally light-hearted and friendly.

The divisions, permissions, status or role-identity of individuals occupying this space were very distinct and often indicated by the clothes (or props) they wear (Goffman, 1990a). Parents were restricted to spectator and public areas which were away from the competition panels. Some clubs offered club t-shirts to parents for a price, which identified them as belonging to a particular group when at these events. This made the segregation of parents from different clubs noticeable in the audience area; and often parents from the

same club would sit together and reserve seating for each other. Older gymnasts in their late teens or early twenties and judges often took on interchangeable roles, making their identification somewhat complex at times. For example, an individual acting as a judge in the morning session of the competition might then have to compete in the competition themselves in the afternoon. Similarly, many of the judges were also coaches from competing clubs. However, there were general patterns of behaviour and dress code that distinguished individuals acting in particular roles. Those acting as judges were distinguishable by their formal attire - black or navy trousers or skirts, black shoes and white shirts. Judges chairing a panel were slightly more formal again, wearing navy or black blazers over their white shirts. Male chairs were required to wear a tie in addition to this. Coaches tended to wear their club t-shirt often emblazoned with 'coach' on the back or breast, with either sports shorts or jogging bottoms. Both coaches and judges were able to access all areas of the competition arena (see Figure 7). Gymnasts were mainly distinguishable as children or youthful appearance, in comparison to coaches and judges. They wore their club leotard sometimes in combination with their club t-shirt or hoody, identifying them as belonging to a particular group. Gymnasts were also allowed in all areas of the competition arena, but were rarely seen around the judging panels. Competition officials (e.g., marshals) volunteering on behalf of a club tended to wear their club kit, but always seemed to have a clipboard in hand containing the running order.

During this research, three types of competition were encountered. Regional grading competitions were the main form of competition and tended to run for eight to ten hours on a Saturday or Sunday, four times a year at locations across Wales (described above). In addition, an annual school competition was held which had three stages of progression – school districts competition (i.e. Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan), a

regional competition (i.e. Welsh Schools) and the British Schools final. The latter two stages of this were determined by success in former stages. Again, the social dynamics of these phased competitions are similar to those described above. The majority of observations at competitions were made at these two types of competition, which were accessible to all members of the club. However, national (or gala) competitions were qualifying opportunities for (inter)national gymnasts (of which the club had two) to progress to the next competitive level (i.e. from national C to FIG B). The culmination of these was the British Trampoline Championships held on annual basis at the National Indoor Arena (NIA), Birmingham, to which all qualifying gymnasts from the national galas were invited. These national competitions differed considerably to regional grading and school competitions, taking place over a weekend (Friday to Sunday) in notably larger venues than regional gradings and schools competitions. There was less inter-changeability between the roles of coach, judge, official and gymnast, particularly at the British Championships. Subsequently, the occupation of space in these events operated in a more rigid way. However, observations in these competitions were minimal (i.e. three events).

Summary

This chapter has provided the contextual background of trampoline-gymnasts lives. Figure 5 presents an overview of their routes into, through and out of their trampoline career. In addition, three creative non-fictions capturing the key dramaturgical stages on which these gymnasts perform their trampoline identities have been created. These help to illustrate the gymnasts' lives which will now be discussed in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

'NEWBIES': THE CONSTRUCTION OF GYMNASTIC BODIES

In this chapter I will discuss trampoline-gymnasts' initial experiences of entering this trampoline group and identify the processes that they experience when constructing a gymnastic body. This chapter builds upon the conceptual platform of Donnelly and Young's (1988) model of identity construction in sporting careers, drawing upon their four stages of constructing a sporting identity – pre-socialisation, selection and recruitment, socialisation and ostracism/acceptance. However, there are key differences here. Narratives aid the construction of these trampoline identities and support the development of self and identity in this trampoline group. A combination of Goffman's (1990a, 1990b) social interactionist work on identity (social, self and role identity) and stigma; as well as Frank's (1991, 1995) theorisations about narrative embodiments and body usage have been used to frame explanations of these unique, intricate processes. It is also important to remember that unlike much of the literature, these trampoline-gymnasts are predominantly children.

Entering trampoline club: Selection, recruitment and initial ideas

As children, trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of selection and recruitment differ from Donnelly and Young's (1988) account. Donnelly and Young (1988) suggest that in order to become part of the group, individuals must have 'opportunity, motivation, and interest' (p.225) to actively select and/or seek out membership. However, the extent to which trampoline-gymnasts were able to make informed decisions about their entry into this trampoline club was questionable. As children, most new gymnasts were heavily

reliant on their parents to pursue and negotiate any opportunities, interests and/or motivations they had to establish a competitive career in trampoline-gymnastics; ultimately they were passive agents in this process.

Most gymnasts were recruited into the trampoline club via an invitation to their parent(s) from club coaches. Initially, club coaches engaged in discussions about children in recreational classes who demonstrated potential to become a club gymnast based on their technical and behavioural performance. Opportunities to join the club were rare and made available only when a club member had left. Thus, coaches often referred to a 'waiting list'. The list was not a tangible document but instead an unwritten mutual agreement among coaches that a child was eligible and deserving of a place. Eligibility was not as rigid or comprehensive as the talent-identification guidelines provided by BG (2007, see chapter two, p. 72); there were no formal, written criteria. Instead eligibility was based on the notion that a child excelled over others in terms of their technical ability and behaviour in recreational classes. For example, their form (e.g., pointing of toes, straightness of their arms and legs in basic skills) was particularly good compared their peers; they were progressing quickly – learning new skills or 'fine tuning' existing skills, and/or they had begun learning skills that were beyond the skill level of their peers. These children also tended to be quite small or certainly small for their age. They were easy to manoeuvre and handle when aiding their skill development. In addition, they attended classes regularly and possessed similar qualities to existing club members (e.g., positive attitude to training, completing tasks both on and off the trampoline when asked and using a level of initiative to perform constructive tasks when 'free-time' became available). Thus, there were similarities between these informal criteria and the talent-identification guidance provided by BG (2007), indicating that some stipulations – demonstrating physical competence,

body shape, commitment and excelling above their peers, were engrained into coaches' beliefs about who the acceptable candidates actually were. However, some aspects were less of concern. Morphological and anthropometric measurements were not taken; age was considered in relation to trampoline ability but was generally less of concern³¹ and personal situations such as family structure, again, although considered, were not an ultimate determining factor. This was perhaps partly because the club created good partnerships³² and held regular fundraising events which significantly reduced the cost for parents/gymnasts. This research journal extract demonstrates the types of thought processes coaches undertake when selecting a potential gymnast:

Amy[Coach]: What's happening with Natalie and club?

RL: Well she's ready, but we're still waiting to find out what's happening with Caitlin.

Amy: Naomi told me she's not coming back. Apparently her back is fine; she just doesn't want to compete anymore.

RL: I'll speak to Brenda again. Natalie is ready to go in though; I should probably ask her mum if she's given it any thought.

Amy: I don't think she does much after school, at least she never mentions anything really and she's always here. She's improved loads recently, all her basics are looking really tidy and wasn't she doing back som [somersault] support with you the other week?

RL - Yeah, she's come on loads. I'll go and have a chat with her mum in a bit. Do you know her mum's name?

Amy: No, I just know who she is.

RL: Me too. Ok, I'll take a wander over in a bit.

For the rest of the session I kept looking at Natalie whenever she got on the trampoline, almost rehearsing some mental checklist of her suitability before approaching her mum. She is a good gymnast. She's had the occasional mental block with certain moves but she's always overcome them and I can see her progressing. She's a 'regular', we'd miss her if she wasn't there, or at least her absence would certainly be noted as unusual; she always tells us if she is going away and her mum always leaves a message for us if she's ill. She gets on well with the other kids, and with the volunteers, and helps out with some of the younger ones, pushing a mat in when we are supporting them etc. So, she is pretty much doing all the things we expect of a club member, she just doesn't attend club sessions or have kit.

(Fieldnotes, 3rd November 2012)

³¹BG (2007) recommends the girls should be 6-8 years old and boys 7-9 years old.

³²The club's main partnership was with the local council leisure facilities. Trampoline equipment and use of the sports hall were paid by the local authority in return for the smooth running of trampoline classes. In addition, club members could buy into a monthly membership (£15.45- £17.98) which then included entry into all training sessions, all local authority swimming pools, gyms (at the age of 14 years old) and school holiday activities. If choosing not to opt into this scheme they had to pay £5.45 per hour to attend training.

After a prolonged period of monitoring their performance it was common for me, as the club's head coach, to approach the child's parent(s) in the first instance about their potential to be put on the waiting list, before approaching the child.

RL: Hiya, can I have a quick word?

Janet: Yeah sure [looked indifferent].

RL: Have you or Natalie thought much about her coming to club. Is it something she is interested in?

Janet: Well she hasn't really mentioned anything, but I know she gets on better with Amy and Leon.

RL: Well me and Amy have been talking and monitoring her for a while and we think she is ready to come in.

Janet: Oh right! [Surprised, smiling]. Well I'm sure she'll be delighted. When is it?

RL: It's 6-8pm on a Wednesday and 5-6.30pm on a Thursday, but it wouldn't be for a little while yet, probably after the Christmas holidays. We've got to wait for a space to become available.

Janet: That's fine.

RL: I'll call her over and ask her if she want to do it as well, if that's ok?

Janet: Yeah that's fine, I'm sure she'll be thrilled.

(Fieldnotes, 3rd November 2012)

Natalie's mum, Janet, did not have a gymnastic background. Thus these types of selections were characterised by a *teacher's pet* narrative, where the potential gymnast excelled above their classmates and formed good relationships with those teaching them. As such this type of conversation almost mimicked conversations at school parent's evenings when a teacher is communicating to a parent how well their child is doing.

It was rare for parents or children to deviate from this type of conversation when offered a place in the club. The number of children invited to attend club or be put on the waiting list was relatively low; it was seen as prestigious to be asked. Across the recreational classes containing 192 children (12 classes of 16 children), there would usually only be 5 or 6 children who were potentially ready to enter the club in the near future. In cases, where places were turned down, it was because the child engaged in other activities that would conflict with the club training times.

Conversations with gymnasts and their parents revealed that it was *parents* who were the primary decision-makers in selecting and pursuing their child(ren)'s participation in this sport and therefore their influence extended beyond the common acknowledgements of

financial and emotional support discussed in the literature (Malina, 2009; Stevenson, 1999). In tune with Goffman's (1985) analysis of gendered performances in advertising, parents' rationales for introducing their children to trampoline-gymnastics revealed their gendered ideas about sport, trampoline-gymnastics in particular, and what they perceived to be acceptable gendered behaviour for their sons and daughters. Some commented that trampoline-gymnastics complemented the feminine body performances they expected from their daughters:

RL: Have the girls ever tried any other sports?

Lisa: I never would have let them play cricket or something...can you imagine they'd look like Michelin men with those pad things on, no that sort of thing, it's not for girls is it. No, I remember when they had their first competition and they were all dressed up, with the glitter in their hair and stuff and they looked so pretty.

(Lisa [Georgia and Katie's mother], Interview, 17th February 2012)

RL: How do you feel about seeing Lara in her leotard at competitions?

Charlie: They do look good when they are all done up though don't they, just like little ladies. She's too much of a tomboy as it is without her doing a sport where they roll around in mud or something (laughs). She'd probably love to do rugby or something though.

(Charlie [Lara's and Lee's father], Interview, 24th February 2012)

Some parents' also associated the sport with risk-taking behaviour and 'gutsiness', which they deemed a desirable masculine quality for their sons:

Lee isn't scared of anything, he loves learning somersaults and crash dives and all that. It takes a lot of guts to throw those moves.

(Charlie [Lara's and Lee's father], Interview, 24th February 2012)

Trampoline-gymnasts' own ideas about the sport revealed similar gendered ideas as their parents. Most had limited knowledge and experience of competitive trampoline groups or gymnasts prior to attending club training sessions leaving them with some misconstrued ideas of what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast. Their limited ideas were based upon their experiences of other gymnastic disciplines, witnessing the activity in leisure centres and/or short encounters with club gymnasts in their recreational classes:

RL: Did you see it [trampolining] before you started?

Sophie: Yes. Cos' some of my friends had been doing it and I went to watch one of them because I slept over their house. I went a few times to watch.

RL: What did you think when you saw it?

Sophie: It looked fun (laughs). I don't think that anymore though (laughs). Well it's quite hard really isn't it?

(Sophie, aged 11 years old, Interview, 6th February 2012)

Emma: It [trampolining] used to be on the other side of the hall and umm we had a go a couple of times in gymnastics, as a treat, like we used to go over if the trampoline class had finished and have little go at forward rolls and stuff like that with our coaches. So I'd always see it on a Saturday morning.

RL: What did you think when you saw it?

Emma: It looked quite fun. I was young at the time and I thought ohh fun.

(Emma, aged 18 years old, Interview, 25th February 2012)

In recalling their preconceived and perhaps naïve impressions of the sport being a *fun* and enjoyable activity, the gymnasts adhere to Donnelly and Young's (1988) *pre-socialisation* phase. They soon realised that this sport required hard work and dedication to be successful. Among their initial observations of the sport and what it entailed, some gymnasts also commented on pre-conceived assumptions of the types of people who took part in trampoline-gymnastics or what a trampoline-gymnast should look like:

RL: What did you think when you saw it?

Sarah: I saw lots of other girls and umm they were always looking pretty and smart.

RL: Did you ever see any boys?

Sarah: No. Umm. No I don't think.

(Sarah, 7 years old, Interview, 13th February 2013)

Emma: Umm, female, to me, the stereotypical, skinny umm, possibly tall umm, yea just really slim, slim, tall and female... usually their hair is tied back anyway so I'd say maybe shoulder length, maybe a bit longer.

(Emma, aged 18 years old, Interview, 25th February 2012)

Thus gymnasts', and also their parents' (gendered) ideas of what it is to be a trampoline-gymnast signaled initial constructions of an ideal gymnastic body for this sport.

Parents' decisions and motivations to involve and keep their child(ren) in this sport revealed an underlying alignment with culturally available gendered narratives (Somers, 1994), as did their child(ren)'s early ideas about the sport and what they thought a trampoline-gymnast was. Notions of youth, beauty and traditional femininity underpinned the construction of embodied identities of female gymnasts in this study. They came to

desire this body-self and sought to recreate this ideal in the construction of their own body in mirroring and disciplined ways (Frank, 1995). Similarly, there were narrow ideas about male embodiments in this sport and/or club. Both parents and gymnasts perceived the ideal trampoline-gymnast as being female. In both parents' and gymnasts' rationales for male participation, the narratives of a desirable male trampoline body were silent and instead masculine bodily performances were focused upon. Therefore, this sport provides opportunities for children to display, perform and reproduce gendered identities and selves that are accepted in society (Connell, 1987; Goffman, 1990a, 1985). Girls tended to display their femininity through bodily decoration and presentation and boys provide risk-taking, daring masculine body performances in their attempts of difficult skills. However, in steering toward these idyllic gendered justifications, these parents failed to acknowledge the ways in which this sport might challenge societal meta-narratives. For example, girls perform the same skills as boys; therefore they too have to be 'gutsy' in their attempts to perform difficult skills. Similarly, boys must also engage in the aesthetic nature of the sport albeit in different ways to girls. They also wear leotards³³ that are decorative and made of Lycra-based materials which display the body. In failing to make these links, I have to question the extent to which this sport advertises and utilises opportunities to challenge the traditional gendered narratives evident in these stories and in turn expand and develop its membership base.

Gendered performances were not the only rationale offered by parents. Some had experience of trampoline-gymnastics or other gymnastic disciplines in their youth or had become involved in coaching and therefore they wanted their child to become part of the sport. These parents sometimes made comparisons between their own sporting

³³ Boys' leotards are similar to girls leotards, although they have a lower, straighter cut at the hip and are always worn with other apparel (e.g., shorts or **stirrups**).

performances and that of their child, often inadvertently placing unrealistic expectations on them:

I used to do gymnastics, so I wanted her to do it as well. But I thought maybe a different discipline so she didn't feel she was under any pressure to do what I did. I mean she'd have to do better than me (laughs). So, I put her in trampolining and then asked you if she could join club and she loves it...I do make her do conditioning and things at home, which she whinges about, but if I had to do it, she can do it too, well that's what I tell her anyway (laughs).
(Nancy, [Elin's mother], Interview, 2nd April 2012)

Well you know I used to compete for the Welsh squad and because I coach it, it's natural that they would do it as well.
(Charlie, [Lara's and Lee's father], Interview, 24th February 2012)

These types of justifications emphasise further the lack of agency some gymnasts have in choosing to take part in this sport and remain in it. These parents talk of an idyllic *following in my footsteps* narrative, something which is, to them, natural but is in fact quite unnatural, and sometimes almost forced. The timing of Nancy's nervous laugh in this interview indicated that she was aware that she was influencing, directing and largely dominating Elin's choice to engage in this sport and this club. Nancy performed this narrative consistently over the research period, she loved gymnastics and she wanted Elin to enjoy it too so they could share that experience, thus demonstrating that biography, narrative and identity are relational (Frank, 2010).

In the main, trampoline-gymnasts entered club settings at a young age (aged 9-11 years old, see Appendix C) as a result of parental ideas, decisions and pursuits combined with being identified as suitable within the selection processes undertaken by coaching staff. Coaching environments are complex, messy spaces (Bowes and Jones, 2006) which produce diverse social interactions between parents, coaches and children. Nevertheless, it is clear that both coaches and parents act as 'gatekeepers' to future, competitive participation in this sport and children are relatively passive agents.

Not all gymnasts experienced this selection and recruitment process. In rare cases, individuals came to the club as established gymnasts in their teens or early adulthood,

having left another trampoline club, another gymnastic discipline or a sport with transferable skills. For example:

RL: Why did you start bouncing here?

Amy: I was a gymnast before I started trampolining, but I kept getting injured and the last few were pretty bad. I broke my arm and it was never the same after that. So, I took up trampolining because there's less stress on the body...isn't there?

RL: Sort of, yes. There's less impact.

Amy: Yeah. So I started at Clwb Sefydliad and then I went to Glymau for a little bit, they were okay. But I didn't really get on there, so I tried here and just ended up staying.

(Amy, 16 years old, Focus Group, 12th July 2012)

RL: I know how you started in club, but why did you actually come along to the adult sessions in the beginning, because you used to come with your friends didn't you?

Luke: Yes, they left because they couldn't do somersaults though (laughs). That didn't bother me so much, I was happy to go over front drops and back drops and stuff first anyway. I'd done them in school anyway. I don't know really, I was the one who wanted to come down and have a go, 'cos it's that same sort of feeling as [street] skating, you sort of, it's the same sort of moves. Well sort of. So I came to just mess around really like, like I do on my skates and then liked it so..., when you asked me about club, I stayed.

(Luke, 19 years old, Interview, 6th March 2012)

Although these gymnasts were older when they joined the group, their entry into the club was not easier, it was just different. They still had to be selected or recruited by coaching staff, but they exercised a more active role in pursuing a place in the club, demonstrating similar forms of selection and recruitment to Donnelly and Young's (1988) model. Amy attended a trial which was arranged between her parents and coaching staff where it was agreed that she wouldn't need to attend recreational classes, but instead come straight into the club. Luke was recruited by coaching staff while attending recreational adult sessions.

Non-trampoline bodies and immediate rejection

Within these observations of early recruitment processes emerged a narrative of *immediate rejection*. This was a frustrating and awkward narrative for children, their parents and coaches. In their instrumental decision-making role, some parents became active in pursuing places within the trampoline club even if they were not approached by coaching staff. These interactions revealed that early or immediate rejection was closely linked to very different notions of what trampoline bodies were.

Jessica [Coach]: Oh look out here she comes again! What do you reckon it'll be this time? *Another* illness? Or *another* injury? Or the dreaded conversation, again!

I felt a sense of dread as I looked up to see Gwen Stevens [Anna's mum] heading in our direction. Anna wasn't with her, so I assumed it was going to be one of the former options suggested. Jessica decided to make a quick exit and pretend to sort out the award sheet file. Amy and Luke, joined her and appeared to be having a laugh about my impending conversation with Gwen.

Gwen: Hello, how're you?

RL: I'm fine thanks, you?

Gwen: Yes good. Anna's just coming now, she's getting a drink from the cafe. I was wondering if there was any change with the situation in club?

RL: Well not at the moment, there still aren't any spaces, in fact we're oversubscribed at the moment. When we last took an intake we brought in a few extra people to account for some people dropping out if it wasn't for them, but they all seemed to stay.

Gwen: Oh right. Well is there any chance the leisure centre will give you more time so you can have an extra class.

RL: That's not likely to happen any time soon.

Gwen: Well is Anna ready to go on the waiting list now? Because if she's on the waiting list I can push it with the leisure centre.

RL: Well not at the moment, she's really struggling with her front somersaults at the moment and she was off for a bit with her arm and then she was ill, so it's put her back a little bit.

Gwen : Oh right, can she go in the harness thing, will that help?

RL: Well probably not at the moment, she needs a bit more support and it's better to learn these sorts of skills without that sort of support.

Gwen: Ok, well I'll have a word with her and tell her to make more of an effort.

RL: Well everyone learns at their own pace, she's doing ok.

Gwen: Alright well I'll leave you to it.

RL: Ok see you soon.

I felt a mix of anger and relief as she left. Jessica, Amy and Luke make mocking gestures of rolling around on the floor laughing. I walked over to them.

Jessica: I'm not being funny but there's no way I can support her. She's put on a hell of a lot of weight, she's bigger than me.

Amy: Me neither.

(Fieldnotes, 25th May 2012)

Anna's story was not uncommon; there were a number of children in recreational classes that didn't *fit* our (coaches') ideas of what was desirable in a potential club gymnast. The experiences of these children were not within the parameters of this research, but it was clear that coaches were the ultimate gatekeepers for children in this group. They controlled who was invited in and who was not. These types of interactions revealed that coaches' justifications for who was acceptable and who was not were often based on bodily appearance and performances. Thus, coaches played a key role in shaping body narratives in this group. For us, Anna's body was associated with reoccurring injuries which were viewed as fictitious or symptomatic of the performances given by a hypochondriac. She was larger than other girls her age and even some of the coaches, including myself, making

it difficult to support her for more complex skills. Thus, our immediate rejection of Anna was based on our ideas of what a trampoline body is, what it looks like and the way it performs (Goffman, 1990a).

Parallels can be drawn between the bodily stigma (Goffman, 1990b) assigned to some children by coaches and the talent identification guidance outlined by BG (2007). In their selection processes, coaches consider bodily proportions, technical ability, psychological profile (e.g., self-esteem, motivation, willingness to work effectively) and aesthetic appearance as part of the talent identification process outlined in coaching manuals (e.g., BG, 2007). This guidance was not applied in its purest sense in this club, but still many of these principles appear to be subconsciously implemented by coaches involved in the selection and *non-selection* processes. As coaches, I do not feel we were explicitly aware of this. Reflecting upon these interactions, I feel a level of disappointment of our inability to be empathetic or communicative (Frank, 1995) of those that want to *try*. These feelings echo an overarching tension in this research of my role as researcher/coach discussed in greater depth in chapter eight. Yet, ideas about children who will make good gymnasts remain rooted in prevalent traditional, trampoline discourses and narratives; something which will also feature in later discussion (chapter eight). Although departing on this point, for now, it is important that we do acknowledge the role of coaches and parents here. In these early experiences of trampoline careers, decisions to join this trampoline club were not free choices. Ultimately these decisions were made by coaches and parents thus limiting any possible future some children had in this sport, at a time when their sense of self, body, physical competency and skill set had not fully developed. As such many children in this sport lack autonomy in making decisions about their lives. Even

those who joined when they were older had to pass these gatekeepers, although they interacted with coaches in a more autonomous way.

Socialisation into the trampoline club

Socialisation into sporting clubs or groups has been defined as a process by which new members 'learn to adopt the values and perspectives of the group, taking on new roles and modifying others' (Donnelly and Young, 1988, p.225) often eradicating earlier pre-socialisation that contained misconceptions. Few studies focusing on sporting identities have addressed individuals' experiences of this in any depth. Instead they look to issues of gendered identity (Chimot and Louveau, 2010), national identity (Clary-Lemon, 2010), or ethnic identity (Schulenkorf, 2010) within the wider construction of sporting identities. Gymnasts' experiences of socialisation into this trampoline group provided evidence of a unique complex array of formal and informal processes, some of which *had* to be undertaken or at least engaged with in order to successfully become part of this group.

Creating opportunities to 'fit in': Formal socialisation mechanisms

Two narrative types of newcomers were present within this research – *I am the newbie* and *we are the newbies*. *I am the newbie* characterised those gymnasts who came to this group as the lone newcomer. However coaching reflections from myself and others, recognised that entering this group as a new member, often being the youngest or certainly younger than most, was a daunting experience. Therefore, where possible we tried to encourage a collective newcomers group – we are the *newbies*. Perhaps as a result of my researcher/coach role and influence within the club, it was felt that establishing a group of 'newbies' would form a sense of collective identity (as defined by Brewer and Gardner, 1996), encouraging the formation of friendships among newcomers, rather than individuals

having to rely on 'getting in' with the existing, established group(s); within which tight bonds or 'cliques' had forged. Thus, coaches often organised formal, yet subtle activities such as social events (e.g., bowling or ice skating) and fundraising events (e.g., a 10 hour bounceathon³⁴) to aid the integration process.

In the extract below, six new gymnasts had been asked to start club training and had been invited to attend a two hour induction session. The first hour of the training session was dedicated to them entirely - they could get to know each other, the coaching staff, the equipment and common drills and conditioning exercises they would be expected to perform. This created a short period of time in which these young, new gymnasts could make initial 'rookie' mistakes in front stage spaces (Goffman, 1990a) without the gaze of a critical audience. For example, these new gymnasts could get a fundamental skill used in a warm-up wrong or ask questions about what an exercise entailed without too much embarrassment. The second hour was supposed to allow new gymnasts to be introduced to and get to know established members of club. All club members, regardless of their training days, were invited to attend this hour. However, drawing upon the extract below, engineering socialisation was incredibly difficult and some established members were not willing to buy into enhancing the socialisation of others. They either chose not to turn up or messed around.

Disappointingly, only a handful of established gymnasts arrived to take part in the second hour – Sophie, Caitlin, Ella, Luke, Ria and Naomi. We played an ice breaker so that everyone got to know each other's names, but the older ones kept messing around. Abbie appeared uncomfortable by the situation and started to become more reserved again. Erin seemed to gravitate toward Eva assuming there would be strength in numbers. When the game stopped Emma, Jessica and I seemed to naturally come together to communicate similar thoughts:
Jessica: Well it *was* going well until they started playing up.

³⁴ In order for the challenge to be met, gymnasts had to work together, as a team, to keep two trampoline beds moving for 10 hours. Gymnasts were given a rota to follow, provided by coaching staff. Efforts were made to pair each person with someone different for each rotation, so existing gymnasts could work with newcomers.

Emma: I can't tell them to stop it anymore; they just aren't taking this seriously.
RL: Well let's split them. I know all the newbies so why don't you split them and I'll take that lot [existing members].
Jessica: Yeah shall we just do basics with them?
RL: Sounds good.
(Fieldnotes, 26th July 2012)

There was a sense of shared awkwardness expressed through bodily performances (shared vocabularies of body idiom [Goffman, 1963]). None of us were wholly comfortable in this situation.

Experiences of lone newbies were no less problematic. This situation was a more natural space for newcomers to integrate within the group; it was less contrived. Yet formal processes were still implemented in attempts to integrate the newbie into the group. Established gymnasts were nominated to 'buddy up' and help new gymnasts. For some established members this was not a welcomed activity; playing this role, distracted from the performance of their own gymnastic identity.

Although normally confident and chatty in classes, Lewis seemed to shuffle on the spot not knowing what to do. He looked nervous and pale. Although I'd already introduced him to Imogen and Eva they had ignored him and rushed off to start warming up, leaving him stranded. I called Leon over.
RL: Can you go on a bed with Lewis and Ryan and help them with their routines?
Leon rolled his eyes.
RL: I'll come over and help you with your fulls [back somersault with a full twist], but I think it'll be good for Lewis to be with the boys.
Leon: Do I have to. Ryan is so annoying.
RL: Go on. Luke will be over to help as well.
Leon skulked toward the red bed, leaving Lewis still hovering on the same spot.
(Fieldnotes, 6th April 2012)

Yet, some existing gymnasts welcomed this invitation to help newcomers, viewing it as part of their own gymnastic performance or role within the group.

Abbie: I like helping the little ones with their routines and stuff though. It does get a bit boring sometimes, but it's a nice thing to do and I get Christmas cards at Christmas from them (laughs). It makes me feel more important as well (laughs)..., like I know what I am doing and can help them.
(Fieldnotes, 17th January 2013)

Activities like this were useful in building cohesion within the group, not only for newcomers, but across all members of the club; sometimes friendships were formed. Other examples of these types of activity included calling skills when learning new

routines, paired conditioning exercises, basic observation and analysis of others' routines and helping younger members to fill in their training diaries.

Despite the nuances of these two narratives, both collective groups of newbies and the lone newbie faced challenges in their early experiences of integrating into this group. Both felt a sense of awkwardness in their first interactions with group members and they were also labelled as a *new*. This label created difference; they made rookie mistakes (Donnelly and Young, 1988) and sometimes deviated away from what was expected of trampoline performances. However while they held the newbie label, this was viewed as normal, at least for a short time.

Another key mechanism used to aid the socialisation process for newcomers were organised events. Fundraising events in particular were timed to coincide with the arrival of newbies in order to subsidise kit expenses. For example, shortly after the arrival of six new gymnasts on 26th July 2012, the coaching staff had organised a 'sponsored 10 bounceathon' (20th August 2012). These types of events often involved some form of collective challenge in order to encourage team/group cohesion. It was in these moments, that it became noticeable that the newbie label was beginning to slip away.

Throughout the day the new/old split became less and less noticeable, the gymnasts seemed to merge as one, uniformed group, particularly when the recreational children came into the hall for their lessons or members of the public came in to buy raffle tickets. Throughout the afternoon they watched films together on each other's tablets/laptops. Lots of them had their nails painted by Amy including Leon, who had joked about having them done and then actually 'went through with it'. A large group of new and old gathered around them, laughing, as he had ladybirds painted onto each thumb.

Emma commented: It's surprising how quickly things fall into place now that they have a combined task.

(Fieldnotes, 20th August 2012)

Although useful, these more formal integration processes were rarely acknowledged by gymnasts in their accounts of socialisation into this group. The 'induction day' was most notable in their early experiences within the group, but they tended to refer to more

informal processes. Ultimately then the process of 'fitting in' or 'becoming part of the group' was not something that could be forced; for these gymnasts it was something that happened (seamlessly) over time through repetitive and prolonged deferment from established gymnasts and coaches.

'Us' and 'Them': Informal socialisation mechanisms

At the outset, new and established gymnasts often choose to remain separate, some actively seeking difference:

Sophie [aged 13], Naomi [aged 12], Caitlin [aged 12] and Ria [aged 10] approached and Sophie seemed to step forward as the nominated spokesperson:

Sophie: Rhi. So how many people are starting?

RL: There'll be 34 of you altogether Soph, but not all at the same time, it'll be over the two days.

Sophie: 34 people! I liked it when it was just *us*.

(Fieldnotes, 29th July 2012)

Naomi: Rhi? [prolonged emphasis]

RL: Yes, Naomi?

Naomi: You know this hour after this, where the older ones come in?

RL: Yes.

Naomi: Can we [Sophie, Ria and Caitlin] join that group?

RL: Well not really Naomi, you're a bit too young. Why do you want to join that session anyway?

Naomi: Because there's too many people.

RL: Why do you think that?

Naomi: Because of *them*, there's quite a few new ones and they are getting in the way. That boy, what's his name? [pointed at Lewis]

RL: Lewis?

Naomi: Yeah Lewis. He won't get off, he just keeps saying one more, one more and he won't change.

(Fieldnotes, 29th July 2012)

Established gymnasts' use of the words '*us*' and '*them*' implies differentiation between the two groups; although there were few differences in actual fact. To them, the 'newbies' were a nuisance, they didn't quite understand the day-to-day flow of activities in training, often making mistakes which established members of the group found frustrating and/or humorous:

Hannah came in, 10 minutes late. She came over to me and Joanna and apologised for being late, she'd been at a netball match. I explained that it was ok and to go and join in with the warm-up on the red bed...Georgia approached us during the break.

Georgia : Why has Hannah got skorts³⁵ on?

Joanna: She was at a netball match or something.

Amy: It looks ridiculous, what is it her P.E. kit?

Georgia : Yeah why wouldn't you bring your kit with you?

(Fieldnotes, 6th September 2012)

I asked Lewis to complete another three front somersaults, working on his tuck shape and then get off. He started with the task and I turned to Charlotte to talk to her about what she was going to work on in her next go. I seemed to 'zone out' for a few minutes, waiting for Lewis to get off and I suddenly realised he hadn't. He was busy back bouncing.

RL: Lewis! What are you doing, I said three more and then off!

He just started laughing and scuttled off the trampoline, sheepishly, his cheeks slightly red with embarrassment that he'd been caught out.

Charlotte: He always trampoline hogs!

(Fieldnotes, 21st May 2012)

Goffman (1990b) refers to a hierarchy of stigmatised behaviours. In this case these small misdemeanours were part of the socialisation process by which members of the group learn to provide authentic performances which will eventually become a manifestation of their trampoline identity. Often these 'rookie mistakes' were ironed out in this process and did not become blemishes or a spoiled identity. As part of the socialisation process, these mistakes or faults in trampoline demeanour (Goffman, 1956) were often minor and communicated through sarcastic humour. However, the extent to which newbies perceived subsequent deference (Goffman, 1956) as humour at their expense or more serious ridicule, bordering on bullying-like behaviour was questionable, and on rare occasions some gymnasts' behaviour might be described as malicious. When possible, coaching staff would intervene and control these interactions, although they usually took place in back-stages (Goffman, 1990a) such as the leisure centre café or toilets so we were not always aware that they were taking place. Often we only became aware of incidents after they had occurred, when (other) gymnasts confided in a coach or parent. The nature of this group was unique, comprising of children and young people who were used to playground/school

³⁵ An item of sports kit commonly used in P.E classes. 'Skorts' are a combination of a school gym skirt, but with shorts built in.

interactions. Parallels can be drawn between the types of deference newbies', who were developing trampoline demeanour, received and the bully-like behaviours of the playground. Some of those who admitted to experiencing and being affected by some form of bullying at school would employ similar tactics in the training hall to communicate newbies' rookie mistakes. As such, these types of interactions served as informal socialisation mechanisms, aiding newbies' recognition of what was desirable and/or unaccepted behavior, characterised here as an *us and them* narrative.

Fitting in

As part of the informal socialisation process, newbies were expected to appear gymnastic. There was a strong presence of mirroring body types (Frank, 1995) in the initial stages of constructing an embodied trampoline identity. Newbies were actively encouraged to use their bodies in mirroring ways, particularly in front stage spaces (Goffman, 1990a), by coaching staff and older established gymnasts. For example, copying warm-up and conditioning skills which demanded consistently predictable body performances. This is something that both coaches and gymnasts needed in this space; it maintained safety standards and ensured the smooth running of sessions without the need for one-to-one coaching situations³⁶. More importantly for the individual, predictability, was the mechanism for fitting in – they wanted to be the same as the others (they produced this desire) and this extended beyond predictable bodily performance to the decoration of the body, a key characteristic of a mirroring body (Frank, 1995). This mirroring body usage was evident in young, relatively new gymnasts when asked 'how did you know what to do

³⁶ Normal training sessions would consist of approximately six gymnasts per trampoline with three trampolines being active simultaneously under the supervision of two coaches. Therefore there was little capacity for one-to-one coaching all of the time.

when you first came? Who helped you? Often younger newcomers looked to older, established gymnasts as an ideal:

Sarah: Amy!

RL: Amy?...

Sarah: And maybe Georgia as well, a bit.

RL: What about Amy and Georgia then? Why them? How did they help?

Sarah: They are good on the trampoline. (Pause). I used to copy them.

RL: Copy them how?

Sarah: Umm. (Pause). Their moves for conditioning. Amy showed me plank. I copied Georgia's trainers as well (laughs).

RL: Oh yes, I remember.

Sarah: Mum said I could have new ones, so I said I liked Georgia's. Oh and shorts as well. Milano ones. When I did lessons, they [club gymnasts] all used to wear them, so Mum got me some.

RL: Why did you want them?

Sarah: To be the same.

(Sarah, 7 years old, Interview, 13th February 2013)

Sarah's desire to mirror other, more gymnastic bodies, especially through bodily decoration, was not uncommon, but this required gymnasts, or their more accurately their parents, 'buying in to' or consuming this image (Frank, 1995). Sarah, and her mother, believed she had to have the same sort of trainers and shorts as existing members of the trampoline club in order to 'be the same', to fit in. Some gymnasts, like Sarah, talked about their strategies to fit in, but others were less open about their methods. However, newbies in this group tried to establish themselves in these ways:

Imogen came into club early, removed her coat and shoes, placing them by the wall and proceeded towards my trampoline eagerly. Something was strange about her appearance, but I couldn't work it out. When she got closer and started chatting to me about what she had been doing in school, I realised it was because she had mascara and eye shadow on.

RL: Imogen [aged 8 years old], you've got make-up on, it looks very pretty.

Imogen: Thank you. I got Ella [her sister] to do it so I look the same as Sophie and Naomi and those.

Having worked with Imogen since she was about six years old, this was the first time I had seen her wear make-up. She has been in club for two weeks.

(Fieldnotes, 21st January 2012)

The new gymnasts came in today. They seemed just as nervous as they did on Tuesday, although they did appear to be a little more chatty. It looks as though Abbie is starting make friends with Amy and Georgia, she joined their group today. She also wore Milano shorts and a leotard underneath her t-shirt, so she blended in quite well. I noticed that Erin also wore a leotard today, which is a little different to her recreational attire.
(Fieldnotes, 29th July 2012)

Although clearly identified, the extent to which the bodies of other (older) gymnasts were the ideal image is unclear. Coaches, myself included, recognised their potential role in the ways in which newbies formed ideas about the types of body they were attempting to construct. We extended the possible repertoire of trampoline discourses through our own bodily performances and reinforced their attempts of gymnastic performances.

Emma...Well we all wear make-up, well most of the time we do, and it's bound to have an effect...we sort of encourage it...
Jessica: I wouldn't say I encourage it, but we do have an influence of them...I'm terrible for making comments about their hair and make-up and even if they waltz in in a new pair of trainers. I'll tell them they look pretty so we reinforce the idea that is good.
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

This was especially true of male gymnasts who were more heavily reliant on the images of (young) male coaches, presumably because there were fewer established male trampoline bodies for them to draw upon and internalise. For example, the boys imitated the hair styles of their male coaches/older male gymnasts:

Jessica: Have you noticed that Leon is like a mini version of Luke?
RL: I have actually (laughs).
Jessica: Leon even came in with one those stupid beany hats the other day and they've got the same haircut.
(Fieldnotes, 10th February 2012)

Thus, the body is central in the socialisation processes present within the experiences of newbies. They use their body in mirroring ways in order to produce authentic trampoline performances in attempts to 'fit in'. The body was central in these young gymnasts' impression management (Goffman, 1990a) in their early interactions in this group. Newbies internalised the images of other trampoline actors – established, competent club members (other gymnasts and coaches) and sought to become them. The

mechanisms associated with early trampoline performances and body constructions are also highly body-centred. Existing members of the group use their body to communicate their (dis)approval of newbies' bodily performances (deference³⁷ – Goffman, 1956). In turn, newbies internalised gymnasts and coaches' deferent performances to inform their future attempts of trampoline performances.

Narratives of acceptance: Role-identity and judgement

Acting in mirroring ways, ultimately newbies desired to become accepted into this group. Although this chapter has identified moments in time when newbies, as a collective group almost blended in, the process of acceptance was a lengthy and complex one which had to be achieved on an individual basis. Newbies had to undergo judgement processes (both in trampoline club and competition arenas) in order to be fully accepted into the group and, where possible, develop a positive role or status within it.

'Finding their feet': Narratives of role-identity, status and position

As noted above, gymnasts' mirroring behaviours were not limited to the consumption of gymnastic/trampoline bodies and seeking to (re)construct their bodies in the guise of these images. Impression management (Goffman, 1990a) extended to performing authentic trampoline performances. In order to do this, newbies had to obtain a sense of position or status within the group. Goffman (1990a) refers to this as role-identity.

Up until this point, many of the newbies would have been used to being awarded a large degree of attention in their recreational sessions, from both coaches and other participants in the class. They would have been used to being perceived as the *teacher's pet* (see above) in their previous recreational club setting, but in this new club environment

³⁷ Goffman (1956) refers to the term *deference* to denote the reaction and/or the respect given to individuals' performances, or *demeanour*.

they had to form a new sense of self. A *finding their feet* narrative was common when a new member joined the club; they had to jostle for position and status in order to find their social position or role-identity within the group. This was a complex process which was fraught with power struggles and difficult experiences. A double-edged sword emerged highlighting the tensions within the *us and them* narrative. Should a newcomer obtain a privileged position within the newbie group, they may receive disapproval by the established members who felt threatened by this. Similarly, obtaining a significant position within the established group may lead to disadvantaged position within the newbies. Four key narrative characterisations or roles were identified by coaches and established gymnasts themselves – *the bitch*³⁸, the *cutie*, the *dark horse* and the *plodder*.

A number of *female* gymnasts took on the character of *the bitch* at some point in their trampoline careers. Although this performance is used in wider trampoline interactions (e.g., the bully-like behaviours of established gymnasts observed in informal socialisation mechanisms) and aligned to playground interactions common to teenage girls (i.e. wider social narratives of what it was to be female), for newbies, it was used to exercise superiority over others.

³⁸ This is not a term that I have constructed, but one that trampoline-gymnasts tend to use themselves. They might refer to someone as 'acting like a bitch' or being 'bitchy'.

Nancy attracted my attention as I was preparing to begin the warm up. I asked Jessica to take over, handing her my list of warm-up exercises. We exchanged niceties before she approached the real purpose of this discussion:

Nancy: I'm not sure if you are aware, and I don't want to cause trouble, but I've heard that some of the girls are having problems with one of them, just saying not nice things. Just being a bit bitchy.

RL: Oh right, well what's going on?

Nancy: Well I don't want to name names, but it's Hannah. Which was a bit surprising, you know, I give her a lift home and help out and she always seems pleasant, but when she gets out of the car, the girls start telling me how she's said they aren't good enough to go to Welsh nationals. It's like she's got of a superior attitude, like she's better than them apparently. She tells them when to get off the trampoline and stuff.

RL: Ok well I'll speak to the other coaches and then probably pull her in and have a little chat.

(Fieldnotes, 2nd November 2012)

These performances were not looked upon favourably by parents or coaches, but established members of the group recognised this as a 'normal' trampoline practice or body technique (Frank, 1991) that they too experienced in their early interactions in the group.

RL: Is this bitchiness normal then?

Georgia: I think it's normal. I had it when I started. Do you remember Kylie?

RL: No not really.

Georgia: Urgh, she was maybe here just before you started. Such a bitch. So horrible. I used to cry and everything.

RL: Why?

Georgia: Oh she used to say things like I wasn't good enough to be in club, and things like, like my shorts weren't the right shorts to wear. Anything to upset me basically. But always behind my back, never really to my face.

(Georgia, 19 years old, Interview, 15th April 2012)

An interesting note here is that none of those who were or had taken on this role were able to recognise this in themselves. Though not a key instigator in this type of performance, Georgia had certainly made 'bitchy' comments about others. In addition, gymnasts (and their parents) were able to identify that these types of performances took place in backstage spaces, away from coaches who might reprimand these individuals. In 'bitchy' moments, these girls acted in dominating (Frank, 1991) ways over others. It seems that the new training environment created a contingent body-self, one that it is out of its comfort zone, and in seeking to overcome this, these girls acted in *emotionally* aggressive ways toward others. In doing so, they do not consider the implications of their actions or imagine the situation in reverse. These findings differ somewhat from Frank's (1991) description of dominating body types in their extreme forms. Typically dominating bodies are male

bodies in contingent states that physically dominate others. Yet these were (highly) feminine bodies which sought more subtle modes of domination (Stewart, 2013; Stewart et al., 2011).

While bitchiness was highly gendered, and tended to only be associated with female gymnasts, other roles or positions were open to all gymnasts. The *dark horse* status was afforded to those newbies who excelled in their physical competence on the trampoline far earlier than their newbie peers. This position awarded the bearer early acceptance into/by the established trampoline group. However, often the dark horse would find themselves then resented by other newbies and even some established members who were struggling with their own progression in the sport. Again, this was rarely voiced in front stage spaces. Abbie (aged 14 years old) provided an example of this dark horse narrative. She progressed very quickly, achieving shaped front and back somersaults far sooner than I'd imagined. She excelled in the club environment. However, notes from the research journals indicate concerns about the social barriers she faced having been placed in this position.

I worked with Abbie, Amy and Luke again this evening. Abbie was working on her piked front and back somersaults. This grouping made sense to me, as they were all experiencing similar technical problems with these skills. Amy and Luke appeared to be fine with this match, they chatted quite freely to Abbie about her somersaults and what she was doing in school. It seemed to be a good bonding session for them. Yet, there appeared to be some contention about this with the others. Sophie and Catlin [established members] approached me before conditioning:
Sophie: Rhi, can we learn pike backs with you as well?

RL: Well not tonight. You need to work on your tuck backs first, the kick out isn't right at the moment.

Sophie: [Eye roll]

Caitlin: But Abbie is learning them

(...)

Luke was chatting to me throughout conditioning with the younger ones. I asked him how he was finding Abbie.

Luke: She's doing well. I like her and I think she gets on with us lot [the older, established gymnasts], but I think from what she was saying, some of the younger ones are being a bit bitchy about her being with us. They've been saying things like 'she thinks better than us'. It's silly really. Surely they can see [the difference]. They'll get used to it.

(Fieldnotes, 30th October 2012)

Thus, the *dark horse* status was one of the hardest of the identified social roles to navigate; tensions from both established and newbie gymnasts needed to be mediated. Yet, as Luke's comments indicate, this is a temporary or transition role, one which often led the gymnast to an overall more privileged position among the group (see chapter six and commentary on 'the top of the pack', p.205). The *dark horse* narrative revealed a key tension in gymnasts mirroring performances. Abbie was performing a seemingly flawless trampoline performance, but the length of time that she had been in this group did not correspond to the position she had built and therefore this was contested by others.

While the dark horse status met criticism from some within both newbie and established groups, some positions or status were advantageous and accepted in both social groups. The *cutie* was one such position and was both highly privileged and highly body-centred, but had a timely nature. This position tended to be awarded to one or two newbies who were deemed by coaches and established gymnasts to be cute. It was not uncommon for this to be later noted by judges and officials at competitions. These newbies were typically unusually small, young, pretty or handsome and tend to possess shy introverted qualities.

Emma: Sarah is a real charmer isn't she though. She's just so little and cute in her leotard. You can just imagine how the judges are going to melt when she stands up and presents. Awww such a cutie.
Jessica: I think Lewis is the same though. He's quite pretty for a boy really isn't he [laughs]. Then so was Leon at one stage I'm sure, don't know what happened there.
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Therefore, even though this status was a privileged position in both the newbie and established group, this could not be maintained. As the cuties' bodies aged, they lost their cuteness and their social position along with it. This issue of ageing will be picked up in chapters six and seven when discussing issues of maintaining and reconstructing trampoline embodiments.

The final newbie role identified was *the plodder*. This status was attributed to those who developed their trampoline identity and performances (technical and gymnastic) at a steadily slow pace. They were the *laissez-faire* of the group, the ones who plodded along with the day-to-day tasks and challenges they experienced. Although plodding, these gymnasts continued to act in mirroring ways, internalising gymnastic performances and recreating them in front and back stage spaces.

Jessica: I'm a bit surprised by Sarina. I thought she would have developed quicker. She seemed so good in reccy, but she just hasn't really materialised. I mean she comes in, does what she's asked and then leaves.
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

In contrast to the dark horse and cutie status which are relatively temporary, this position seemed to be maintained over longer periods of time and developed further into the gymnasts' career. However, the plodder was in some ways privileged. They were rarely challenged by other newbies or established members. Coaches tended to pick up on this narrative more so, as suggested by the discussion above. We did not view this role favourably, although this was never openly voiced in front-stage spaces. These gymnasts were rarely selected for national coaching or competition opportunities, they blended in far too much.

'It's horrible': First experiences of competition arenas

Initial competition performances were central to trampoline-gymnasts' identity construction and greater sense of being or becoming a trampoline-gymnast. These front stage spaces provided the most pivotal opportunities for the internalisation of trampoline selves and identities (Goffman, 1990a). The nature of this sport requires individual trampoline performances that are judged formally. In these processes, trampoline-gymnasts cannot hide within a collective group, they cannot blend in, team identities and sub-groups (e.g., the newbies) are lost and they are pushed into front stage regions as an individual. Competition arenas provide an audience - judges, officials, gymnasts and parents, who judge gymnasts' attempts at authentic trampoline performances, both in front and back stage regions (see chapter four, p.152). However, having never experienced competition spaces before, newbies were uncertain of competition processes and expectations within this setting.

The club provided opportunities (formal socialisation mechanisms) to prepare newcomers for their first competition. Dress rehearsals were compulsory for all gymnasts competing in upcoming events in which they were encouraged (and sometimes coerced) to perform their routines in front of the rest of the club (coaches, gymnasts and parents) wearing their leotards. The coaches formed a judging panel and gave them scores with the view of creating similar conditions to competitions spaces.

From the corner of my eye I could see that Eva had mounted the trampoline, Amy was telling her to sit in the middle of the trampoline until we were ready. Eva looked a little nervous. Jessica was still calculating her score for Luke and the general chatter of the group had risen in volume.

RL: Guys can you keep it down please, and make sure you watch everyone's routine please, it's only fair.

The volume lowered.

Jessica: Oops I didn't realise she's already got on. Maybe we should tell them that on the day we will tell them when to get on so they don't get nervous waiting.

RL: I think Amy told her to jump up, but yeah.

Jessica: I'm good [finishing writing Eva's name].

RL: Is your name Eva?

Eva nodded and laughed a little nervously.

RL: Ok Eva when you are ready you may begin.

Eva turned and started her preliminary bounces.

Jessica: No presenting.

RL: We have told them. I'll go through it again.

Eva completed a rather hurried and messy routine, stumbling at the end and giving a rushed present; most unlike her. Everyone clapped.

(...)

Michael, Jamie and Ian came into the hall with nervous smiles. Luke was grinning behind them.

Jessica: I thought you were going to put your leotards on?

Luke: They have (laughs).

RL: What and then you put your joggers and t-shirts back on?

The three of them just grinned at me.

RL: Well do they fit? Let's see. You're going to have to show us in a minute anyway.

Jamie: Mine's quite tight.

Luke: They're supposed to be tight, it's just because you aren't used to it.

They sheepishly removed their joggers and t-shirts revealing white stirrups and club leotards.

Jessica: You look very smart.

RL: Ian, you're not going to be able to wear those socks on the day though.

Jessica: (laughs) No black socks, even if they do match your leotard.

RL: That's a point actually. [To the group] Guys! Can you all please remember to bring white socks on the day! You won't be allowed to complete in fluffy socks, or pink socks. Just white trainer socks please.

(Fieldnotes, 29th September, 2012)

At this point in their trampoline career, training spaces tended to be comfortable environments, yet this slight change in conditions was not a comfortable or enjoyable experience for newbies, emphasising the connection between bodies and social spaces (Andrews et al., 2005; Frank, 2010). Both boys and girls commented on the centrality of their body or more importantly their body in a leotard, in these mock-competition experiences. It felt alien to them and they didn't want to reveal their body to others.

Jamie: It was just so tight [laughs]. I wasn't expecting it to be tight. I don't know why. I'm quite glad I did it [wore the leotard in training before competition].

RL: You put your t-shirt and joggers back on.

Jamie: Yes [laughs]. I was embarrassed.

RL: Why?

Jamie: Because... I don't know, I didn't want people to see me in it [leotard]. No one really said anything though.

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

Sarah: I didn't enjoy it.

RL: Why?

Sarah: It was just different.

RL: Was it better to show people in club first?

Sarah: Yes. I think...doing it [wearing a leotard] in competition for the first time would have been weird otherwise.

(Sarah, aged 7 years old, Interview, 13th February 2013)

In addition to dress-rehearsals, competition terminology, language and processes were implemented to help generate familiarity on the day. For example, the gymnasts were asked their name, required to confirm who they were and then asked to begin. However, despite these practices gymnasts still recounted their first competition experiences as being a daunting, negative experience, even if they performed well on the trampoline, placed well in their categories and won a medal.

RL: Do you remember your first competition?

Sophie: Urgh. It was horrible. Hated it.

(Sophie, Interview, 6th February)

RL: Do you remember your first one [competition]?

Leon: I think so, I was quite little really.

RL: What was it like?

Leon: I think I was more worried about getting through it than doing well or anything [laughs].

[Pause]. It wasn't very nice really, even though I won. I was still getting used to things I suppose.

Wearing a leotard, the people, the ummm, the judges.

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October, 2012)

Newcomers were not the only ones who had to grapple with these competition processes, parents required a certain amount of educating as to what was expected of them and their child(ren) at these events. The club provided them with a document outlining the preparation they needed to undertake and the processes that were likely to happen on the day. Thus, at this stage of their trampoline career gymnasts were highly dependent upon their parents' understanding of competition processes as well as getting to grips with it

themselves. In constructing and performing an authentic trampoline identity, particularly in competition spaces, parents had to aid their children's mirroring bodies, by buying into the internalised, desired image their child(ren) were trying to achieve. For example, they purchased trampoline/gymnastic apparel – a leotard, shorts/stirrups, club t-shirts, club hoodies. However, despite these preparations, uncertainty often prevailed and mistakes in competition settings still occurred providing inauthentic gymnastic performances.

Marshal: Ryan?

RL: Yes.

Marshal: He's on next.

Ryan: Is this the real one now?

RL: Yep. Just remember, it's just like training. Just do the same. All I want you to do is get through your routine.

Ryan nodded. He'd gone rather pale.

RL: Come on then.

Luke and I walked him to the nearest bed, the judges were still calculating their scores. Ryan went to alight.

RL: Wait a minute otherwise you'll be waiting ages. And you need to take your t-shirt off as well. Take your time.

Ryan quickly flung his t-shirt on the floor in a heap.

(Fieldnotes, 14th October, 2012)

A number of gymnasts, having overcome this stepping-stone to acceptance, noted that this was indeed a pinnacle point for them in their trampoline career. Having competed in a formal competition, newbies underwent a rite of passage. They became accepted because they had experienced a judged performance.

Sophie: I don't know, it just seemed like after the first one [competition] I was part of the group. They sort of were more friendly. I think it was like they needed to see if I could trampoline properly or something.

(Sophie, 13 years old, Interview, 6th November 2012)

Ostracism and difference: Experiences of problematic integration

Although transition from recreational classes to club training was relatively smooth for most newbies, others' experiences were more problematic. This trampoline group presented a small number of newcomers who had difficult and/or different experiences of socialisation. Some immediately left club training sessions and never returned to any form of trampoline activity. Reasons given for drop out in initial weeks were associated with perceived performance differences and feelings of not fitting in:

Amy: I spoke to Cecilia in school, she said she's not coming back.

RL: Why's that then?

Amy: She feels embarrassed that she can't do the same routines as us or something.

(Fieldnotes, 11th November 2012)

Michelle meandered into the hall with Lola apparently pestering her and Hywel hiding behind her. Lola ran along to meet the others and started to warm-up, but Hywel remained hiding behind her:

Michelle: Sorry can I have a quick word.

RL: Yeah sure.

I ushered her to a quiet corner in the hall.

Michelle: Hywel doesn't want to carry on in club.

RL: Oh right, well that's ok. I can always put him back into reccy and then if he wants to come back when he's a bit older he can. He's still very young.

Michelle: Well I've said to him that he should stay and stick it out a bit because he's good, but... Hywel retaliated by shaking his head silently, looking up at Michelle desperately. I had a feeling that this hadn't been the first time she had tried to coax him into changing his mind.

RL: Well what's bothering you about club Hywel?

Hywel continued to shake his head at his mum.

Michelle: I think it's just because there aren't any other boys of his age. I've said to him, if he leaves Lewis will get his space and he should just wait a bit until there is a space for Lewis.

RL: Well Lewis is on the list and as soon as there is space he will be in club, but we just haven't got spaces at the moment. Why don't you have a think about it and let me know in a week or two.

(Fieldnotes, 11th March 2012)

More interestingly, there were a small number of gymnasts who experienced either temporary or permanent ostracism from the group, yet remained in the trampoline club for a prolonged period of time. These individuals were easily identifiable by gymnasts, coaches and parents.

It's awful I know, but it's like something off *Mean Girls*³⁹, you've got the cool kids, the geeks and then *the losers*. We all know who they are.
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012, added emphasis)

Four prominent storied examples of *the losers* narrative emerged – Joanna, Imogen, Charlotte and Yasmin, each offering nuanced accounts of living in and through this narrative.

Imogen, Charlotte and Yasmin illustrated particular stigmas (Goffman, 1990b) which resulted in their ostracism not only from the existing group, but also from other newbies. A focus group discussion among coaches revealed that these young girls' experiences were a result of non-trampoline performances.

It must be the way they perceive her character in some way. She's quite – I don't really want to use the word, but you know, when you describe someone as “a bit of a social retard” – where they don't quite get exactly what's acceptable and exactly how you should act around others? Maybe that's just...Charlotte struggles with that and they [other gymnasts] can't just be nice and ignore it, because they aren't old enough to understand that it's polite to do so. So instead they cast it as “She's a weirdo, or a freak” and don't really want to be associated with her. Perhaps.
(Emma, Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Jessica: Well I can't seem to talk to Yasmin, she's just so stand offish. That's why you deal with her [laughs]. She is really good, she tries really hard and she always does well...
Emma: I think the girls don't like her because she tries hard...
Cassie: Like she shows them up
Emma: Yeah but they really resent it and then just ignore her
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Thus, any demonstration of superiority or social inadequacy was likely to cause problems for any newcomers. However, unlike rookie mistakes, discussed earlier in this chapter, these misdemeanours were repeated over time and led to a higher notion of stigma, leading to a spoiled identity (Goffman, 1990b).

Yasmin was very focused on performance and the ostracism she faced never seemed to bother her as much as it did Charlotte, whose parents had a number of conversations with coaching staff about the bullying-like behaviours she experienced from the other girls. Charlotte commented on her experiences:

³⁹ Reference to the 2004 film ‘Mean Girls’.

Charlotte: I like coming, I enjoy it. I like learning new skills, that's why I still come. Even if the others are horrible sometimes, my mum has, and well you said to just ignore them. I mainly stay with Imogen and then Ella sometimes comes over, when they are there.

RL: You say the others are horrible. What do you mean?

Charlotte: Well they didn't speak to me for ages (laughs).

RL: I know we've spoken about it before...

Charlotte: Well I can see them talking about me and sniggering and stuff.

(Fieldnotes, 12th September 2012)

Although she was never able to make the link, both coaches and Charlotte's parents made links between her social experiences in club sessions and her competitive performances. Charlotte's early experiences of competition were disastrous. Often she would perform excellent routines in training and competitive warm-ups but fail to complete competitive routines causing her a great deal of distress. Her mother often blamed the behaviour of the other girls for this, claiming that their bullying-like behaviours extended to these competitive spaces leaving her daughter feeling vulnerable and alone. These are unpleasant stories to hear, but ultimately these initial competitive moments were vital to Charlotte's role-identity (Goffman, 1990a), position and status in the club. Donnelly and Young (1988) also note the impact of failed bodily performances in experiences of ostracism in rugby players and climbers. Charlotte's story echoes this. She had failed competitively on a number of occasions, ultimately this labelled her with the additional stigma of performative incompetence in formal judgement spaces – she failed to provide good trampoline performances when it mattered most. Thus, the narrative of *the failure* emerged from this type of story.

While *the failure* narrative was recognised by other gymnasts, coaches and parents as part of an individual's social identity, those who had failed and still remained in the club attempting to continue their trampoline careers never used these experiences to reinforce their self-identity. Instead they continued to behave in mirroring ways, internalising desirable images of trampoline bodies and attempting to reconstruct their bodily

performances in this guise. Perhaps, this is the advantage of youth, a feat that someone in adulthood would be unable to overcome.

Imogen (aged 8-10 years old) faced an altogether different type of stigma (Goffman, 1990b), one that was beyond her control. She was born with a cleft lip and palate, causing some verbal impairment, which became the source of her ostracism from other gymnasts in the club.

Emma: I would say people feel awkward talking to her, because you can see them... You can see, like Naomi, and it's not because they're being nasty... It's her being a child and the fact that Imogen, when you speak to her and it's hard to understand what she's saying, you feel a bit awkward because...

Cassie: I'll ask her half a dozen times what she's said...

(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Imogen's story revealed the storied narrative of the *mis-fit*, the gymnast who has a spoiled-identity which they are unable to overcome (Goffman, 1990b). Through her physical deformity she did not and could not provide the beautiful trampoline/gymnastic body that was prevalent in this group and she could not provide the same trampoline performances or engage with particular narrative role-identities such as *the cutie* (see above). The difference here is that while Charlotte and Yasmin's perceived inadequacies might be overcome as they developed into young adults and developed their social skills and trampoline practices, Imogen was likely to always face these challenges and experience an enduring spoiled-identity.

Although coaches were able to easily identify those being ostracised and even demonstrated some level of empathy toward these stigmatised gymnasts, delving into the storied lives of these stigmatised newbies was not easy; these stories were hard to hear and engage with. I note my own experiences and reflections of these moments in Chapter eight.

However, not all gymnasts experienced prolonged ostracism, sometimes this was a *temporary* difficulty. Joanna had a difficult integration into the group, although she

became a prominent character in the club later on. There was no clear reason as to why Joanna didn't fit in with the others:

The gymnasts had begun their warm-up when Joanna arrived late. I told her to go onto the red bed to even up the numbers. It was hard to tell if the expression she projected back to this request was one of dread or just indifference. My thoughts then turned to a consideration of the group I had just placed her in. I felt concerned for two reasons. One, I had placed her into a group of established gymnasts. Two, these established gymnasts are outspoken about their disgruntlement about the new intake of gymnasts and have requested segregation. Despite these concerns, this was, in theory, an ideal group for me to place Joanna. She is a similar age to most of the other gymnasts on the trampoline. She attends school with Sophie and therefore should have some similar topics of conversation. She has the same competition routine and works to a similar standard to those on this bed.

My concerns were realised. It became quickly apparent that there was little interaction between Joanna and the established group members. They completely ostracised her from their group, creating a large physical space between themselves and Joanna. I had to shout at them across the hall to spot for her. They only spoke to her on occasion to tell her it was her turn. She looked the same as them – long hair, make-up, Milano shorts and a t-shirt. She bounces in the same way they do. Joanna looked miserable and disengaged with the tasks putting in little effort.

I repositioned myself to stand behind them with a look of disapproval. They quickly stopped talking and moved to spotting positions. It didn't seem to improve things for Joanna though who remained miserable, staring into space.
(Fieldnotes, Tuesday 2nd August, 2012)

Coaches also noticed that Joanna had experienced a difficult transition from recreational classes into club training. Again, the source of these difficulties was unclear:

RL: It's funny how things change look at them over there [Joanna, Amy, Leon, Luke].

Emma: She has fought to be part of that group.

Jessica: She's fitted in a bit better now though...

Emma: Because she's tried hard.

Jessica: She's changed what she wears. She wears leggings and a vest top and ties her top up. Whereas when she used to come first, she wore baggy t-shirts and joggers. She's lost weight, and started wearing make-up, I would say put more effort in...

(Fieldnotes, 2nd February 2013)

In unpicking the rationale for Joanna's early difficulties in the club, it appears that her initial trampoline performances and body-work (Goffman, 2005) were not authentic. She did not fit the idealised image of the trampoline-gymnast that was expected. She wasn't predictable. However, through mirroring body usage, consuming and internalising gymnastic images produced through a desire to fit in, Joanna soon began giving these performances within training environments. Yet, she still identified a remaining hurdle that delayed her acceptance into the club. In

her reflections on this time, Joanna determined that her place in the group was not fully established until she had proved her technical, competitive ability as a gymnast in a competition setting:

Joanna: Well it wasn't great. It was difficult to start. Some of the girls didn't speak to me. To be honest I'm still not friends with them now, if you think, I hang around with Amy and Abbie, the older ones.

RL: How do think that happened? Why did things stop becoming difficult?

Joanna: I think, maybe the first, maybe the competitions helped. Because they could see I deserved to be in club, because I did well.

RL: You won your first competition didn't you?

Joanna: Yeah and qualified, and they didn't. But I missed the first one they all did and I don't know maybe that's what it was.

(Joanna, 13 years old, Focus Group, 12th January 2013)

Thus, Joanna's story provides some ambiguity surrounding any clear criteria or stigma that would lead to ostracism from this group. Although her debut competitive performance was delayed, she had never failed to perform well. She just faced difficulties in becoming accepted.

Summary

The initial construction of trampoline bodies and identities was the product of complex, interwoven body-centred processes. Gymnasts had to construct and reconstruct their corporeal body in the guise of idyllic images of the trampoline-gymnast, and they did so mainly in mirroring ways. They consumed images of the desirable, predictable trampoline body, internalised it and sought to become it. Established members of the group used their body to communicate their (dis)approval of these early performances which in turn influenced newbies' future performances and determined the role, characterisation or status they came to have in the group.

Trampoline-gymnasts were rarely able to make free choices about entering this sport or constructing their body; they lacked agency. Some parents were active in pursuing opportunities for their child(ren) to join the club, but ultimately *coaches* were the key

gatekeepers to this group. They decided who was allowed in and who was not. The gymnast being recruited or rejected was relatively passive in the whole process. These findings lead to further questions surrounding the level of agency these and other young people have in making decisions about their sporting lives. How can we, as coaches or development officers, ensure that children are making informed decisions about their participation in sport? Are there policies or guidance that can be put into place to ensure that children are given more decision-making opportunities?

Parents' rationale for their child(ren) taking part in trampoline-gymnastics was embedded in traditional and narrow notions of femininity and masculinity. This was an environment where beautiful feminine bodies were displayed and masculine bodies demonstrated technical skill and risk-taking behaviours. These ideas were often reflected in their children's (pre-conceived) ideas about what trampoline-gymnastics was about and who took part in it. However, in their uncritical agenda these gymnasts and their parents were unable to recognise that the aesthetic and risk-taking elements associated with trampoline-gymnastics were relevant to both male and female gymnasts. Thus opportunities to capitalise on the ways in which this sport challenges traditional gendered narratives are being missed. This is perhaps something that should be considered by BG, and other associated bodies, in the ways in which they advertise and portray the sport.

Moreover, the types of bodies that were accepted and privileged in this trampoline group were restricted by the limited nature of trampoline/gymnastic discourses and narrative resources available. Again, coaches played a key part in shaping the body narratives that are available to this group in their selection and recruitment processes. In this trampoline club, gymnasts had to construct a trampoline body and give authentic performances in order to be accepted and successful. In doing so, these children

(re)negotiated narrative characterisations and status in the club (e.g., *the cutie*, *the bitch*, *the dark horse*, *the plodder*, *the failure* and *the mis-fit*). These narrative roles were also never really a free choice, they were often assigned to newbies by other members of the group. Yet, they determined the type of experience these newcomers were likely to have and signaled the challenges they may have to overcome in maintaining or reconstructing their identity throughout in their career.

CHAPTER SIX

'I AM A GYMNAST': LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE TRAMPOLINE-GYMNAST

For these gymnasts it was not enough to construct a competitively successful and aesthetically legitimate trampoline body, they had to enter into processes to maintain and confirm this over time (Donnelly and Young, 1988). This required negotiation of various challenges associated with ageing as they transitioned through puberty. Their body was a project that had to be worked on as part of the (re)construction and confirmation of their gymnastic self (Shilling, 2003).

In this chapter I present four narrative themes which home in on gymnasts' body and identity work over their sporting career. First, experiences of belonging in this group, that is looking, behaving and feeling like a trampoline-gymnast, as well as developing roles and position status within the group. Second, experiences of myriad levels of judgment, typically associated with trampoline discourses and wider social narratives. Third, disrupted body-selves of pubescent bodies, capturing stories of body management in accordance with trampoline discourses. Finally, the negotiation of body matters (e.g., body dissatisfaction and sexualisation of young people) stemming from a heightened sense of body consciousness. Although relatively neat thematic findings are presented, gymnasts' experiences were responses to complex intertwined processes that were not isolated to one specific moment in time, but often combinations of challenges, echoing the messy nature of lived experience (Frank, 1995).

'I belong': Bodies, selves and identities

Following initial acceptance into the trampoline group (see chapter five, p.177), gymnasts still had to engage in face/body-work in order to maintain their authentic gymnastic performances (Goffman, 1990a, 2005). The trampoline body can be viewed as body-project (Shilling, 2003), one that had to be worked at over time to affirm gymnasts' sense of identity. In face/body work process, these gymnasts meandered through mirroring and disciplined body usages (Frank, 1991, 1995), producing a desire to construct trampoline/gymnastic identities and provide predictable, consistent authentic gymnastic performances. That is, for example, performing highly predictable routines of training and being predictable in their appearance. They consumed and internalised images of the perceived ideal trampoline/gymnastic body and sought to become it through prolonged processes of body (re)construction. Over time, some trampoline performances appeared to be flawlessly and consistently performed in the front stage spaces of the training hall and competition arena; although the precise time when consistent performances began to occur was hard to isolate. However, what was clear is when these gymnasts reached this level of consistency in their performances they felt as though they belonged in this group; they became part of the club. Thus, instead of trying to pinpoint particular moments in time when this sense of belonging happened, this research looked to form an understanding of the narrative constructions of *belonging*.

Data indicates four signifiers or symbols (Goffman, 1990a) of belonging which were identified and traced across gymnasts' stories and body performances – *I look like a gymnast, I behave like a gymnast, I love to fly* (shared understandings of bodily feeling) and *Others see me as a gymnast*. No one narrative is privileged above another. However a combination of these was required to feel a sense of belonging. Moreover this sense of

collective identity (Brewer and Gardner, 1996) emerged more quickly for some than others and had to be continuously (re)negotiated over time.

'I look like a gymnast': Body (re)construction

Gymnasts had to appear authentic over time in order to be considered as someone who *belonged*, as part of their self and social identity (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Goffman, 1990a, 1990b). It was difficult to capture gymnasts' ideas about whether their body might now *belong* as many were so engrossed in monadic and self-centred mirroring body processes (Frank, 1991). In doing so, they produced a constant desire to reconstruct their bodies so few, if any, ever openly said that their body was perfect or complete. However, some alluded that it was, in some way, gymnastic. For them, this was a goal, sought by everyone and achieved by very few; for the mirroring body, desire is to want more:

Well I'm not skinny, I'm (pause), I'm more muscular, well not muscly but you need muscles to do trampolining, or any sport really, otherwise you'd snap.
(Abbie, 13 years old, Interview, 9th August 2012)

Luke: None of us are big are we? You couldn't have say someone who's in the gym all the time [excessive weight-training associated with body building] on a trampoline, they wouldn't be able to bend. None of us have got too much muscle basically, well I don't. I have to be able to do a straddle so I couldn't put on too much muscle.
(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

In order to belong, these gymnasts had to have some sense that their body was gymnastic. They had to fulfil, at least in part, the idea of a sport-specific body ideal (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011) as part of the negotiation of a collective group identity (Brewer and Gardner, 1996) and also have a body that was physically able to perform skills on a trampoline and undertake sometimes grueling training sessions.

However, body construction was not something that was fixed, it had to be (re)negotiated and reconstructed over time as the body aged. This was challenging for all gymnasts throughout their careers and rather than discuss this here, these issues will be a

key focus later in this chapter (i.e. 'The disrupted body-self: Experiences of the pubescent body') and in the next chapter (i.e. 'My body hurts': Disrupted body-selves, injury and ageing').

'I behave like a gymnast': Body performances

The second signifier of *belonging* was being able to achieve convincing and consistent trampoline performances over time⁴⁰. Established gymnasts who claimed to have a sense of belonging in this group, naturally performed day-to-day tasks in training with little need for instruction or support once they had been given a particular focus (e.g., practising routines for competition). They seemed to blend in to the group.

Jessica: Aww it's weird isn't it, the newbies aren't newbies anymore.

RL: What do you mean?

Jessica: Well I don't have to tell them what to do anymore; they've just come in and got on with their warm ups straight away. They've even got their training diaries out of the box I didn't have to say anything, they just did it.

(Fieldnotes, 6th September 2012)

Thus, these gymnasts shifted between mirroring styles of body usage having (re)constructed their body, to disciplined usages or habitual practices to provide authentic trampoline performances. They performed regimented styles of body usage making them consistently predictable (Frank, 1991). For example, putting their personal belongings against a specific wall, collecting their training diaries, being able to understand what warm-up tasks were without question. In regimented performances (e.g., performing a given skill multiple times) gymnasts demonstrated a lack of desire to focus on anything else but the task at hand in that moment; they were disassociated with others and were monadic in the sense that they were alone with their own thoughts on completing a given skill set on the trampoline.

⁴⁰ Although the (gymnastic) body and (gymnastic) body performances are intricately linked (Goffman, 1990a, 1990b) there was evidence that while some gymnasts had a gymnastic body, they failed to provide appropriate, desirable gymnastic performances. For example, see Charlotte's story in chapter five. Thus, although separated out here, the two are intricately linked.

Disciplined performances were very noticeable in the early stages of coming to belong to the group, mainly because, as a coach, I no longer had to undertake tasks for newbies, for example, give them their training diary or tell/show them what a particular skill was. These daily tasks became autonomous of gymnasts' self, and a means of surveilling and regulating self. However, regimented performances became less noticeable over time. They became something that was accepted as part of a gymnast's self-identity; how they defined themselves – as an accomplished, practiced gymnast.

As such, body usage to (re)construct and display trampoline identity became more explicit and frequent in back-stage settings outside of trampoline contexts (e.g., in school, among other friends and extended family). For example, for her 18th birthday party Amy ordered a birthday cake portraying her bouncing on a trampoline, suggesting she wanted her school friends and extended family to recognise her trampoline identity as a young adult. Social media also featured highly in gymnasts' attempts to reinforce and communicate their trampoline identity to wider audiences. The club had a closed (private, non-accessible to the public) Facebook page which contained information about upcoming events and activities. This provided limited⁴¹ backstage access to gymnasts' online profiles⁴² or identities, but this revealed that the gymnasts and even their parents had profile pictures that depicted their trampoline/gymnastic identity. For example, competition performance photographs or pictures of them at trampoline-based events wearing their club uniform. Thus, gymnasts used technological spaces to maintain, reiterate and confirm their

⁴¹ As part of the coaching role held by the researcher and the club's policy for online communication, it was deemed inappropriate to communicate with children (those under 16) in private online spaces. Therefore all coaches were asked to decline friend requests from club members (under the age of 16) and restrict online communication with club members to the club's Facebook page, accessible to all club members and their parents.

⁴² It wasn't within the ethical consent given to this project to undertake a detailed analysis of the social media use of these gymnasts, although it emerged as an interesting observation. This is something that would be interesting to look at in future research.

trampoline identity not only with trampoline groups, but also a wider social audience. These performances allowed them to produce a gymnastic narrative over time – ‘I belong’.

‘I love to fly’: Embodied sensations

Experiences of the lived body (Leder, 1990; Merleau-Ponty, 2002) were central to trampolines-gymnasts' continued participation in this sport and sense of belonging. Similarly, Goffman (1990b) refers to felt-identity as identity formed through bodily feeling. The bodily sensations they experienced while bouncing on the trampoline were like no other they had or could experience elsewhere. Embodied sensations of flight emerged quite prominently in interview discussions and diary entries from gymnasts.

There's no other sensation like it. It's like weightlessness, like you're flying through the air. You can feel the air rush against your skin. You can feel your hair get left behind in the air and whip back against your back. There's brief points where you actually feel suspended in the air (the top) and I can't think what else you could possibly do to feel that.
(Diary extract, Jessica aged 20 years old)

Leon [12 years old]: It's like you're flying. There's not really another way to describe it. I love it! Even the scary bits when you think you've messed up. It's why I do it.
(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

In discussions with gymnasts who struggled to fit in (e.g., Charlotte) or who were noticeably disengaged in training (e.g., Naomi), embodied flight sensations were central to their continued presence in the group. This was one of their main reasons for continuing to come to training; quite simply, they enjoyed the way that their body felt when they bounced on the trampoline.

Naomi: It's quite nice [being in the air], like flying. I feel like I don't weigh anything and that's maybe why I look lazy when I bounce sometimes [laughs].
RL: Really?
Naomi: [Laughs] No honest.
(Naomi aged 12 years old, Interview 9th August 2012)

There was a sense that bouncing on a trampoline held some form of historical density (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, see p.64). Therefore, this was an automatic movement and sensation,

one gymnasts relied upon to feel normal, to feel like a gymnast. Similarly, gymnasts had a shared understanding of fear in flight when historical density was broken. For some, this was a welcomed feeling, one that reminded them of the limitations of their body.

Luke: We've all done it, when we take-off and realise we've put too much in and think 'shit'!

Leon: [Laughs] Yeah true! Or not enough in, that's even more scary.

RL: But you've never stopped doing a skill because of it?

Luke: No it's part of the sport, like I said, we've all done it. You have...

RL: [Agreeing].

Luke: It's just part of the sport. We can't always do things perfect.

Leon: I think it's slowed me down before.

RL: What do you mean?

Leon: Like, I might not do something for a little bit after, even though, you and Martin always make me get straight back on [the trampoline] and do something [a particular skill] if something bad happens, like I get scared. Something [sic], I'll do progressions for a bit though rather than the whole move.

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

For others, this was a very unwelcomed sensation, one that disrupted their development in the sport, but again reminded them of their bodily limitations.

Jessica: It's that split second that seems to take an age to pass. It's pure fear. And you know straight away something has gone wrong, but there is nothing you can do to change it. It's like when Charlie was teaching me baranis and told me to just do a front somersault and turn my head. Horrendous! I just remember being blind, having no clue where I was, there was just a blur and my heart sank, you know like a, like a sick feeling, because I was just waiting to see if I was going to land on my head basically. Luckily I didn't really [laughs]. Reminds me a bit of a car accident when everything goes in slow motion. You know that's what people say. Anyway, I never did them after that, well not until uni, so two years later maybe.

(Focus group with female coaches, 10th July 2012)

Whether enjoyable or feared, flight sensations provided these gymnasts with a shared understanding of bodily feeling, one that an outsider would find difficult to comprehend, enabling them to feel as though they belonged. This was one of the few times when gymnasts started to border on producing elements of more communicative, dyadic bodies (Frank, 1991) that were expressive, sharing their ideas of what it was like to experience this sport. In moments of fear in particular, gymnasts were empathetic of one another's feelings and experiences. This notion of shared bodily feeling or sensation and its role in creating a sense of belonging or collective identity in sporting bodies has received little attention in the literature. Bodily performances (Goffman, 1990a) and body

(re)construction (Shilling, 2003) have featured greatly in discussions of individual (self and social) identity, but there has been limited commentary on bodily feeling in *sport* producing a sense of collective identity. Allen-Collinson's (2005, 2012) phenomenological work on, for example, those with asthma (in sport) and runners' shared understanding of pain, provides much of the leading work in this field, although other studies of surfing groups, for example, also make these connections (e.g., Taylor, 2007).

'Others see me as a gymnast': Roles, position and status

Gymnasts' sense of belonging was not only based on the construction of the self-identity as a gymnast, but also on the social identity they projected to others (Brewer and Gardener, 1996; Goffman, 1990a). As previously discussed, others' deference towards gymnastic performances, and the subsequent social-identity formed, was central to the maintenance and reinforcement of individuals' trampoline identity and a sense of belonging in this group. In offering and receiving audience acceptance of authentic performances, prolonged, enduring friendships were formed which extended beyond trampoline settings. This is what Stevenson (2002) terms *entanglements* – a complex web of commitments and relationships which embeds individuals into sporting groups. In this club it was common for gymnasts to spend their social time away from training and competitions (in back stage settings) with fellow gymnasts and they would often form long lasting friendships that continued beyond retirement. Over the course of the research I saw groups of gymnasts shopping together in the town centre and when 'bumping into' ex-gymnasts they would be able to tell me what other ex-gymnasts were doing with their lives. Friendships were, at times, one of the only reasons that these young people remained in the sport, particularly in their teenage years, when they began to develop other interests outside of sport (Light, Harvey and Memmert, 2011).

RL: Why do you come training? Sometimes it seems like an effort for you to actually get on [the trampoline].

Sophie: Because of Naomi really. We're friends. Caitlin was the same for a long time before she left, she just came because we came. I enjoy it, I do, but Naomi sort of keeps me coming I guess [laughs].

(Sophie, 13 years old, Interview 6th November 2012)

Amongst these entanglements, gymnasts formed specific roles or status-positions within the club which as Weiss (2001) suggests, are vital to reinforcing identity in sport. Already mentioned in chapter five is *the cutie, the dark horse, the bitch and the plodder*. However, as body construction and body performances became more refined, other status-positions became available. Goffman (1990a) refers to role-identity as the positioning of an individual within a particular role which not only provides them with a particular status but also a form of identity. This acted mechanism to reinforce individuals' sense of self and social identity. Once established as a member in this trampoline group there appeared to be another layer or social ladder to climb. A *top of the pack* status was reserved for those who had developed their trampoline identity to the point where they were acknowledged by other established gymnasts as being a role model. They produced technically accurate skills and routines on the trampoline and were able to competently support others in their learning and development. For example, pushing in a safety mat in order to support other gymnasts and coaches in the safe learning of a new skill, helping younger gymnasts learn their routine, fill in their training diary or show them conditioning exercises. All of these tasks required some level of coaching-like skill and certainly a great deal of trust. In doing so, they became role models to newbies and younger established gymnasts.

RL: Why do you look up to Luke and Georgia?

Sarah: They are really good.

RL: On the trampoline?

Sarah: Yes. And they help me with my somersaults as well. Luke practised with me when he was learning to coach. I trust him.

(Sarah, 7 years old, Interview, 13th February 2013)

In this role-model guise, these gymnasts took on a central and privileged position-status in the club. 'Top of the pack' members were identifiable by coaches and gymnasts (i.e. Georgia, Luke, Amy, Leon and Abbie). Collectively, they shared characteristics which signaled they were 'top of the pack'. All were seen as exceptional, competent gymnasts; they gave consistently good trampoline performances and could perform complex skills which they learned and mastered in a small time frame. Consequently, all had made quick progression through the competition structure, reaching the regional D⁴³ competition category relatively quickly. Their dedication to their learning and development in the sport was in some ways rewarded by the coaching staff through more opportunities to train and engage in the trampoline group, which in turn strengthened their position-status. They became 'volunteer coaches' and helped out in recreational classes, supporting coaches by demonstrating skills, occupying young children with floor-based gymnastic activities or pushing in safety mats for skills being learnt/practiced. These opportunities supported their learning and development, but also the feeling of belonging. They felt they were an essential cog in the day-to-day running of the club's activities. However, these status positions seemed to transfer almost naturally into club training and they became viewed as the elite or 'top of the pack'. This was something that was seen as desirable and contributed to gymnasts' bodily performances. Essentially this group acted as one possible narrative resource (Frank, 1995) for others to draw upon, when seeking to (re)construct their trampoline body and develop their trampoline identity.

⁴³ Regional D is the highest competition category at regional level, before progressing to national competition levels.

Some gymnasts remained on the periphery of the top pack. Joanna, Sophie and Naomi were all identified as being on the edge of this exclusive group. They had all expressed an interest to become volunteer coaches and came along to recreational sessions over a period of time. Yet they never quite seemed to achieve the same position or status within the club group as the top pack. The only difference between the groups was the extent to which they performed authentic, dedicated trampoline performances, particularly in competitions. Naomi and Sophie were certainly not as dedicated to their own training as the top pack, despite being given the same opportunities. They openly admitted at times that trampoline-gymnastics had become more of a social avenue for them. Volunteering in the recreational sessions became a way of remaining in the group without the pressure of having to provide good technical performances.

Sophie: I like volunteering probably more than actual trampolining now.

RL: Why?

Sophie: I don't know, it's just different. It's good for my school stuff, but it's different as well.

RL: Different in what way?

Sophie: [pause] Ummm...well you're seen differently. You have responsibility.

RL: How do you think the reccy kids see you?

Sophie: A bit like a teacher I guess. Like Emily drew me a picture and you get thank you cards from them and things. Those are the things I did for my teachers in school, you know, when I was little.

(Sophie, 13 years old, Interview, 6th November 2012)

Therefore, in order to be in the top pack, engagement with the trampoline group had to extend beyond serious leisure (as defined by Stebbins, 1982). This role required extensive commitment, time and hard-work both as a gymnast and a volunteer to the club.

Joanna was different in that she, at times, gave inauthentic (volunteer) performances in recreational sessions, becoming very moody and not wanting to undertake any tasks, and if she could arrange transport, she would leave early. Essentially she did not fulfil the desired characteristics of a top pack gymnast in the eyes of the coaches and the top pack themselves.

I asked Leon if he wanted to take my group for a game as we were nearing the end. He seemed happy that I said he could pick the game and lead the remainder of the session. He chose **genie** so he could get on the trampoline and bounce as well. I looked around the room. Abbie was helping Luke's group do forward rolls on the foam wedge. She looked as though she was enjoying herself more than the children. Then I caught sight of Joanna out of the corner of my eye slumped against the wall, staring at her phone looking miserable. 'What's wrong with Joanna?' I asked Amy as her group ran to collect their belongings. 'Oh I don't know, I give up, she's in a mood again. There's no point in her being here if she's going to be miserable and not help. (Fieldnotes, 14th April 2012)

Amy's response to Joanna's poor performance was the culmination of a series of similar incidents. Generally, members of the top pack were incredibly supportive of one another during stressful exam periods at school or problems at home for example. Yet being on the edge of this group but not fully committing to the role and its requirements was a dangerous and challenging place to be in terms of identity and creating/maintaining a sense of belonging. Trampoline performances had to be consistent and prolonged in order to belong in this group.

In attempting to become top pack gymnasts Sophie, Naomi and Joanna displayed mirroring body-selves (Frank, 1991). They internalised the available narrative resources and/or images of top pack gymnasts and sought to become them. However, Sophie and Naomi never fulfilled the necessary characteristics of this group to fully fit in, and Joanna provided suitable performances only part of the time. These girls were unable to effectively manoeuvre their way from the mirror image ideal of top pack performances, to the consistent, prolonged disciplined bodies required to perform well on the trampoline and maintain high training loads; they gave flawed performances (Goffman, 1990a) and subsequently remained on the periphery. Moreover, top pack performances suggest that in the coaching-like role they sometimes undertook, there was an expectation to become more dyadic, to freely express and share knowledge of being a trampoline-gymnast, to become communicative in their style of body usage. Communicative bodies are for *other* bodies (Frank, 1995). However some were more/less able to do this than others. Thus to be

successful, trampoline-gymnasts had to negotiate their trampoline careers through successful, predictable performances associated with mirroring and disciplined body usage. Yet, dyadic relationships with those seeking to develop their trampoline performances were also expected and in turn supported individuals' sense of identity in this group.

Complex body-centred processes are required to maintain and negotiate trampoline bodies and identities over time. Gymnasts had to provide an authentic trampoline body, consistent trampoline/gymnastic performances, and often developed a shared understanding of embodied sensations during trampoline movements, and they did so mainly in mirroring and disciplined ways to maintain self and social identities. However, elements of communicative bodies also began to emerge in their dyadic relationships with others (e.g., 'top pack' status identities). In doing so, gymnasts take on different roles throughout their trampoline career – from newbie, to the established, accomplished gymnast, and ultimately the top pack, or at least the latter was desired if not achieved. Although these experiences focus on the relative pleasantries of gymnasts' experiences this was not always the case. These young people had some real challenges to overcome throughout this process of coming to belong. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to these.

Judgement of the trampoline body: A singular, dominant body aesthetic

One of the key themes throughout this research was gymnasts' perceptions of myriad judgments of their body, the way it looked and moved. The nature of this sport demands an emphasis on an aesthetic body⁴⁴. Much like dancers, the body is judged on its movement according to aesthetic judgment criteria (Adair, 1993). Trampoline-gymnasts'

⁴⁴ More recently, other (objective) judgement criteria have come into use. That is, time of flight measurements using technical equipment attached to the trampoline. However, this only applies to competitors in national level categories (National C and above) and this score only accounts for a very small percentage of the overall marks awarded.

performances are judged against the FIG code of points, a technical criteria which examines the angles, shapes and speed of the body at specific points in flight (See Appendix I); criteria that are used both in competitions and by coaches in the teaching of skills and routines. This is the only formal judgement criteria noted by BG. Yet, this research found that trampoline-gymnasts perceived that their body was being judged and scrutinised in multiple ways. The myriad layers of these perceptions are not easily untangled. The following analysis reveals that this was a complex web of scrutiny which played out across multiple (front and backstage) spaces and social actors.

'Clothes hide a lot. A Leotard doesn't!': The leotard aesthetic

The leotard was central to gymnasts' experiences and perceptions of being judged. In this group the leotard was not only a symbol of a sporting identity (Adair, 1993; Barker-Ruchti and Tinning, 2010; Stewart et al., 2010), but an artefact or form of body auxiliary (Merlau-Ponty, 2002) shaping gymnasts' ideas of bodily feeling and perceptions of judgement in competition. It conceals and *reveals* the body, creating a source of heightened body consciousness.

Extending upon earlier work on trampoline uniforms (Stewart et al, 2010), this research focused on the uniform regulations post-2009 (and pre-2013⁴⁵), which brought some opportunity for adapting the traditional, leotard only, uniform:

6.2 Dress (female) long tights may be worn either flesh colour or the same colour as the leotard (must be **skin tight**). In BG levels D and below female gymnasts may wear skin tight shorts in a colour and style matching the leotard.
(British Gymnastics, 2009a, original emphasis)

BG (2009b) stated that the reason for this change was to 'help ensure more women and girls feel comfortable to participate in the sport'. Yet, the findings of this study reveal that

⁴⁵ In 2013 further adaptations were made to the uniform regulations for male gymnasts. However, these changes were not within the data collection period of this research.

there has been little change in female trampoline-gymnasts' experiences. A singular, dominant leotard aesthetic remains in this sport and both male and female gymnasts were found to have body-judgement challenges to overcome.

Connotations of the ideal trampoline body were strongly gendered, although there were some surprising similarities between male and female gymnasts' ideas about what constituted an authentic body. All gymnasts envisaged an attractive, lean body that emerged from gymnastic discourses and experiences in the sport. Female gymnasts alluded to ideas of slimness, using the word 'skinny', before coming to realise that actually a body that is too slim is undesirable, although still more privileged than one that has excess fat.

RL: Can you describe the ideal trampoline-gymnastics body?

Jessica: Slim, pretty.

Cassie: Skinny

RL: Pretty to who [sic]?

All: Guys [laughs]

RL: So does slim mean skinny?

Emma: No I'd say more lean. It's a tough sport, you need muscles as well.

Cassie: Not too muscly though [pulls a horrible face]

RL: Do you see many girls that [sic] do not fit this image?

Emma: Not really. You very rarely see anyone overweight. The top competitors have a very specific body type.

(Focus group with trampoline coaches, 10th July, 2012)

This is a body continuum of sorts, one that reflects Frank's (1991) discussion of the problem of desire. In their mirroring state, these gymnasts viewed themselves (and others) as, in part, achieving some aspects of the ideal bodily form, although never *fully* making it. Thus they continually produce a desire for the ideal (trampoline) body, which provided some differentiation from Krentz and Warschburger's (2011) ideal performing body and ideal social body. In this group, the lines were blurred, there were no distinct categories. Female trampoline-gymnasts drew upon wider social narratives of what Somers (1994) refers to as heterosexual feminine beauty to form ideas about their body construction.

RL: What does the perfect gymnast look like?

Kimberly: Ideally they would be skinny, well not stick thin, toned I guess, but small, like a size 8 or maybe a 10, maybe. They'd have long hair that's been put up nicely. And flawless skin with no spots. Perfect make-up. Basically what people think girls should look like. And I think this is what people expect to see if you're a gymnast.

RL: Can you think of anyone in club that looks like this?

Kimberly: Georgia definitely! Everyone wants to be like her, she's so skinny and never has a hair out of place, it's so irritating!

(Kimberley, 16 years old, Interview 15th April 2012)

Male gymnasts used alternative words such as 'muscly' to convey the idea of a lean and attractive body, although recognising that too much muscle was detrimental to their performance and actually they too desired a somewhat slim build. In doing so, they too referred to more contemporary variation of masculinity popular in society.

Luke: I'd say we are all quite muscly, no one is fat.

Leon: Yeah even at competitions

RL: How muscly do you think you need to be?

Luke: I don't think we need a lot of muscle...[pause]...not like bodybuilders or anything [laughs], I don't know, too much muscle would probably be bad for flexibility surely?

RL: Would you say this is a similar amount of muscliness to footballers?

Luke: No, perhaps more like one of the more athletic film stars or a singer or something. You know they're not too muscly but they are well built.

RL: So attractive then? [Laughs]

Luke: Yeah. It's even like when we go out, we wear normal clothes rather than joggers. My friend who's a rugby player can't find jeans to fit him [laughs] at least we don't have that problem.

Leon: That's why we can get away with wearing skinny jeans, fashionable see Rhi!

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

In addition, both male and female gymnasts acknowledged the similarities and subtleties between different types of gymnastic bodies. Importantly, artistic gymnastics influenced their ideas about what is was to be gymnastic and experiences of trampoline-gymnastics resulted in subtle alterations to the body.

Amy: ...I learned to dress for competitions through [artistic] gymnastics I guess, [pause] because I started that first. So, I was used to putting glitter in my hair and make-up, but I don't do that anymore because you don't really do it for trampolining as much.

RL: Does that mean that it's not okay to put glitter in your hair?

Amy: Oh no, people do. Mainly little ones I think, but I think this is something that comes from gym.

Joanna: It's less glittery

Amy: I'd even say we wear less make-up.

Joanna: Not no make-up though

Amy: God no, couldn't do that! It's not slapped on though.

(Focus group with female gymnasts, 12th July 2012)

RL: How do you know what a male gymnast is supposed to look like?

Luke: I don't know really...[pause]...

Leon: From gym [artistic gymnastics], well I think that's how it starts, but it is quite different. Like we wear stirrups and they wear shorts.

Luke: I think we are probably taller than them as well, maybe a bit bigger.

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

These internalised ideas formed the basis of a singular, dominant body ideal in trampolining-gymnastics which was central to maintaining and (re)constructing the body over time. Gymnasts internalised this monadic ideal and sought to construct a sport-specific body (as defined by Krentz and Warschburger, 2011). In this case, a gymnastic body which was lean, athletic and attractive, not too far removed from societal connotations of the beautiful body (Featherstone, 2010).

In order to form ideas of and maintain their bodies, gymnasts were mirroring and disciplined (Frank, 1991). They consumed and internalised images of 'perfect' gymnastic bodies and attempted to (re)construct their own bodies in this guise through moulding the body and decorating its exterior surface in gendered ways. For girls in particular, their reconstruction was never fully complete; they always produced the desire for a predictable trampoline body. This required body-work (Goffman, 1985) and significant time and effort dedicated to this body project (Shilling, 2003), especially when preparing for competitions.

I usually start dieting and exercising like mad as soon as I know there is a competition coming up, so that I can lose a few pounds. A few days before I usually bribe my mum to take me for a spray tan and get my legs waxed or I get the do it yourself kits and do it at home and make a mess in my bathroom (laughs). And then the morning of a competition I have a little regime that I follow...I exfoliate and moisturise my whole body and I usually use one of those tanning moisturisers so that I'm a little bit darker on the day and I usually take that with me. I always take that and my make-up bag and my mum has a 'hair' bag as which has bobbles and clips and scrunchies and hairspray so that I don't get there and have a panic. It just makes me feel better on the day and when I compete because everyone does it and I just want to worry about performing my routine as best I can rather than worrying about how fat and ugly I am compared to the girl standing next to me. If I think I look better than them then I'll be more confident and perform better.
(Kimberly, 16 years old, Interview, 15th April 2012)

Many of these gymnasts, despite engaging extensively in body techniques or practices (Frank, 1991) and obtaining success in the eyes of others, felt they never fully achieved this image it always remained a source of desire, of wanting and needing to be more:

...Clothes hide a lot. A leotard doesn't. People say I'm skinny, but I have stretch marks and cellulite!
(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th October, 2012)

For male gymnasts, (re)constructing the body over time seemed less of a feat to overcome. Exercise was viewed as part of the ongoing body construction processes and less of a short-term fix before competition periods.

Luke: I'll go to the gym and stuff, but not too much because I don't want to get too big.
Leon: I don't really go to the gym or anything, but then I do a lot of P.E and stuff in school and I walk everywhere or run to training so I guess I do quite a bit.
RL: Is it just from trampolining that you do that or...?
Luke: Well partly. I'm quite slim anyway, but I have been bigger than this. Do you remember? I got smaller not long after I started and I've just stayed like it.
Leon: Yeah you did used to be a bit chubby [laughs]
RL: What about just before competitions do you change anything?
Jamie: Well we train more so...
Luke: Not really, it's not really like we are fat or anything, we are all quite slim, but then we all do a lot.
Leon: I wouldn't say I change anything, other than training more on the trampoline and maybe I might buy some new stirrups or a leotard or something.
(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

Previous studies of the gymnastic body (e.g., Barker-Ruchti and Tinning, 2010; Kerr, Barker-Ruchti, Schubring, Cervin and Nunomura, 2015) have tended to neglect male gymnasts' experiences of the body. Only a few (e.g., Chimot and Louveau, 2010, Kamberidou et al., 2009) have explored male experiences exclusively, but none have made

comparisons between male and female gymnastic bodies and their experiences. Both male and female gymnasts in this group desired a lean, athletic and attractive body based on gendered societal narratives and gymnastic discourses. However, attempts to (re)construct this body over time were experienced differently. This will be explored in more depth later in this chapter, but before doing so, it is important to understand how judgements of trampoline bodies contribute to this process.

'Everyone is looking at me': Experiences of judgement

Gymnasts' often discussed perceived forms of informal judgment, rather than formal judgement criteria. Their stories revealed three core narratives of body-judgement—*everyone is looking at me*, experiences of panoptical-like competition spaces; *I just want them to do well*, parents' motivations for judging their children; *are they looking at us in "that" way*, perceptions of a sexual audience gaze.

'Everyone is looking at me'

Competition spaces are complex, (formal) judgement-centred environments (see chapter four, p.152). In this space, the body is being judged in terms of its conformity and predictability of appearance and social and technical performances. However, gymnasts' perceptions of judgement did not only come from judges, but also parents, other gymnasts and an unspecified mass audience, effectively creating a panopticon-like effect. The types of judgements perceived varied greatly depending on the gymnasts' age and gender, but were all based on negative assumptions.

Early experiences of competition judgement revealed how daunting and emotionally challenging this environment can be. All gymnasts commented on initial feelings of nervousness and (imagined) scrutiny in this setting.

Ria: My first one was really scary. Well they are still scary.
 RL: What do you mean scary?
 Ria: Ummm [pause] well everyone looks.
 RL: Who looks?
 Ria: Everyone! Judges [pause]. There's just lots of people all looking at you.
 RL: What do you think they are looking at?
 Ria: To see if you are rubbish [laughs]. Like, like, if you fall they'd probably laugh at you.
 RL: Who would laugh? The judges?
 Ria: Maybe. But just everyone.
 (Ria 11 years old, 2nd November 2012)

Although these comments spanned the vast majority of gymnasts in this group, all would acknowledge that this feeling became better with time and actually they had achieved some good results that contradicted these insecurities.

For some, these feelings of judgement were detrimental to their formal, technical performances on the trampoline, leading to temporary inability to fit into the trampoline-group having provided unconvincing performances (Goffman, 1990a). Charlotte provided a very specific and ongoing example of this. She performed technically very well in training sessions and even warm-ups in competitions, but crumbled in her first three attempts at formal competition. These occasions were highly emotional for Charlotte and her family, significantly affecting her self-esteem.

'Charlotte?' the marshal called.
 'Yes' I confirmed on her behalf. She stood too quickly, alert. I placed my hand on her shoulder to try and calm her a little. Leon had arrived to help spot for her, but remained silent, apparently not wanting to make the situation worse. We walked toward the trampoline. 'Ok Char, just remember exactly the same as before. Smile to the judges when you present'. She tried a smile and jumped up, starrng transfixed on the mat in front of her. 'Charlotte?' Terry asked with a smile. She nodded. 'When you're ready then' he cued. She stood, focused on the mat, turned and presented to the panel giving a brief smile. She turned to the mat, took a breath and began building height. My body tensed. The arm set came on schedule, signalling the start of the performance. Each skill performed well despite some unusual travel. Then disaster. She moved to the back of the bed for the penultimate move, through too hard and slightly over-rotated landing safety, but flat on her back bobbing about trying to regain her control. Tears flooded to her eyes as she covered her face with her hands. She ran, past me, past her mum who was making her way to her, straight to the toilet. Terry banged his clip board on the trampoline. 'It's such a shame' he said, 'it was going so well and her warm-ups were very good. I was certain this would be an easy qualification for her and a medal'.

(...)

I approached Connie. 'My mum has gone after her' she explained.

'It's competition pressure every time' I tried to explain.

'I know, but I can't put her through this again. She just gets so distraught.'

(Fieldnotes, 1st April 2012)

Despite my claim that this was competition pressure, I was not entirely convinced this was the sole cause of Charlotte's problem. In undergoing coaching processes to try and improve this situation I interviewed Charlotte about her experiences of competitions.

Charlotte: Everyone just looks at me.

RL: Who?

Charlotte: Just everyone [frustration]. Everyone judges me, well not just me.

RL: In what way?

Charlotte: They all judge me on how crap I am. Mum doesn't help, she analyses every mistake as well.

RL: What about when Terry spoke to you and your mum after?

Charlotte: He was just trying to be nice.

RL: What about when you are in training?

Charlotte: Well obviously you help me and Jessica and Amy sometimes.

RL: What do we say?

Charlotte: You say what's good and bad, Jessica and Amy don't as much...

(Charlotte, 11 years old, Interview, 12th April 2012)

The scrutiny Charlotte was feeling appeared to be somewhat aligned to the deduction system used to judge trampoline performances (see Appendix I). It is common for coaches (and judges), in any sport, to focus on the negative aspects of performance in order to correct them (Stirling and Kerr, 2013). In trampoline-gymnastics, coaches are encouraged to focus on positive aspects of trampoline routines and skills; it is built into the UKCC qualification criteria for all coaching exams (BG, 2007). However, this doesn't always filter into the day-to-day practical processes of coaching. We work within a structure that looks to deduct points; we are looking for faults to rectify. Therefore, it is only natural that Charlotte might have begun to focus on this. Yet, her experiences suggest that scrutiny of her technical performance extended beyond judging and coaching staff, to her mother who just wanted her to do well.

'I just want them to do well'

Parents are instrumental to their children's participation in sport (Salmela et al., 2007; Stevenson 1990, 1999; Wureth et al., 2004). However, numerous studies have found that parents can act in over-zealous and detrimental ways (e.g., in tennis Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes and Pennisi, 2008; in gymnastics McCombs and Palmer, 2008; and hockey Lavoie and Stellino, 2008). It was not uncommon to find parents in the audience at competitions agonising over their child(ren)'s performance. Although often being highly critical, they were still willing to place their child above others, openly voicing criticism of their and other children's performance.

Steve: Well I wrote down some points for Erin, like her bloody legs bending again, but how did that girl that went before her win. Elin was better than her. She was packing a few extra pounds for a start, there's no way her straddle was better than Erin's, she'd struggle to get her legs up.
(Fieldnotes, 14th October 2012)

'Well how many times has Rhi told you to stand still after your routine babe?' she asked accusingly. Sarah just shrugged and looked tearful. 'It happens all the time, we've all made mistakes in competition Sarah, it just happens' I tried to reassure both of them. Katherine looked displeased. 'You have to listen to the coaches more, so you don't make these silly mistakes' Katherine continued.
(Fieldnotes, 14th October 2012)

Contrary to previous research, critical feedback or 'directive behaviour' (Wuerth et al., 2004), in this group of parents was not exclusively reserved for paternal family members (e.g., Steve). Mothers were just as critical of their child(ren)'s performances (e.g., Katherine), some openly admitting they would call themselves a 'pushy parent'.

Nancy: I would say I'm a pushy parent [laughs]. I make her do her conditioning when she comes home from school and I make sure she always wears kit and I make sure she enters everything she can, even if it is miles away [laughs]. I just want her to do well.
(Fieldnotes, 22nd August 2012)

This *meaning well* narrative emerged quite frequently from the parents in this group, but their behaviour had an impact on their sons and daughters. They felt some level of pressure and judgement from their parents.

I get nervous when my mum watches me compete or in training. She always tells me what is bad after which I don't really like. I know she just wants me to do my best though.
(Diary extract, Elin [Nancy's daughter] 12 years old)

Abbie: I hate my dad coming to watch me, he's just so judgmental sometimes it drives me mad. He will just be like, why did you do that? Why didn't you do this? I feel like saying, it's not you up there, it's me. It's extra pressure.
(Abbie, 13 years old, Interview, 9th August 2012)

Although the deductive scoring system legitimises parents' focus on their child(ren)'s faults to a degree, many had little knowledge of this sport and therefore often gave gymnasts conflicting information and advice that was counterintuitive to the ethos of the coaches and the club⁴⁶.

Parents' *meaning well* narrative also demonstrates an ethic of care which has been noted in trampoline-gymnastics settings (Hardman, Bailey and Lord, 2015). They used their bodies in communicative ways (Frank, 1995). In this mode of being parents focused solely on their child(ren), recognising the challenges and tribulations they are experiencing and seeking to express some level of comfort or consolation. However, gymnasts experiences of these communicative moments, revealed perceptions of additional judgement and scrutiny by someone who was supposed to support them when things went wrong in training or competition. Instead, this was often provided by the coaches in this club who were empathetic to the processes these young people had to go through, having usually lived through these experiences themselves (e.g., Jessica, Emma and Amy).

⁴⁶ The precise philosophy of the club was cited in the annual club membership packs and reviewed annually. It stated:

The club and its coaches aim to provide an enjoyable and friendly working environment in which the responsibility for attainment and hard work is placed on the gymnast. Coaches will guide gymnasts through their learning processes, encouraging gymnasts to make appropriate and rational decisions about their performance, behaviour and development.

'Are they looking at us in "that" way': A sexual gaze in competition spaces

Aside from parents, these young gymnasts also focused on the behaviour of judges in their perceptions of judgement in competition settings. Early experiences in these settings provided the perception of judges as 'scary' people who judged their trampoline performance (see chapter five, page 186). However, these perceptions changed dramatically as the gymnasts became older and more experienced. Judges became gatekeepers to success (i.e. progression to higher levels of performance) and in part, the source of a perceived male heterosexual gaze, adding another level of pressure to these performances.

Emma: I think some judges look at us in the same way you'd eye up a girl in a nightclub. It's difficult really, I don't blame them, you can't expect to put a girl in next to nothing and for guys not to look at us in that way. And in the same way when the guys pull their leotards up and down on the floor we look at them as well and make judgements about the way they look. Relationships have started because of it! (laughs)"

(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th February 2012)

Feelings of heterosexual body-judgement extended to unidentifiable audience members, although judges were always named explicitly as a source.

I've regularly heard people [in the crowd/on a judging panel] making comments throughout other people's routines. Whether negative (about somebody being fat or hairy or having a strange birth mark or skin defect), or positive (about how skinny somebody is but has massive boobs, or an amazing bum)...

(Written account, Jessica, 20 years old)

As their sporting career develops, gymnasts had fewer concerns about parental judgement of their technical performances, but instead developed a heightened sense of body consciousness and additional possibilities of how their body might be judged. Previous work undertaken (Stewart et al., 2010) highlighted female gymnasts' perceived heterosexual male gaze prior to the 2009 uniform adaptations, when a leotard-only uniform was enforced. Yet, despite opportunities to wear additional clothing (i.e. small, tight shorts), these young girls still felt uncomfortable when their bodies were presented in this

space. Extending upon this earlier work, this research presented opportunities for male gymnasts and judges to comment on this.

RL to Luke: Do you find girls in leotards attractive?

Leon interrupting: Yeah...because I'm going through puberty! Well in competitions they are right in front of me. It's hard not to look. It's competitions though, not club, they're friends. I was talking to Martin because was saying 'oooo look at her' and I overheard Martin talking about it (...)

Luke: Anyway...No I don't look at people in the sport in that way. The girls I bounce with at club are just friends.

RL: But you were texting Harmony weren't you? From High Flyers?

Luke: Yeah well [laughs]...she doesn't bounce here.

(Fieldnotes, 25th June 2012)

Tim [aged 20]: I know it looks bad, because most of my girlfriends or people I have been with have been from the trampoline world, but I think it is just because I spend so much time with them and in trampolining, that they are the people I tend to meet and have stuff in common with.

(Fieldnotes, 27th July, 2012)

This commentary and additional observations in the setting, reveal that boys and young men in trampoline-gymnastics are likely to enter into romantic relationships with female gymnasts based on having similar interests and close friendships or 'entanglements' (Stevenson, 2002). Yet, controversy seemed to occur when older males take on multiple roles of gymnast/coach/judge simultaneously in their career (see chapter four, p.152). Although common (for females as well), this blurred the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable relationships. Similar to the findings of Bringer, Brackenridge and Johnston's (2002) study of coaches and swimmers, these young men were not infringing upon legislative issues, but romantic relationships were frowned upon by some coaches who questioned the moral and ethical nature of these relationships. However, this research provided an even further complication to this dynamic with the male coach who is often also a gymnast and a judge.

Although key instigators and participants in female perceptions of a heterosexual male gaze, male gymnasts' bodies were scrutinised in similar ways. Female gymnasts and

coaches admitted that although the male uniform was not attractive, they did 'enjoy' looking at male bodies on display.

Emma: Well we look at them as well, let's be fair, we've all done it. Especially when they are pulling their leotards up and down on the floor, it's hard not to look.

All: Laughs.

Cassie: The leotards are quite revealing as well, you can see their six packs.

RL [to Jessica]: What about when you were going out with Sean?

Jessica: I liked looking at his body, not so much the leotard [laughs].

Emma: Especially the white glittery one right [laughs].

(Focus group with trampoline coaches, 10th July, 2012)

Male gymnasts often produced strong, lean and muscular bodies, echoing desirable social narratives of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Somers, 1994) which female gymnast found attractive. However, there was a contrast between the desirable body constructed by male gymnasts and the leotard or prop they are required to wear to fulfil their trampoline performance (Goffman, 1990a), particularly in competitions. For these female coaches/gymnasts, the male body was a leotard is 'not attractive'. There is also some indication here that certain types of leotard are better than others. The boys in this club certainly would not wear pink or glittery styles, like the one described in the extract above. There was a shared understanding that glittery (pink) apparel was a symbol (Goffman, 1963) of femininity, and for male gymnasts this was not a desirable image.

In spite of their bodies, males in this group often described the difficulties they had negotiating their masculinity through their gymnastic identity. For those with a shared understanding of the sport (e.g., gymnasts, parents and coaches), male gymnasts' masculinity was rarely questioned, but outsiders' ideas about what the sport entailed were a lot more difficult to negotiate.

RL: Have you ever had any problems in school or anything because of you doing trampolining?
 Leon: Some. [Pause]. Things like 'I'm gay' and stuff but I just say, 'well I spend most of my time around pretty girls, so not so gay really [laughs].
 All: Laughs.
 Leon: It's true though isn't it, there aren't many boys here, not as much competition!
 RL: Wait but you haven't been out with any of the girls though?
 Leon: No, but it doesn't matter, they don't need to know that. They just see me chillin' with Marcy and Ali in school and think 'hmm maybe it's working'.
 RL: Has it ever made you sad?
 Leon: Not really. I don't really hang around with people who say it though.
 RL: What about you?
 Luke: Well obviously not in school now [laughs] but some of my friends do say stuff.
 RL: Like what?

(...)

Luke: About how I'm always around young girls and stuff really. So, not that I'm gay, but that I'm almost perving on girls that [sic] are too young if you see what I mean. I think, I think...they know it winds me up though. I don't even get it, I've never been out with one of the girls here. They're friends. And younger ones, that's just disgusting.
 (Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

These stories echo the same sort of ridicule experienced by male rhythmic gymnasts in Chimot and Louveau's (2010) study. Leon (13 years old) had experienced challenges of his sexual identity questioned by his classmates and Luke (19 years old) had been accused of forming inappropriate relationships with young girls, both difficult stories to hear, given the close relationship I had developed with these boys. Despite, claiming these experiences had little impact on their lives, the tone and mood of the focus group certainly changed when these stories were discussed. They became notably quieter and Luke became angry and frustrated by the accusations he'd received. Leon's coping mechanism was an interesting one. Instead of being subjected to the physical and emotional bullying Chimot and Louveau's (2010) gymnasts recalled, he made claims that he desired heterosexual contact with 'pretty' girls and was using his body in a resourceful way to do this, thus mirroring traditional notions of masculinity. He drew upon popular male narratives of heterosexual promiscuity from wider social settings, although I am not fully sure if he was aware of this given his age.

These stories highlight the issues these young men have in negotiating their gendered identity, but what they were not aware of was the challenges they also faced in back stage spaces. It was not uncommon for outsiders to question these boys sexual identity. For example:

Dennis [leisure assistant]: Do you think Leon is going to be gay?
RL: No, why?
Dennis: Oh come on it's a bit of fairy thing to do isn't it?
I felt angered and irritated by Dennis' ignorance and quickly left the staff room.
(Fieldnotes, 18th January 2012)

Thus, all gymnasts had their own gendered challenges that they have to negotiate and manage in these judgmental front stage spaces and gazes (Goffman, 1990a). However, they also had a number of other body matters to contend and cope with. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to telling the storied narratives of these struggles and, although presented independently of judgment processes and experiences, body matters and body judgments were constantly combined.

A disrupted body-self: Experiences of the pubescent trampoline body

This study recognises the physical body as a fluid social construct, a project to be worked on as a process of (self and social) identity (re)construction (Shilling, 2003). Yet, while some body techniques are produced in relatively autonomous acts (e.g., dieting, wearing make-up, buying sport-specific clothing) which have been focused on a great deal so far in this thesis, some body changes are uncontrollable, but have a huge impact on individuals' lived experiences (e.g., puberty). Thus, while the body is a valuable resource that enables human agency (Goffman, 1990a), it is also a limiting, a fleshy, corporeal entity that ages (Frank, 1991).

Trampoline-gymnasts normally constructed their gymnastic body-self during the childhood stages of the lifecycle (see chapter five, p.141), but soon after 'acceptance' or developing a sense of belonging (above), most gymnasts experienced the onset of puberty⁴⁷. Kerr et al.'s (2015) report on experiences of career in WAG identifies puberty as a challenging and problematic time for girls and young women based around three factors – increased risk of injury, changes in mood and changes in body size and shape, all of which were present in this research. However, this research adds a narrative account to these themes.

Private narratives of female puberty

Puberty disrupted trampoline-gymnasts' controlled disciplined and mirroring body-selves. Pubescent bodily changes were not welcomed by these girls. They developed a heightened sense of body awareness or more specifically dissatisfaction with their bodily changes, a common feature in previous discussions of the female gymnastic body (e.g., De Bruin et al., 2009).

Emma: Well I developed hips which wasn't the greatest thing to happen [laughs]...hips and no boobs. I don't know I'm just so aware of my bum and hips now, especially in a leotard...there is something about feeling womanly rather than not. I don't think I ever felt like a child, but I definitely felt different after, my body was definitely different.
(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th October 2012)

There is an underlying tension in these types of stories, one that toys with the idea of an ideal performing body and an ideal social body (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011; Russell, 2004). Emma suggests that while her pubescent body changes were not ideal for trampoline-gymnastics, because her hips (and buttocks) had developed, her body wasn't quite the social ideal either; she didn't have 'boobs'. She was in limbo, half-way between

⁴⁷ There has been a lengthy debate among (exercise) physiologists as to the long-term effects of high intensity gymnastic training on children and in particular young girls (Malina et al., 2013). Popular debates suggest that gymnastic training delays puberty and impacts on normal growth (Caine, Bass and Daly, 2003). However, recent studies have emerged suggesting gymnasts experience the onset of puberty within the normal parameters of the general population (e.g., Malina et al., 2013).

the small, lean body idealised in gymnastics and the womanly body desired and produced in societal discourse. Even though the contemporary gymnastic body (in WAG) appears to have progressed and moved away from exclusively child-like bodies of the 70s featured in Weber and Barker-Ruchti's (2012) study, this was yet to filter its way into the narrative repertoire of these girls. Escaping womanly changes (e.g., the development of hips and breasts) was seen as a privilege, as was being unusually small for your age.

RL: So that's 12 U14s and 8 over 14s?

Georgia: I'm going to pass off as a 13 year old just fine, so 13 U14s.

RL: Do you reckon? You are 19!

Georgia: Well I did last week.

Amy: So irritating!

(Fieldnotes, 1st December 2012)

Female gymnasts had predominantly mirroring and disciplined body-selves (Frank, 1991), attempting to control their body through routine, order and perfection. They feared the contingent body produced by the natural pubescent changes; and talked about how they actively attempted to manage their body during this time:

Emma: It was awful to begin with... mum helped me a lot, but it was even minor things, well they are minor now, like hair [laughs]

RL: [Laughs] What do you mean by hair?

Emma: Well you know, body hair. Leg hair, under arms. Let's face it pubic hair is a problem when you are wearing a leotard.

(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th October 2012)

Naomi: Rhi [dragged out]

RL: Yes?

Naomi: You know seeing as it's a rehearsal can I keep my leggings on?

RL: Well you should really take them off if you can. That's the whole point, to practice.

Naomi: Yeah. But you know [eyes widened, implying that she was menstruating].

RL: Oh OK. I see, just keep them on then.

Naomi looked relieved.

(Fieldnotes, 1st December 2012)

These stories produce a contingency narrative – '*I manage my body*'. In actively managing or attempting to control their pubescent body these girls behaved in mirroring ways (e.g. shaving auxiliary and pubic hair) attempting to (re)construct their body in the guise of other, better bodies. This was especially difficult in trampoline spaces where sporting

practices (e.g., wearing leotards) limit the level of agency these girls have to manage their body. There were frequent incidents where the body was mismanaged and succumbed to its contingent state, causing embarrassment. For example:

I looked over to the far bed in horror, “please tell me that is not what I think it is?” I said to Jess and Julia. “Oh my god” Jessica blurted out in equal disbelief. Hannah was completing her normal warm-up, dressed as usual, only there was half a sanitary towel sticking out of the leg of her shorts. Julia had already moved toward her. She quickly and smoothly approached the trampoline and called to Hannah. They exchanged words. Hannah turned scarlet. Not just her face, but what seemed to be her entire body. She quickly lept down and made her way to the toilet.
(Fieldnotes, 17th April 2012)

Embarrassing moments, such as this, were crucial to gymnasts' identity (re)construction. Embarrassment is experienced when an individual provides an inauthentic performance which threatens or disrupts their social identity and sense of self (Goffman, 1990b). For these, girls, an inability to manage their pubescent body threatened their (newly) formed sense of self as a gymnast.

The types of deferment (Goffman, 1956) toward the gymnastic body, in this contingent state, reiterates wider social narratives around female puberty. Puberty brings embarrassing bodily changes and despite this being a natural shared experience it remains undiscussed or private; it is whispered about and *managed* in back stage spaces. These girls' experiences echo societal narratives of female puberty discussed by Clarke and Gilroy (1993). For example, metaphors replaced any discussion of this natural, contingent body. Menstruation was often described as ‘being *on*’. The word ‘period’ or ‘menstruation(ing)’ was rarely used. There was a level of secrecy surrounding the whole issue of puberty in girls in this club. They never openly discussed bodily issues with each other, certainly not in front stage spaces. Often they relied on their mothers to relay information to coaches about ‘starting’ their periods or if they were ‘on’ during competitions. Young girls' reliance on their mother's guidance during puberty is not uncommon (Clark and Gilroy, 1993); however due to the sporting practices inherent to trampoline-gymnastics, this led to

awkward conversations between coaches and mothers about how best to navigate their daughters through this process given that the body is so openly on display in this sport.

Nancy: Just to let you know, Elin has started her periods.

RL: Right Ok.

Nancy: That's why she's missed a few sessions and has been wearing joggers. I know it's not recommended uniform but I said you wouldn't mind, given the fact she's just 'started'. We can't get to grips with tampons just yet. I know you've said before that's the best solution but...

RL: Well everyone is different. It'll take time.

Nancy: She's getting upset because she can't train. I've said to her I don't think it's a good idea to wear a pad though?

RL: Well if she feels more comfortable she can. Maybe she'd need to wear joggers though.

Nancy: Hmmm, I've suggested that but she said she always trains in her shorts. They don't cover a lot though do they? The thing is she says that everyone knows what wearing joggers means.

(Fieldnotes, February 8th 2013)

Amy: I think it was awful when I first 'started'.

RL: Sorry I don't mean to get too personal, but how? Why was it awful?

Amy: Well let's be fair you have to use tampons really don't you...[pause]...but I guess my body just wasn't [pause] ready. I've always been quite small. Tampons hurt. Especially when you think of some of the positions and landings we have to get into. I was quite aware it was in if you know what I mean.

RL: How did ...

Amy: I was always terrified the string would stick out of my leotard somehow as well [laughs]

RL: OK so how did you manage or [pause] get used to it?

Amy: Well...[pause]...just time I think. All girls get used to it. But there's just no time to get used to it in this sport.

RL: Did anyone help you to...

Amy: My mum obviously helped a lot, but she had to speak to the coaches to tell them I'd started and I was having problems. But I had a male coach so I was mortified. And to be honest, if I was a parent I'm not sure if I'd be happy telling my 11 year old daughter to wear a tampon.

(Amy, Focus group with female gymnasts, 12th July, 2012)

These stories highlight the lived issues of increasingly young(er) pubescent girls (Bellis, Downing and Ashton, 2006) and raise concerns about the provision of sanitary wear for sporting girls, particularly those who have to display their body. Although studies on young girls and their mother's perceptions of health-related education about tampon use (Middleman and Varughese, 2012) and the types of language used for female menarche (Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck, 2009) contribute to our knowledge of female experiences of puberty, little has been reported from sporting contexts. In this group, it was not unusual for young girls to absent themselves from training to escape potentially embarrassing and/or painful experiences or adapt their body techniques in order to pursue

their sporting career. Some girls would wear jogging bottoms or leggings at these times. Yet, there were concerns that this had potentially 'outed' them as being 'on', suggesting that some clothing became signs or forms of shared vocabularies of body idiom (Goffman, 1963) that symbolised the individual was menstruating; in essence creating another panopticon-like effect.

Looking back now I know why those girls were wearing leggings, because they were on. It's what they did to make them feel more comfortable I guess, but really it was just a sign that you are 'on'. So I'm not sure if it makes it better or worse?
(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th October 2012)

So, despite attempts of getting more young girls and women to feel comfortable to participate in this sport (BG, 2009b), there appears there is still a long way to go in developing this. The girls in this group reported stressful negotiation in body management having experienced natural, inevitable changes in their body. These findings emerge from a club where the recommended uniform for training is lenient in comparison to other trampoline groups. As long as members wore their club t-shirt or leotard, all other clothing was not stipulated as long as it was 'appropriate' for the activity taking place. In club information packs members were asked to bring jogging bottoms to protect their skin when learning new skills, but few chose to do this. This raises questions about the experiences of others in more disciplined environments.

It is difficult to form an overarching narrative title for these experiences, as the narrative itself is undiscussed. Stories emerged, but they were private, embarrassing and unnatural, illustrative of the messiness and complexity of the lived fleshy body and how this is dealt with in trampoline-gymnastics. Yet, being able to tell a story is ethical and health-related issue (Frank, 1995). We make sense of our lives through stories (Richardson, 2000). Disciplined and mirroring female bodies are exemplars of control and

predictability (Frank, 1991). Puberty disrupts the level of control girls have over their body, placing these bodies into a contingent state which has to be managed. Trampoline practices do not provide young girls with the necessary level of agency and support to fully manage these experiences convincingly, and so embarrassing moments disrupt the presentation of their trampoline identity (Goffman, 1990b).

Missing narratives of male puberty

Male gymnasts faced very different challenges in their experiences of pubescent bodies. Instead of commenting on managing the *messy* body, male gymnasts noted a different kind of contingency, one that impacted on the predictability of their technical trampoline performances. This was seen as a hindrance by both coaches and gymnasts, and is noted in BG's coaching manuals (e.g., 2007) and more recently in Kerr et al.'s (2015) report on WAG, as a common problem. With the onset of puberty, gymnasts experience a 'growth spurt' resulting in an altered, often larger body shape. The arms and legs become longer altering the gymnasts' kinematic feeling of skills they have already learnt and mastered, and their ability to effectively rotate in somersaults and twists. For example:

Jessica: I don't know what has happened to Jamie's back sum.

RL: Why?

Jessica: he's started under-rotating on nearly every one.

RL: Do you reckon it's because he's got bigger though?

Jessica: What do you mean bigger? He hasn't put on weight.

RL: No but he is 15. He's got longer arms and legs now, so rotation will be slower.

Jessica: Oh I see.

(Fieldnotes, 3rd May, 2012)

Jamie: Nah it's not really mattered to me. Obviously I've grown, but it's not like it's made much of a difference to me. I'm not going to cry about it or anything.

Luke: Well it's different for the girls isn't it?

RL: Why?

Leon: [Laughs]

Luke: Well they have different *changes* don't they.

Leon: I just don't know what to do with my legs. Well, it's, it's harder to get into tuck backs and stuff than when I was smaller.

Luke: It's sort of the same with the judges saying I look too big. I'm not sure how I am too big, I'm actually quite small in relation to...

Leon: They mean like too big for the sport

Luke: Well it's not my fault my rib cage sticks out.

(Focus group with male gymnasts, 16th October 2012)

Thus, male gymnasts' competency was challenged or threatened following these changes.

Mistakes (e.g., over/under-rotating in a somersault and landing awkwardly or on the safety mats) in performing already mastered skills were embarrassing and frustrating experiences which tested the normal trampoline identity coaches and other gymnasts had come to expect (Goffman, 1990b). This problem is also true of female gymnasts (Kerr et al., 2015) but in this research it was more of a male concern.

As well as exemplifying the lived experiences of this sport-specific challenge, these extracts also reveal similarities in the pubescent experiences of boys and girls. Male gymnasts face the same tensions between a sport-specific body ideal or performing body and a social body (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011). Luke, much like Emma, is torn between a body that is too big to look aesthetically pleasing for trampoline performances and is too small to have the ideal social body presented in social discourses. Although he makes these assertions himself, the panoptic deference (Goffman, 1956) he receives from 'the judges' is telling. Luke's post-pubescent body did not conform to their internalised image of the male trampoline-gymnast. He struggled to manipulate and manage (control) his body in order to meet the aesthetic criteria inherent to the sport.

These male stories reveal, again, an undiscussed narrative. Questions are raised about the long-term potential implications of pubescent growth in male gymnasts. Can some become simply too big to look aesthetically pleasing? Are these perceptions reiterated by judges in this sport? These questions are left unanswered. One of the key limitations to really unlocking these experiences and answering such questions was my own gendered body and experiences. It is unrealistic to expect that these boys would be willing to share their stories of male puberty with me, their female coach. Puberty is a body-centred, *gendered* experience and I didn't have a shared, lived understanding of what male puberty entails. Thus, my interpretation of these male gymnasts' care-free attitude to their experiences of puberty is not whole; it reveals a small snapshot of their lived experiences. What is clear is that experiences of male puberty were not as messy as female gymnasts and were therefore more manageable. Trampoline practices and the level of agency that they are given in relation to these is less of an issue. Their key challenge was negotiating the kinematic feeling of their body in trampoline movement following pubertal changes to its size and shape. In a sense, these basic skills had to be re-learned or adapted. In doing so, the potential for embarrassment arose, threatening their already established sense of self and identity (Goffman, 1990b).

Stories of negotiation: Body matters in trampoline-gymnastics

With such contentious experiences of judgment and changing bodies, it was necessary for these gymnasts to negotiate and manage their bodies continuously over their trampoline career. However, stories of negotiation provided some unsettling narratives and were also difficult to hear and at times difficult to live through.

Previous work has focused on the body matters in *female* gymnastic bodies such as weight-control behaviours, low self-esteem, anxiety and body dissatisfaction (De Bruin, et

al., 2009; Kerr et al., 2015; Krentz and Warschburger, 2011). This research extends upon this literature by providing in-depth rich, narrative accounts of such body matters and also provides stories from male gymnasts as well as females. Four key narratives operated within the storied lives of gymnasts in this group – *I feel naked, I hate my body, I'll punish my body until it conforms* and *I have a sexy, desirable body*. The first of these narratives was present mainly in female gymnasts. Although male bodies were not altogether exempt from any of these experiences, female gymnasts appeared more willing to discuss their stories with me presumably because of my own biographical story.

'I feel naked': Body consciousness

As I mentioned earlier, one of the most common narratives across the female gymnasts, even those at a young ages, was a heightened sense of the body being revealed or exposed when wearing competition uniform (i.e. the leotard). Many of them would describe this as feeling *naked*.

Basically I feel naked. You may as well be as there is nothing flattering about a leotard – it clings to all you[r] lumps and bumps whilst the elastic exaggerates it all (especially your bum!) It leaves nothing to the imagination whatsoever.

(Written extract, Jessica, 20 years old)

The problem here is the level of agency these young girls have in their decision to ultimately expose their body, particularly in competitions, and the subsequent embodied experiences they have. The leotard is a required uniform, it is not optional. A number of girls interviewed commented on their lack of choice and this led to interesting debates around the uniform regulations allowing young girls to wear shorts with their leotard in order to encourage more young girls and women to feel comfortable to participate (BG, 2009a, 2009b). Many of the gymnasts choose not to wear shorts for two main reasons. First, this item of clothing actually heightened their body consciousness, particularly of their waist, hips, buttocks and legs, adding to feelings of discomfort.

You can put your shorts on, but they only add about half an inch on the side of you[r] leg, and less than half an inch on your inner leg. Recently I've been competing without shorts as I think it makes my legs look longer and it's less elastic going around your waist (my muffin top) and the tops of your legs.

(Written account, Jessica, 20 years old)

Shorts make me more aware of my bum. They make me look like I have a double bum and it makes me more aware of cellulite and my thighs.

(Written account, Sophie, 14 years old)

Some girls indicated that they would rather wear an alternative uniform altogether, utilising their training leggings.

RL: Do you prefer to wear shorts or just a leotard?

Naomi: I don't like wearing either; I prefer to wear leggings or something that covers my legs. I have a birth mark on my knee which I don't like to show.

(Focus group with female gymnasts, 9th August 2012)

However, concerns were raised from coaches and competition officials about how well this clothing met the uniform regulations and also from gymnasts worried about looking or being different from the norm, leaving these girls with few options. Some opted not to utilise the new uniform regulations, as they perceived that judges scored gymnasts unfairly if they chose to do this. These thoughts were echoed by coaches and some judging staff, although no judges openly admitted that this happened.

RL: Do you think they lose marks? [If girls wear shorts]

Jessica: You can't prove it, but...

Emma: I think they do.

Jessica: Sean [a coach from another club] thinks they do.

Cassie: When I've spoken to some of the judges they say they think it looks nicer without the shorts...their lines look straighter [pause]...but it's the same routine so I don't see why they do.

Jessica: I know Sean makes his girls take their shorts off because he's convinced.

Emma: Institute girls always get told to as well, they don't get given the option.

RL: Do you think that we should give our girls the choice?

Emma: Yes! It's in the rules now, they should have a choice. Why should they go through what we went through if they don't need to?

Jessica: Would we have even known about the rule change if you weren't doing your PhD?

(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Discussions like this then also raise the issue of communication of amendments to rules changes. This rule change was not openly communicated to clubs, coaches or gymnasts despite (large) membership fees being paid. It was the responsibility of coaches to go onto the BG website and check what changes had been made, if any.

'I hate my body': Body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem

Not totally isolated from feelings of nakedness, was another common narrative in this group – *I hate my body*. Body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in sporting groups has been documented (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011), but the concerning issue here is the age of these gymnasts. This narrative was present in girls as young as eight years old, although more common following the onset of menarche. Again, trampoline uniform regulations greatly contributed to heightened body consciousness, body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem, along with additional clothing trends adopted by this group from media (e.g., wearing Ugg boots with training clothing rather trainers).

My body feels horrible. I find it uncomfortable and I would prefer to wear normal clothes.
(Written account, Naomi, 12 years old)

I don't like sitting down in it [a leotard] as I look down and see my stomach rolls, and my legs look huge, and you can see stretch marks and cellulite on the tops of my legs...shorts don't change that.
(Written account, Jessica, 20 years old)

Perceived body imperfections did not match the internalised ideal body prevalent in trampoline/gymnastics discourses. In the moments when gymnasts describe hating their bodies, predictability and control of bodily appearance and performance is questioned.

However, this research noted interesting contradictions to the 'I hate my body' narrative. Some girls had developed a distorted sense of bodily (im)perfection. Quite often the comments they made about their bodies were simply exaggerated, or at least to my mind they were false. Some commented on having cellulite (e.g., Jessica, aged 20 and Sophie aged 15) yet they had none that was noticeable at least. Some perceived that they were a lot bigger than other girls. Mirroring body usage encouraged these gymnasts to scrutinise their bodies and reduce the whole body into parts. It was not within the parameters of this research or expertise of the researcher to delve within the psyche of the gymnasts, but this led me to question the authenticity of these comments. It left questions

about whether these girls truly believed they had these imperfections or if modesty is part of an authentic trampoline body. After all, there had been occasions when gymnasts, particularly girls, were frowned upon for appearing too comfortable with their body.

Some gymnasts contradicted narratives of nakedness and body discomfort which they told stories of, particularly in the training hall and back stage settings, choosing to display their bodies, particularly parts of the body they pertained to dislike – the stomach, waist, hips and bottom.

Emma: What is it with this irritating need to tie their polo shirts up with a bobble so that half their stomach is out? I mean look at Naomi, it's ridiculous.

Jessica: Apparently it's because their polo's are too loose and fly up [sarcasm]...Bloody tuck them in then!

(Fieldnotes, 17th March 2012)

Jessica: We need to order kit or something, why are so many bums out?

Emma: I think it's that new thing, you know like the denim shorts where the girl's ass cheeks are hanging out. They've pulled them up!

Jessica: It's quite wrong really, especially with the boys being around, well anyone.

(Fieldnotes, 24th July 2012)

I have left this as more of an interesting notation, rather than a finding. Gymnasts' reasons for engaging in these behaviours or having distorted perceptions of their bodies does not mean that they also feel genuine body dissatisfaction. They experienced a negotiation of their sense of self and identity through their body via a continual mirroring body process. Some of the girls talked openly about their body in negative ways and displayed contradictory behaviours, therefore also exhibiting an additional narrative – *I'll punish my body until it conforms.*

'I'll punish my body until it conforms': Weight-control behaviours

One of the hardest narratives to listen to and comprehend, particularly as a coach, was when these young girls confessed to behaviours that are defined as weight-control behaviours (Otis et al., 1997); unhealthy behaviours such as restricting food intake, fad dieting and excessive exercising which were often hidden with great care. Essentially these behaviours were used to try and achieve a desirable (gymnastic) body, but at great cost to the health of the gymnast.

Amy: When I look in the mirror I always feel bad. I have tried all different types of diets and gone through times where I try not to eat, but it doesn't seem to work and I just end up feeling like crap. Sometimes, even if I look better, I feel worse...I want to make myself perfect. I've only ever done it for trampolining. I guess I feel pressured to look a certain way, more so in my sport than in general life. I bought a leotard once that was a size too small so that I could aim to fit into it before the comp. I did a lot of extra training...running...and stopped eating properly for a while. I know, I know, it was stupid. But I never managed it and I've never really worn it, except for a bit after I'd been ill and I felt okay in it.

(Focus group with female gymnasts, 12th July 2012)

RL: Have you ever tried dieting?

Georgia: Yeah I've mainly done it for the ideal figure in general life, not just for trampolining. But then it has sort of been linked with competitions. Like, over the summer I dieted so I felt more comfortable coming back into training and competitions.

RL: You say you dieted. What do you mean? What diet was it?

Georgia: Ummm I used an app to work out how many calories I was eating and then just reduced it. Or burn off what I ate basically.

RL: By how many? So how many did you start with and how many calories did you restrict yourself to?

Georgia: Umm about 1500 to 1700 to start probably, sometimes 2500 on a bad day. Then I tried to stick to 800-1200. I cut down a lot of bad food and did loads of exercise. So, eating healthier has helped me lose weight.

(Georgia, 17 years old, Interview 15th April 2012)

This narrative not only impacted upon the individual engaging in self-punishing behaviours but also their parents and other gymnasts.

Melinda came into the hall towards the end of the session and hovered around the entrance, strange as Joanna wasn't in training tonight. I assumed she wanted to talk to me so wandered over. She asked if she could have a private word with me to which I agreed. 'Is everything alright with Jo?' I asked. Well actually she half laughed, 'I was hoping you could tell me'. I was a bit confused. 'I had a phone call from the school today, it seems Jo's friends in school have told one of the teachers that she isn't eating and she is also self-harming'. She began to well up. 'Have you noticed anything?' I hadn't as such. I explained that I had already made a comment in passing a few weeks prior that she had lost a lot of weight over the Christmas period which seemed odd when everyone else normally over indulges, but Melinda had been there and agreed with me, laughing it off; and I certainly hadn't noticed any evidence of self-harming. 'I don't even know what to look for!' She became more teary, 'what am I supposed to do? I know she's been unhappy about her weight but there's nothing of her, she's so small, she just doesn't see it!'
(Fieldnotes, 3rd March 2012)

Over the course of this research, three gymnasts confessed to problematic weight-control behaviours, including disordered eating (as defined by Otis et al., 1997). A fourth, provided an exceptional case of a formally diagnosed eating disorder developed within wider extenuating circumstances outside of this sporting context; but this case brought to the forefront the consequences of restricting food intake. Ultimately these behaviours were attempts to construct a perfect body based on an internalised idealistic image. This was something these young gymnasts claimed that they desired, and they actively consumed images of other bodies and bought products to (re)construct this image (e.g., gymnastic apparel). However, the desire was never fulfilled leading to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem and consequently unhealthy attitudes and behaviours toward their body. As a result of prolonged mirroring usage, these gymnasts shifted to disciplined, regimented styles in order to punish their body through food intake restriction and/ or excessive exercise. In these moments these bodies were concerned with control, what the body looked like and how it felt.

Desirable bodies: A Sexualised body-self

A prevalent narrative was one of the sexy, desirable body. This was often something that was *performed* by male and female gymnasts. The trampoline body echoes socially desirable narratives of beauty, health and fitness (Featherstone, 2010; Shilling, 2003). These are lean, attractive bodies which are subject to the sexual gaze of trampoline audiences (see above). Subsequently, some gymnasts openly displayed or flaunted their bodies in training and competition settings, despite claims of body dissatisfaction. This was perhaps more obvious in male gymnasts who would frequently pull their leotards down around their waist while not on the trampoline, in training and in competitions, exposing their chest and stomach. Although a popular habitual practice in other trampoline clubs, this club didn't see this gymnastic performance until Luke attended a coaching course with me. Having spent the day watching and being with other male gymnasts closer to his own age, he began this practice and it became visible in our club. He viewed these other young men revealing their bodies in training and internalised this practice as an elite performance. He incorporated this into his bodily performances in training and competitions. Yet, he would not freely admit this mirroring of other trampoline bodies, having reached this stage and age of his trampoline career.

RL: Why have you started training without your t-shirt on?

Luke: I don't know, it's warm in here.

RL: Warm! It's not that warm!

Luke: [Laughed] I feel a lot freer when I don't have it on. It doesn't restrict me. It doesn't fly up in my face.

(Fieldnotes, 3rd March 2012)

Leon also started this practice shortly after Luke. Ultimately these young men were happy to show-off their lean, muscular bodies, although others objected:

Jessica: Why has Luke got his top off?

RL: I don't know really. He's been doing it since he came back from doing that tech module with me the other week. Some of the High Flyer's guys were training with their tops off and I think he's decided to copy it.

Jessica: Do you think we should say something though? It's a bit wrong, for the girls I'm thinking? (Fieldnotes, 28th February 2012)

It was interesting that Jessica's discomfort with this practice was the open display of the young male body, when the female body was so readily on display in this sport.

For some girls, this sport provided the opportunity to display their beautiful, lean bodies. Despite claiming discomfort and body consciousness some girls in this group openly flaunted their bodies, particularly in competition spaces where trampoline practices (i.e. wearing a leotard) exposed the body. It was not uncommon to see young girls move their bodies in sexualised ways.

Emma: Could she stick her chest out any more?

Emma was almost staring at a pretty brunette girl, maybe 15 years old talking to Tim. They both appeared to be flirtatiously discussing the day's events so far. Although he stood with his hands in his pockets rocking back and forth on his feet, almost nervously, she appeared confident standing in just her leotard and socks, almost as though she was ready to compete, although she had let her hair down so that it was trailing down her back.

(Fieldnotes, 11th December 2012)

Flirtatious scenes were common and I chuckled at Emma's reaction, recalling in my mind catching Tim (in his younger days) and another gymnast I'd been sent to find for a presentation ceremony sharing a kiss in a cafe.

Examples of sexualised performances were not only present in post-pubescent girls, some younger girls also view themselves as having a beautiful body and were more open to admitting it.

RL: Would you prefer to wear shorts or just a leotard?

Eva: Just a leotard, because it shows off my beautiful legs [laughs]

RL: Do you like wearing your leotard?

Eva: Yes, it's tight.

RL: Tight?

Eva: It makes me look like I've got big boobs [laughs]. Pause. Well bigger than I have.

(Eva, 10 years old, Interview, 18th April 2012)

These types of stories lead me to consider if trampoline practices propel young girls into early adulthood and into discussions that were beyond their young years. Following the

interview, Eva's mother expressed her embarrassment at the comments her daughter had made:

Jade: I can't believe she said that [hand over eyes]. What's she like?!

RL: [Laughs] well she is 10 now.

Jade: Oh don't, I've been having murder with her recently. The other day, we had tears because she'd taken a selfie on her iPad in her sports bra and accidentally posted it online. She had quite a bit of bother about it in school and she got really upset because the girls in school had said she was an attention seeker, trying to show off her body. We had to sit down and have a chat about acceptable photos on the internet. She said she'd taken a few and the one she meant to put up was just of her face but she picked the wrong one!

RL: Well it could have been worse.

Jade: Honestly, look at the iPad.

Jade showed me the files on the tablet, swiping through numerous photos of Eva posing in magazine style poses and selfies, even a video of her twerking.

(Fieldnotes, 19th April 2012)

Some of these practices (e.g., selfies and twerking) are by no means trampoline practices; they were fashionable teenage performances, often displaying the desirable qualities of an adult female body, one of beauty and sexuality. However, the leotard clearly enabled Eva to show-off her beautiful body. It empowered her at an age where young girls are increasingly becoming body aware (Rees, Oliver, Woodman and Thomas, 2011).

Questions around the level of empowerment these trampoline practices and performances give young girls remain. Some practices might well propel these girls into providing sexualised, more adult-like performances. One particular example that really brought this issue forward was the debate around girls (not) wearing underwear during competitions. This was discussed in some detail in a focus group with female coaches.

Emma: I was told by my coach to not wear knickers, but we were little.

Jessica: I'm not sure if it matters either way when they are little. They just look a bit like they've got a nappy on underneath though [laughs].

RL: Ok, so how little is little?

Emma: 3 to 5.

Jessica: Yeah about that.

RL: Ok, so what about 11 or 12.

Emma: I think that's when it becomes a problem.

Jessica: Well seeing a girl who is, let's face it, probably going through puberty in knickers is a bit wrong isn't it, it's a private thing, you'd never just stand in your knickers other than in your bedroom, but it's difficult if they are having a period.

Cassie: Well it's that and other changes. Like hair.

All: [Laughs]

Jessica: And the whole bedwetting⁴⁸ thing.

Emma: Urgh yeah. I know. I think that's how I ended up with my first thong.

Jessica: And me probably. The thing is, what's worse seeing a girl with a thong sticking out or having nothing on underneath with just a small strip of material covering you. You can't win. Both are just wrong when you think about. And having full on briefs just doesn't work with a leotard. Maybe for little ones but not past the age of 8 probably, and even that's pushing it.

RL: Why is a thong wrong?

Cassie: It's something you'd associate with sex really isn't it.

(Focus group with coaches, 10th July, 2012)

It was not unusual to see girls wearing small or thong-like underwear under their leotards. However, as implied by these female coaches, it is difficult to determine if these girls would be exposed to these adult, sexualised practices had they not been placed in this position by the rules and practices of this sport. There was also other evidence noted in observations, to suggest that these girls were exposed to other adult practices. For example:

It was overly warm in the hall, even after opening the doors to get some air circulating(...). Kimberly slouched in the corner with beads of sweat running off her head. Amy, Georgia and Kristen joined her. I didn't say anything about them not spotting, I'd rather they didn't overheat, so I took their place, although still able to hear their conversation.

Kimberley: Urgh I'm so hot [fanning her face with her training diary]. She turned to Amy and said blow me. She immediately started laughing and as the others erupted into fits of giggles on the floor.

(Fieldnotes, 2nd July 2012)

This small group of older girls would often make these types of discrete innuendos and openly discuss other gymnasts' sexual exploits with boys⁴⁹. One of the girls developed a nickname which I tried to ban in training as it directly implied that she had participated in a sex act, which coaching staff, myself included, deemed wholly inappropriate. Over the course of this research, one gymnast became pregnant at the age of 17 and again aged 18, eventually giving birth to a baby boy at 19 years old. Another gave birth to her baby at the age of 16. One married her boyfriend of 18 months at the age of 20 and quickly became

⁴⁸ 'Bedwetting' is a common problem in some pubescent girls who lose control of their bladder on contact with the trampoline and pass urine (BG, 2007).

⁴⁹ These girls were over the age of sixteen meaning that this wasn't a legal issue, although still morally challenging.

pregnant⁵⁰. Although by no means definitive of all female trampoline gymnasts, this study found that sexual behaviour in these lower level female gymnasts was acceptable and common in their mid to late teens. Little literature has addressed this issue in young sporting females; much previous work relates to sexual abuse in sport (e.g., Brackenridge and Rhind, 2014) or focuses on how sport removes young girls from this socially questionable behaviour (Lehman and Koerner, 2004). Pike (2007) has begun to question the latter rhetoric, arguing that there is lack of convincing evidence to suggest that sport delays sexual activity and subsequent teenage pregnancies. These findings might contribute to such an evidence base, but further work is needed.

This research found that trampoline settings provide opportunities for young girls and boys to display the attractive, lean bodies that they have constructed through their mirroring and disciplined body usage, providing a level of empowerment at an age and time when young people are under increasing pressure to construct 'perfect' attractive bodies (Rees, et al., 2011). However, some forms of empowerment arguably have serious implications for young girls in particular who are propelled into adult practices that they are too young to understand (e.g., wearing thong underwear). In some cases, it also appeared that the display of the body to a (wider) sexual gaze led some gymnasts to engage in sexual, adult practices at a young age, resulting in some evidence of teen pregnancy and adult lives at a relatively young age.

⁵⁰ Gymnast's pseudonyms have been removed here as this presented anonymity issues.

Summary

This chapter has captured the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts as they progress through their trampoline career, using interactionist and narrative frameworks to inform ideas about how trampoline bodies are managed and experienced over time. Goffman's dramaturgical ideas of bodies, selves and identities have been drawn upon to understand gymnasts' experiences of performing trampoline identity and forming a sense of self over time. Extending upon this framework, Frank's concepts of embodiment and narrative have allowed the rarely heard intricacies of the lived, fleshy trampoline body to emerge prominently. Moreover, gymnasts' storied lives have produced a narrative understanding of the lived experiences in this trampoline group.

Trampoline-gymnastics provided these young people with a sense of belonging, a network of friendships and support mechanisms based upon a shared understanding and enjoyment of this sport. Developing a sense of belonging had to be developed. Gymnasts have to look and behave like a trampoline-gymnast, not only to those in the club, but to the wider trampoline community and even those outside of it (e.g., school friends). They also had to develop an authentic understanding of embodied sensations of flight on the trampoline, being able to recognise a sense of fear and pleasantness in this bodily movement. In addition, they had to build upon or change their previously developed role and/or position status, often desiring and seeking to obtain (more) favourable positions and/or status. For example, a dark horse might seek to become part of the 'top pack', a loser or mis-fit might be more happy to be aligned with the characteristics of a plodder. To belong, gymnasts' were reliant upon mainly mirroring and disciplined body-selves, although evidence of some communicative elements were underlying in some roles and position status' (e.g., top pack).

Gymnasts' experiences of judgment were complex and multi-faceted. Multiple sources and forms of judgment were perceived, but they were also experienced as a constant embodied challenge. This, in combination with an emphasis on control in mirroring and disciplined bodies, produced experiences of body dissatisfaction, weight-control behaviors and low self-esteem, echoing and extending upon the behaviours highlighted in previous quantitative studies of the gymnastic body.

Puberty was a significant challenge for these gymnasts. It disrupted gymnasts' body-selves which were still in the early stages of construction. Pubescent bodies were problematic for both male and female gymnasts, albeit experienced in different, gendered ways. Female gymnasts' experiences of puberty in particular, highlighted the messy nature of the body and the complex tensions of managing bodies in restrictive settings (e.g., 'managing' menstruation while wearing a leotard). These struggles produced some contentious and difficult stories and narratives which have raised areas for debate not only in this sporting setting, but in others. Questions arising from these findings include, what guidance is available for sporting girls and their parents on menstruation and the use of tampons? What are girls' experiences of managing their pubescent bodies in sport? What are male experiences of puberty in sport?

Additional questions were raised by stories revealing embedded sexualisation within the habitual practices, rules and regulations of this sport. It was common practice for girls, in particular to wear small or thonged underwear under their leotards, if wearing underwear at all. The nature of adolescent conversations, and in some cases the experiences they referred to in these conversations, were of a sexual nature. Within this group there was some evidence of sexual relationships and pregnancy at a young, albeit legal, age. The findings lead to questions about the nature of this and other sports and if

sexualised (habitual) practices, such as revealing the body, (by) wearing sport-specific clothing encourage early sexual behaviours.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOOKING TO RETIREMENT: POSSIBLE FUTURE SELVES AND IDENTITIES IN TRAMPOLINE-GYMNASTICS

It was not within the aims or scope of this research to look at trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of retirement. This is something that has been commented on extensively in the literature, particularly in female artistic gymnasts (e.g., Kerr et al., 2015; Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; Warriner and Lavalley, 2008). However, this chapter offers an insight into retirement as a process, not a transient experience. Gymnasts, and presumably other athletes, often *consider* retirement before leaving sport.

This chapter will provide the embodied narrative resources (Frank, 1995) that trampoline-gymnasts draw upon when developing a sense of possible future selves and identities (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Narrative maps, as Pollner and Stein (1996) explain, are the process by which individuals who are experiencing change look to others for information or stories to form ideas about what possible futures awaits them. In doing so, they utilise storied narratives to inform their ideas about the possibilities of what they might become (Markus and Nurius, 1986). As Frank (1995, p.23) states 'to think with a story is to experience it affecting one's own life'. In taking this approach, this research views ageing as socially constructed, interpreted and experienced, in cultural ways (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2007). Prior to this study, this analytical lens had mainly been applied to sporting bodies in mid-life (e.g., Partington, Partington, Fishwick and Allin, 2005; Tulle, 2008; Wainwright and Turner, 2003), and the aged body (e.g., Dionigi, Horton and Baker, 2013; Pike, 2011). However, Phoenix and Sparkes' (2007) study of ageing narratives demonstrated that this framework is useful in coming to understand young athletes' experiences of self-ageing.

They define the term 'young athletes' as those who are at the peak of their career. In their study participants' average age was 20 years old. The present research looks to extend on this work, by providing trampoline-gymnasts (aged 11 years old⁵¹) storied narratives of self-ageing as they look negotiate possible future selves and identities.

'This isn't for me': Early exits from the trampoline group

As indicated by Figure 5 in chapter four, those who came into this group could exit or end their gymnastic career at multiple points. There were a few who left this group early on in their careers, often within the first few weeks of attending club training sessions or sometimes after their first competition. Their collective stories provided the narrative *this isn't for me*. There were three reasons for early drop-out in this group – a gymnast's inability to form meaningful, prolonged friendships or entanglements within the group; an inability to fully commit to training and competitions, an essential mechanism required when forming a sense of identity and belonging; and/or a lack of enjoyment following the transition between recreational settings and competition training.

In the last chapter, I determined that gymnasts' prolonged engagement in this group was often dependent upon a complex web of friendships and working relationships or 'entanglements' (Stevenson, 2002). However, some children felt unable to form these relationships due to their age and/or gender, despite the formal opportunities given for integration. Hywel, aged six years old, was the club's youngest male gymnast and despite being provided with the position status of the 'cutie', he still found it difficult to 'fit in'. He was unable to form the necessary relationships required to form a sense of belonging.

⁵¹ Average age has been calculated based on the gymnast's age at the end of the study. Gymnasts' biographical profiles are available in appendix C.

Hywel huddled behind Michelle's leg, peering at me.
Michelle: I can't get him to come in today.
RL: What's up Hywel?
He shied away again behind Michelle's leg.
Michelle: I think it's because there are no other boys in club, well not of his age. And he doesn't want to hang around with the girls all the time.
(Fieldnotes, 6th September 2012)

Ultimately, for newbies friendships or other good working relationships needed to be developed quickly in order to 'fit in'. For Hywel, this did not happen and consequently he stopped coming to training and to my knowledge has not engaged in competitive or recreational trampoline-gymnastics since. Thus, as Woodward (2000) explains, identities are not a free choice; specific body/face work and body techniques were required to inform social interactions (Goffman, 1990a). Trampoline-gymnasts were required to interact with others in meaningful ways (friendships), when this was not achieved possible identities and future selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) were limited or removed altogether (Goffman, 1990b).

Not totally removed from the idea that these gymnasts had to form meaningful friendships quickly, is the notion that they had to present a certain level of commitment to training and competition. However, it was not unusual for gymnasts to engage in multiple leisure and sporting activities outside of school. Children have increasing opportunities to take part in a variety of (sporting) activities (Malina, 2009). Yet, this sport demanded a certain level of commitment, not only to progress, but also to fit in and become a gymnast. This research provided examples of some children, and their parents, who were not able to provide this level of commitment and consequently decided to exit early on in their trampoline career.

Penny: Sorry she hasn't been here lately, she just can't keep up with everything. I've brought her today, but I think we've decided that it's not really for her. She's choir on Mondays and Wednesdays and piano before this and netball with school. I have PTA meetings and things I like to do. It's just too much. I feel like a constant taxi service [laughs].
(Fieldnotes, 3rd March 2012)

In this observation Claire's ability to fully commit to training was clearly an issue, but this account also reveals questions about the impact of parents' busy lives on their children's sporting opportunities. We must question, once again, the level of agency children have in making decisions about their sporting lives. In being a key driving force for their child's development in sport (Stevenson, 1999; Wuerth et al., 2004), parents can also limit their child's ability to fully commit to sporting opportunities presented and consequently the possible future selves and identities of their child.

Malina (2009) argues that a primary motivation for children taking part in sport is enjoyment or fun. Many gymnasts drew upon these motivations for their prolonged engagement in this group (see chapter six, p.199), but others simply did not enjoy trampoline-gymnastics, at least not in its competitive form.

Megan: It's just not really for me, I can't see me ever wearing a leotard in competitions and training all the time. I just didn't feel comfortable. I'll keep coming here [recreational sessions] though, I still enjoy this.
(Fieldnotes, 4th August 2012)

Megan, who only attended two club training sessions, really noticed and honed in on the differences between recreational trampoline sessions and competitive training (see chapter four for contextual information). For her, the regimented bodies associated with competitive trampoline-gymnastics were not fun or enjoyable. Instead she preferred more relaxed recreational settings where the body was not required to be (as) disciplined or mirroring (Frank, 1991).

The storied lives of early exiting trampoline-gymnasts reiterates the necessary body-work required to form trampoline identities, such as forming meaningful relationships, committing time to the group and 'enjoying' day-to-day regimented body use.

These features limited some children's ability to develop an athletic career in trampoline-gymnastics and therefore a trampoline/gymnastic identity and a trampoline body.

'It's just not cool anymore': (Failed) Male stories of negotiating gender

Chapter six presented the narratives of male gymnasts who negotiated their gendered and sexual identity as a consequence of participating in this sport. However while some successfully negotiated their way through these challenges (e.g., Luke and Leon), others found that this was a critical period in their trampoline career, one that led to retirement. Both Robbie and Ian retired as a result of being unable to successfully negotiate their gendered identities in this sport. A notable difference between both sets of boys was Robbie and Ian's commitment to playing sports with masculine associations such as rugby and football; whereas Luke and Leon did not. Luke had participated in street skating and Leon swimming, but trampoline-gymnastics was their main focus. Although Robbie and Ian never openly discussed their interactions of gender negotiation with others, their parents hinted that their children were facing underlying conflicts.

Peter [Robbie's dad]: I just don't think it's cool anymore. He loves doing it, but it's just not cool for a 14 year old boy to be on a trampoline and in a leotard. I mean, that's not what I think, you know I've always supported him, bribed him to do somersaults when he was giving you a hard time [laughs], but I know he gets some stick from the football boys if they find out he can't play on the weekend because he has a trampoline competition. It's a real shame, but I can understand.
(Fieldnotes, 4th June 2012)

These exclusively male narratives present questions around what mechanisms young male gymnasts, in trampoline-gymnastics and other disciplines, use in order to negotiate their gendered identities and how effective these mechanisms are. Much like Chimot and Louveau's (2010) study, this research found examples of male gymnasts who have achieved some form of gender negotiation with wider social groups and those who had failed, but neither study has been able to make any wholly conclusive comments about

successful mechanisms to support male gymnasts through this process. While, Chimot and Louveau's (2010) study is written with the aim of challenging masculine hegemony in the sporting world, these issues were not the sole focus of this research. However, it is clear that the range of available male narratives in this sport is limited.

'Everything has changed': Institution-led restructures

This research captured those that were 'caught up' in institutional (BG) restructures of the sport⁵². In my coaching career, two major competition restructures have been implemented, each time disrupting gymnasts' sense of self and identity. Each time, gymnasts began to question their ability or competence to perform on the trampoline. To date, studies on athletes' resilience or responses to change have focused on injury and the coach-athlete dyad (e.g., Galli and Vealy, 2008; Samuel and Tenenbaum, 2011) and have not really considered institution-led structural changes and how these might impact upon athletic identity.

Both Jessica and Emma [club coaches and former gymnasts] commented on their experiences of competition restructures and the impact this had on gymnasts. Both had failed to move from one competition structure to another, facing what they perceived as inescapable, impossible hurdles to overcome in order to maintain their performance status. Under the new competition structure (2009), the routine for their category or grade had increased in difficulty, requiring them to perform skills they were not willing to learn, perceiving them as beyond their capabilities. For them, stepping down into another lower grade was considered failure. Consequently both retired shortly after the new structure came into effect.

⁵²Although an institutional restructure did not directly take place during this research, some gymnasts and/or coaches had experienced one and this filtered into their discussions of retirement possibilities.

It was just too much for me. Too much change too quickly. I went from being good to being crap overnight. Even though they gave us options, in terms of the routines, because there are always two, I couldn't perform one skill in each routine for my category. Let's face it I could never do a half twist to crash dive and I wasn't ready to do baranis piked either.
(Emma, 18 years old, Interview, 25th October, 2012)

Both remained in the sport in various capacities. Jessica completed coaching courses and began competing again at university, under a different competition structure. Emma volunteered in the club, undertaking both coaching and administrative tasks, although never undertook formal coaching qualifications. She too competed in university competitions later on, when she was old enough and eligible. This type of narrative – *everything has changed* was a challenge other gymnasts feared. Having survived the 2009 restructure, which effectively led to Emma and Jessica's retirement, Sophie and Naomi openly claimed that they could not face this challenge again.

Naomi: Rhi! Is it true that they [BG] are bringing in another restructure?

RL: Well not for a while. 2014 I think. Why?

Naomi: I've heard it's all going to change. Like everything! Again! Why can't they just keep it the same?

Sophie: If it's going to be like last time, new routines and everything, I just don't think I can do it again.

(Fieldnotes, 5th March 2013)

Although clearly feared, and having devastating effects on gymnasts' careers, institution-led changes to structure were approached with little consultation at grass-roots levels. Coaches and even organisers felt detached from the decisions made, despite having to deal with the consequences of such actions. Often significant changes such as this were communicated via word-of-mouth, at competitions for example, much like changes to rules and regulations on uniform. Despite membership fees paid by the club, gymnasts and coaches, it was up to individuals to find the relevant documents on the governing body website once changes had been made. There was no formal notification of change or what the changes were. Thus, questions are once again raised about the level of agency trampoline-gymnasts have in making decisions about their lives, the subsequent bodies they

construct, and the possible future selves and identities that they can engage with and produce.

'My body hurts': Disrupted body-selves, injury and ageing

One of the key narrative resources that this group drew upon was the injured body in trampoline-gymnastics. Goffman (2005) refers to 'situations of chance', interactions in which bodily welfare is put at risk in order to maximise potential gains. On sporting stages, situations of chance are daily endeavours, integral tasks of impression management (Goffman, 1990a) and therefore risk of injury is inevitable (Pike and Maguire, 2003). 'Felt-identity' (Goffman, 1990b), that is identity formed through bodily feeling (e.g., flight sensations), is often taken for granted until an event, such as injury, results in a disrupted body-self (Sparkes, 1996).

The injured athletic body is particularly difficult to negotiate and manage as it directly impacts on athletes' sense of self and identity (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007). Gymnasts' experiences of injury have been found to be devastating to their athletic career and sense of self and identity (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Warriner and Lavalley, 2008). This research looks to extend upon this work by providing non-elite trampoline-gymnasts' (male and female) ideas and experiences of injury prior to retirement.

Unsurprisingly, in this trampoline group the injured body was a feared body, one that would alter, if not end, a gymnast's career and one that would drastically change their sense of self and identity. Two forms of injury were observed in this research - catastrophic, acute injuries (e.g., broken limbs) and prolonged or repeated minor injuries (e.g., strains and sprains) often presented as aches or pains experienced by gymnasts over time.

'I will get better': Catastrophic injuries, restitution narratives and long-term consequences

My story of Michael's catastrophic injury and the subsequent stories after this event provide an explicit illustration of the first of these feared bodies.

Linda and Katherine had approached me to have a chat about the forthcoming weekend arrangements. I felt a bit annoyed by their interruption of the warm-up, and even more so now, but I took them to the other side of the hall anyway. Three minutes or so into the conversation, there was a loud crack, like a large tree branch snapping and a scream. Everyone froze. 'Rhi! Argh. Rhi!' I ran to Michael who was lying in a foetal position on the red bed, he was claspng at his leg. 'I think I've broken my leg' he whimpered.

'Everybody out!' I screamed at the gymnasts. Linda, Katherine, Nancy and Jenny rounded them up quickly and took them to another room in the centre, although I did not notice at the time. I held Michael's hand, he had tears streaming down his face. I reassured him, 'it'll be okay. Try not to move, take nice slow breaths for me'. I heard the call over the speaker system 'all first aiders to the main hall, all first aiders to the main hall' and I knew help was on the way. Josephine and Laura arrived swiftly, friends of mine who worked at the centre, both exceptionally qualified in delivering first aid and I felt relieved. They quietly approached 'what's happened'?

'Look at his left leg' I urged, 'it's difficult to tell because of his joggers and the angle, but I think it might be broken, it looks bent to me'.

They agreed, but said it was difficult to tell. 'An ambulance is on the way anyway, Laura relayed information from her radio and we've rung his mum, she's on her way'. Ryan arrived with the oxygen pack and started administering it to Michael. I continued to hold Michael's hand asking him to squeeze my hand every few minutes and talking to him about school. He seemed remarkably calm and I started to question my own judgement of what I heard and what Michael had said. I looked at the trampoline, inspecting it for damage, anything that could have made that terrible noise. Nothing. I instructed Laura and Ryan on how to build a platform underneath the trampoline, so it would not move when the paramedics arrived and inevitably would get on to assess the situation. (...)

One, two, THREE, the paramedic called as the pat slide flew underneath Michael and I squeezed his hand, clutching his gas and air supply. He shrieked a piercing cry as his leg flopped unnaturally in different directions, his femur clearly broken. My worst fears had been realised as I felt the ground coming toward me spinning, pins and needles in my head. Michael's mum put her hands to her face, tears streaming through. I quickly passed off the gas and air to Ryan as I stumbled and fell through the nearby fire exit onto my knees and heaved.

(Adapted fieldnotes⁵³, 6th July 2012)

The following training sessions were difficult; gymnasts were fearful, some still upset and many reeling from Michael's injury. The first session focused on getting everyone in the club back onto the trampoline and simply jumping, the coaches and myself included. Normality was restored relatively quickly, but still barriers remained. Some gymnasts refused to perform certain skills in light of what had happened.

⁵³ This diary entry was very emotive and contained multiple personal reflections of what had happened, including my incredible sense of guilt. Therefore it has been edited for the purpose of this chapter, to provide the reader with a story void of some of the more intricate emotions.

Naomi was refusing to do double tucks, even though I had explained that it would help her kick out of her somersaults.

Naomi: I can't. I just can't do it.

RL: Why?

Naomi: Look what happened to Michael.

(Fieldnotes, 1st August 2012)

Understandably some gymnasts feared the body in this injured state, it was a contingent body, one that was broken and unable to perform not only trampoline movements, but normal day-to-day tasks. In these fearful moments, while still reeling from Michael's injury, these gymnasts echo some elements of Frank's (1995) chaos narrative. The stories gymnasts produced were 'without sequence or discernible causality' (p.97), at least in relation to their own lives and lived experiences. They went from performing skills competently and masterfully to being fearful of them without experiencing any source for these feelings.

In contrast, Michael epitomised Frank's (1995) restitution narrative. He not only strived to be 'healthy again' (p.77) in terms of societal narratives of healthy bodies, but also to be athletically fit, to be able to perform on the trampoline again. This narrative reflects 'a natural desire to get well and stay well' (p.78). His 'prospective' restitution stories were crafted through his regular progress updates on the clubs Facebook page, especially when he was in hospital and at home, unable to attend school.

Leon: Have you seen Michael's Facebook post?

RL: No, why?

Leon: He's up and walking apparently, been in physio.

(Fieldnotes, 15th August 2012)

These stories continued as he moved into physical trampoline settings. He returned to training quickly, while still using a wheelchair and later crutches for support. His stories both before and after his return tell of the medical tests and treatments characteristic of restitution narratives (Frank, 1995).

Michael hobbled through the hall, younger recreational gymnasts smiling and waving to him.
Michael: Hi Rhi.
RL: How's it going?
Michael: Good, I'm on one crutch now, look [holding up one crutch]. Martin [his brother] has got the other one in case I get tired, but I feel ok, I've just been for a swim.
RL: That's great. Very quick!
Michael: It's been eight weeks since I had my leg pinned! The doctor said it's fast. [Pause]. I've got my new exercises in my bag, so I am going to do them tonight, can you help me?
RL: Yeah sure. Let's have a look at them.
Michael: Rummaged in his bag. I'll be back bouncing soon Rhi. Not long. The doctor says only a few more weeks and then I can start back.
(Fieldnotes, 31st August 2012)

For Michael, just being trampoline spaces, both virtual and physical (i.e. front and back stage regions), enabled him to perform this narrative and aided him to (re)negotiate his gymnastic identity through injury.

Frank (1995) suggests that in performing restitution narratives ill people tend to 'fall somewhere between the *disciplined body* and the *mirroring body*' (p.87). Michael adhered to these types of body usage while performing his restitution narrative. He acted in disciplined ways, performing conditioning and physiotherapy exercises when he could and attending trampoline sessions as soon as he was able, even if he could not get on the trampoline. All the while he was consuming images of other, more healthy (trampoline) bodies and sought to become them. Michael was a success story of the injured body in trampoline-gymnastics. He experienced a terrible, inexplicable⁵⁴ injury and returned to the sport at full capability within six months, living and epitomising Frank's (1995) restitution narrative. For him, there was an incredible sense of triumph; yet others were not as lucky. Sophie's story provides another experience of a catastrophic injury.

⁵⁴ There was no explanation for Michael's injury. He was performing exercise on the trampoline that he had performed numerous times and to a high standard. When discussing the incident with more experienced coaches in the sport they simply explained it away as a 'freak' accident.

Sophie somersaulted and twisted awkwardly. She came crashing down onto her side. The mat slid in to her aid, providing a soft landing. She shuffled to the edge of the trampoline clutching her arm. 'Are you okay?' I asked.

'My arm hurts' she continued to clutch at it, although not presenting any signs of extreme pain. I helped her to the floor, supporting her underneath her armpits so that she did not have to put any weight on her arms. 'You've probably just scared yourself; you did land a bit awkwardly. Let's have a little look anyway.' She showed me her arm. No swelling, no bruising, no redness. 'Can you bend it?' I asked. She moved her arm slowly up and down. 'What about bending your elbow?' I asked. She did the same. 'It hurts' she said again. 'What kind of pain?' I quizzed her, with no obvious sign of injury. 'I don't know, numb' she explained. 'It looks fine and you can move it fine, I think you've just landed on it a bit awkwardly' I explained 'you really need to get back on and just do a front somersault, no twists if you don't want to though, just so you don't build on your fear. She looked unhappy, but climbed back on and performed a front somersault, over-rotating and again landing on the mat. She did another, landing on her feet and then climbed down, still clutching her arm. 'Ok, well done guys, grab your things' I called as the session concluded.

I caught Christina as she was about to leave with Sophie and explained that she'd fallen awkwardly and even though there were no obvious signs of injury, they should look for any symptoms in the next few hours, as it had only just happened.

Later addition (15th June 2012, 8am): Christine text me last night (11.43pm). Sophie has been to AandE and has a broken arm. An overwhelming sense of guilt swept over me.

(Adapted fieldnotes, 14th June 2012).

Following her injury, Sophie performed a similar restitution narrative to Michael, providing regimented body usage in her attempts to recover. She would attend training with her arm in a sling and perform conditioning and physiotherapy exercises. However, she was not able to return to the same competitive ability again. She refused to perform or attempt the skill she had been performing when she became injured. Without it she could not continue in the sport as it was a required element in most trampoline routines. Months after the accident, she performed the skill with my support.

Progress! Sophie finally started doing baranis again. I climbed onto the trampoline, slightly nervous that one failed attempt could be a potential disaster in this pivotal moment. Let's just do some front somersaults with me supporting you so you can get used to the feeling of being supported again. She did so comfortably, landing neatly every time. 'So that's all you are going to do' I explained, 'exactly the same and I will twist you around for the barani and you'll land facing the other way. Ok?' She didn't reply, just nodded her head nervously. I held my hand out and she took it. I could feel her trembling. 'Ok, sure now? Remember, try and open your eyes so you can see where you are, I'll twist you and help you land, you just have to do a front somersault, you've done it hundreds of times before'. She nodded. We began to bounce to a comfortable height. 'Ok, one, two, *three!*' She took off perfectly, tucked up tight into the somersault and then as I began to pull her into the twist she followed, opening out and landing on her feet as planned. Everyone on the side clapped and I gave her a congratulatory hug. She was trembling, shaking from head to toe, although smiling.

(Fieldnotes, 11th January, 2013)

Despite some improvement, Sophie began a spiral of decline from the moment of her injury; she never progressed technically on the trampoline after her accident. She did

compete again having entered into a lower grade banding and although successful at this level she could not return to the position she had held prior to her accident.

'I just carry on': (Hidden) Injuries, pain and ageing

What gymnasts termed 'niggles', minor prolonged injuries (e.g., strains and sprains) were more common in this group than catastrophic accidents. Niggles were a normal, part-and-parcel of being a gymnast. Pike's (2005) study of female rowers suggests that athletes' normalisation of pain is a phenomenon within the study of sport. This has too been noted in rugby (Howe, 2001) and football (Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000). Thus these findings add to the study of athletes' normalisation of pain, providing the storied narratives of non-professional trampoline-gymnasts, often children, who competed in lower levels of competition.

It was common practice among these gymnasts to conceal injuries, especially if they had been sustained away from trampoline spaces (e.g., P.E. classes or the playground). This was particularly true of top pack gymnasts who were less dependent on their parents and saw injury as a distraction from their trampoline training.

RL: Are you trying to be clever by not putting your hand down or something? I know they are seat landings but still, try!

Luke laughed and descended. The others grinned.

RL: What's going on?

Luke: Alright, alright. He pulled back the sleeve of his jumper to reveal a wrist support, seemingly provided by an accident and emergency department. I felt a wave of anger. Luke sensed he needed to explain.

Luke: It's nothing really, it's fine to bounce, it's just my wrist.

RL: So if you were to over-rotate and put your hands out then what!

(Fieldnotes, 7th October 2012)

In performing loose restitution narratives (Frank, 1995) of wanting to get better, a more prominent *laissez-faire* injury narrative emerged, one of 'carrying on' regardless of pain and injury. Much like the gymnasts in Harringe, Lindblad and Werner's (2004) study, those who had niggles had little regard for their long-term health and well-being, often refusing

to rest. They acted in regimented ways, exhibiting disciplined body types (Frank, 1995), seeking to control their bodies to compensate for their corporeal reality. Consequently, despite the laissez-faire injury narratives projected to others, gymnasts' stories of experiencing injury revealed tensions between trampoline performances and a body in pain.

Georgia: We all have our little niggles. They aren't serious injuries or anything. It just hurts a bit to bounce.

RL: What's a niggle?

Georgia: Like not a broken arm or anything. Like when I sprained my ankle. Even after I came back, it hurt when I was bouncing and after training and stuff.

RL: What sort of pain?

Georgia: Ummm like a sharp pain at the time. Like a needle sticking in your foot. And then aching after.

RL: Why didn't you say anything?

Georgia: I just wanted to bounce. So if it hurt a bit, so what [Pause]. That's what I decided. I wear an ankle support though.

(Georgia, 17 years old, Interview, 15th April, 2012)

The use of supports for joints such as ankles and knees was common and went unquestioned. Amy often wore an ankle support and Leon knee supports and it was not unusual to see top pack gymnasts rubbing their joints and limbs during training. Experiencing and negotiating pain was a normal part of what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast, especially for those who had reached the peak of their trampoline career. Amy would often ice her ankles after training; it was part of her day-to-day trampoline routine.

Questions are raised around who should take responsibility for these 'niggles'. Although still children (e.g. Amy aged 15 years old and Leon aged 13 years old), these gymnasts managed their injured body, and often refused to confide or take advice from their parents and coaches. Thus in these matters gymnasts exercised control and agency over their body. Yet, these injuries could have had potential long-term implications for these young gymnasts and limit possible future selves and identities.

Early in this research, there appeared to be no explanation for why these gymnasts hid their injuries or produced disciplined body performances to manage and negotiate their pain through trampoline performances rather than resting. There was no notable stigma

attached to the injured body found in previous studies (e.g., Pike and Maguire, 2003). Many gymnasts were absent from training while resting injuries. However, in top pack gymnasts' stories of niggles, they alluded to an age-associated pain. Thus an adjoining narrative of *I'm getting too old for this* seemed to couple onto the laissez-faire injury narrative, particularly in older members of the group.

My whole body just aches. It is sore to move. Usually my ankles and knees hurt. I often ice my feet and ankles after training if it has been a tough session. I'm getting too old.
(Diary extract, Amy, 17 years old)

Gymnasts' ideas of ageing and feeling old were not aligned with wider societal or popular connotations of what it was to be old or aged. For them, it was a feeling of pain over time. In experiencing body-centred challenges (see discussion above and in chapter six) they drew upon the limited narrative resources available to them to inform possible future selves and identities.

Possible future selves and identities

Five core narrative resources were drawn upon when trampoline-gymnasts discussed possible future selves and identities – *hanging on*, *gymnast-turned-coach*, *on to new pastures*, *the disappeared* and the *injury faker*. Some narratives were certainly more preferable than others, but ultimately, only five pathways were available to them.

'Hanging on': A feared body-self

In looking to possible future selves and identities, gymnasts feared the narrative of 'hanging on', living through pain in order to maintain some sense of self and identity as a gymnast. They drew upon stories of 'hanging on' in their determination not to live this reality.

Georgia: I was speaking to Sean about it and he says that he is in pain all the time and I should just get on with it, but look at him.

RL: What do you mean?

Amy: We'll he's like thirty or something isn't he?

Georgia: He should just give it up. Why would you want to be like that?

Amy: It's embarrassing. He can't even stay on the trampoline for a whole routine.

Georgia: I guess he's just been doing it for so long. What would he do if he gave it up?

(Fieldnotes, 7th April 2012)

Georgia: I overheard you and Martin at grades as well, about him telling you that every time he bounces he's in pain and now he's retired.

RL: Well he's been doing it a long time. He's what 26, so you guys should have some time yet.

Amy: [Laughs]

Georgia: Yeah but I'll be crippled by then [laughs]. Better to go out with some dignity I think. He picked a competition and that was it, after that he retired.

(Fieldnotes, 7th April 2012)

Those identified as hanging on produced a stigmatised body-self (Goffman, 1990b), an identity spoiled by age and prolonged pain. These bodies produced failed trampoline performances. They were unable to perform the required body-work of a competent trampoline-gymnast despite disciplined body usage (e.g., training every day) and were unable to (re)produce the required trampoline body despite mirroring consumption of other younger gymnastic bodies. These bodies were limited by their corporeality and were no longer predictable (Frank, 1995).

Although both living through injury narratives, neither of these gymnasts indicated that they were 'hanging on' like Sean, perhaps because they were still able to produce competent, authentic and convincing trampoline performances (Goffman, 1990a). However, in recognising similar elements of this narrative in themselves they actively looked to more positive possible futures, as they negotiated their way through the body-centred experiences of injury and ageing.

The 'gymnast-turned-coach': Preferred selves and a perpetual gymnast-coach cycle

Many gymnasts considering retirement openly considered and started constructing a preferred alternative self in trampoline-gymnastics. The *gymnast-turned-coach* narrative was very common in this group and the wider trampoline community. All the coaches with whom I worked throughout this research had been or were still gymnasts themselves (e.g., Jessica, Emma, Charlie, Martin, Sean, Luke, Amy, Cassie, Terry). Thus, this seemed to be a perpetual narrative cycle in this group.

In discussing stories of this narrative, coaches and gymnasts drew upon similar reasons for looking to form this alternative self. Surprisingly monetary rewards took a back seat in their motivations in favour of *giving something back*.

RL: Why do you coach?

Cassie: Well obviously the money helps [laughs]. No but that's not really it...

Jessica: Me neither, the money doesn't really come into it for me, I hardly make anything anyway, it just covers my petrol.

Emma: Let's face it we all do club stuff without being paid. Competitions, all the fundraising days, paperwork stuff. You wouldn't do it, if you were just in it for the money.

Cassie: I quite like giving back something as well.

RL: What do you mean?

Cassie: Well I didn't have an easy time in school and trampolining really helped me. I had friends in trampolining. My coaches were nice to me. It was where I felt comfortable. I guess it's where I developed into being a confident person if you want to be all serious [laughs]. But no, in all seriousness I think I help them [gymnasts].

(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

In addition, coaches also told of a sense of accomplishment and proudness when a gymnast achieved success. In a sense coaches developed themselves through developing young people.

Cassie: It feels good when they've done well. Sure it's nice to have medals and stuff but even when they have learnt something new it's great to see them so happy.

Jessica: Yeah, it feels like you've achieved something too, like you've led them to that point and all the hard work has paid off. Like I remember the new ones first competition, do you remember [to RL]?

All: Agreed

Jessica: We'd worked so hard to get them ready. Weeks and weeks of practices and dress rehearsals and telling them and their parents what would happen and it all just came together. When they were all on the podium together it just hit me. An overwhelming proudness almost. I started crying didn't I?

RL: Oh yeah, Jade and Katherine spotted you welling up and you had to walk away.
(Focus group with coaches, 10th July 2012)

Top pack gymnasts who were actively seeking to form this alternative self in anticipation of the termination of their career echoed these storied narratives in their discussions with me. Thus, coaches storied lives acted as a narrative resource for these younger gymnasts to draw and act upon.

Abbie: I quite fancy coaching when I've finished trampolining myself.

RL: Why?

Abbie: I like helping the little ones. They are so cute.

RL: So just because they're cute? [Laughs].

All: [Laughs].

Abbie: [Laughs] No not just that. It's nice when they learn new stuff, it's like a buzz. I get a bit of buzz from it. It's what a lot of people do though isn't it.

Georgia: [Agreeing]. Loads have. Jessica. Emma, well started anyway. Luke and Amy have started as well. Loads of people do. I can't imagine not coming training, not doing it [trampolining] anymore.

Abbie: I can't imagine not seeing you guys three or four times a week. It'd be weird [laughs].

(Focus group with female gymnasts, 12th July 2012)

These consideration of retirement stories highlight two key points. First, gymnasts felt a sense of 'living for gymnastics' (Lavalley and Robinson, 2007, p.128). A gymnastic life had come to dominate their sense of what it was to be in the world. The friendships and working relationships developed provided a primary motivator for continuing their trampoline career and staying in the group in some way even after retirement. For them, this is where their friends were, this is what they were good at. Coaching identities offered an alternative sense of self which still enabled them to live this life and maintain their friendships. Second, a seemingly perpetual narrative cycle of *gymnast-turned-coach* seemed to resonate within the group. Becoming a coach seemed to be a natural

progression. Kerr et al.'s (2015) study of WAG indicates that this cycle is common in other gymnastic disciplines. In reaching this level in the sport, albeit still 'regional' within the national structure, those who were considering retirement from this group held privileged, insider knowledge (Goffman, 1990a) about what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast and what it took to succeed. Therefore they were encouraged to contribute to the coaching process of younger, less experienced gymnasts⁵⁵.

Over the course of this research, Luke, Leon, Amy, Georgia, Sophie, Naomi, Joanna and Abbie all began looking to form a coaching identity through their *top pack* status and role and in anticipation of their impending retirement for a variety of reasons. Yet this possible future identity was not a free choice; a number of challenges had to be overcome. As Woodward (2000) explains identities are constantly in flux, but resources or opportunities to construct particular identities are not always available. For these gymnasts, there were institutional and financial barriers to consider. BG is the only recognised provider of trampoline coaching courses in the UK. Therefore they and their partners (e.g., WG) control the frequency, location and cost of coaching courses and make decisions about those who are suitable to attend them. Thus, these courses were restrictive in a number of ways. All candidates attending a UKCC level 1 trampoline course had to be aged at least 16 years old. Therefore some gymnasts like Joanna, Abbie, Sophie and Naomi had to wait a year or more before they were eligible to register. Having overcome this hurdle, there were financial and logistical obstacles. A level one course costs around £315, an additional membership package was required (£40) and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, formerly the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, costing £10-

⁵⁵ Although drawing upon privileged insider information and its contribution to coaching, I do not wish to deny other explanations and fortitudes of good coaches who do not have insider knowledge. Mentorships and coaching clinics, which have informed my own coaching background, are valuable too (Irwin, Hanton and Kerwin, 2004).

£40. Often aged 15 or 16 at the time of registering, gymnasts were not financially dependent or able to travel independently to course locations. In order to pursue their desired alternative self, gymnasts were reliant upon the support of their parents and their club. For example, Luke and Amy obtained their level one coaching certificate having received financial support from the club and their parents. Georgia, although offered the same monetary contribution from the club, could not raise the necessary remainder of the funds to register onto the course. Sophie, Naomi, Joanna and Abbie were not old enough to apply, although they hoped to do so in the future when a course became available in the local area. Instead they focused on honing their coaching skills through voluntary work in recreational classes, actively engaging in body-work to achieve an alternative sense of self.

'On to new pastures': Looking to alternative selves and identities

Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) study of retired gymnasts identified a 'new beginnings' narrative stemming from those who had moved away from gymnastics altogether. It was not within the scope of this study to explore experiences of retirement and find out what had happened to those who had formed a new sense of self away from trampoline-gymnastics. However, some gymnasts' retirement from their competitive trampoline career coincided with other important points in their life. For example, Kristen and Cecilia left to pursue academic careers embarking on university courses while Georgia left to start a life in Ireland with her fiancé. Thus, this group tended to draw upon and celebrate *positive* stories of retirement and life after trampoline-gymnastics.

Georgia welled as Amy handed her the gift bag. 'We wanted to get you something for your new house in Ireland' Amy explained, as the younger gymnasts hovered over the bag trying to get a glimpse of what was inside. Georgia briefly rummaged through the bag and pulled out her card. She opened it and read the messages inside. Welling turned to tears and she quickly wiped them away. 'Sorry' she said laughing. 'I'm just going to miss you all'. 'We'll come visit you in Ireland' Luke reassured her. She continued to open her presents, revealing a photo frame full of club photographs.
(Fieldnotes, 18th February 2013)

Gymnasts' ideas of possible selves and identities away from the trampoline-gymnastics were informed by a narrative resource which emerged as 'onto new pastures'; they were leaving for a new life. Although producing a positive ageing and retirement process it is important to recognise that these 'new pastures' were not available to all gymnasts. Some were too young to attend university, others were not moving away with their family. In order to fulfil a positive alternative self, opportunities for forming a new sense of self had to be present and utilised (Woodward, 2000).

In focusing on positive leaving narratives, other contrasting stories were notably stigmatised (1990b). Throughout the research some gymnasts, '*the disappeared*', simply stopped coming to training without giving a reason. This wasn't viewed favourably among the group.

Jessica: Where is Lacy? I haven't seen her for ages.
RL: No idea, but it would be useful to know if she is coming back. We can give her space to someone.
(Fieldnotes, October 7th 2012)

Amy: What is going on with Caitlin? Is she coming back or not?
Naomi: I don't think so. She needs to just make up her mind though.
Sophie: I think she is coming back.
Naomi: Urgh she's staying, she's going. Make up your mind.
(Fieldnotes, 12th March 2012)

Ultimately 'the disappeared' produced a spoiled identity (Goffman, 1990b) through a lack of commitment to the group; not coming to training frequently over time, was deemed an inauthentic trampoline performance. Those who left altogether were not only expected to formally notify others of their retirement, but also justify this, or risk being ostracised. Not

only were gymnasts in this group judgemental of 'the disappeared' they also perceived other retirement narratives negatively.

Caitlin's retirement from trampoline-gymnastics came after months of negotiating a rehabilitative return to training following her claims of a back pain. Yet, some gymnasts viewed this negatively.

Naomi: There is nothing wrong with her back. She does P.E. in school and everything. If she doesn't want to come back, she should just say.

Sophie: She won't even do anything to get better. Like her physio exercises. That's why I think it doesn't even hurt.

(Fieldnotes, 1st April 2012)

Again, this type of storied narrative – '*injury faker*' produced an inauthentic trampoline performance. To be dishonest about or exaggerate pain was not looked upon favourably by the group.

Thus certain types of retirement narratives are privileged above others. While 'gymnast-turned-coach' and 'onto new pastures' narratives were favourable and even desired, narratives of 'hanging on', 'the disappeared' and the 'injury faker' were feared or undesirable.

Summary

Unlike much of the previous work exploring body narratives of retirement and ageing in sport contexts (Pike, 2011; Tulle, 2008; Wainwright and Turner, 2003) the stories and narratives provided here are not of mid-late life, but from children and young people. Career termination is often associated with old bodies, but this is not the case here. In this group, retirement was often a considered process, one which happened over time.

These trampoline-gymnasts faced an array of possible career terminating challenges – *it's not for me, it's not cool anymore, my body hurts and everything has changed*. For those who had established a deep and enduring sense of trampoline identity, it was difficult

to leave, and they drew upon a limited repertoire of only five possibilities for future selves and identities – *hanging on*, *gymnast-turned-coach*, *new pastures*, *the disappeared* or *the injury faker*. Not only was the repertoire of narrative options restrictive, but the narratives that were preferential, that is *gymnast-turned-coach* and *on to new pastures*, were not free choices. These narratives were reliant upon financial support and/or other opportunities coming to fruition (e.g., obtaining a place on a university course). Yet, reassuringly, in comparison to previous work on gymnastic retirement that has described the body in chaos-like states (Frank, 1995), experiencing a lack of control (Warriner and Lavalley, 2008) and/or disorientation (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000), these trampoline-gymnasts' approaches to retirement appeared quite controlled and in most cases decisions were made over time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I discuss the key contributions of this work. They are a) the successful combination of interactionist and narrative theoretical lenses, b) the gathering of rich, in-depth ethnographic data which illustrates the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts over time, allowing their rarely heard voices to be represented, c) the identification of the narrative structures which exist in and through the lives of these young people, d) new insights into individuals' sporting lives and career, particularly children and young people in trampoline-gymnastics, and e) the creation of a model of embodied sport careers.

The chapter begins by discussing how combining two theoretical lenses, Goffman's interactionist work and Frank's ideas of embodied narrative, has produced ideas about how structural and body processes fit together to form individual experience. Indeed, throughout this thesis the notion that bodies, selves, identities and narrative are integral to the lived experiences of trampoline-gymnasts has been captured. Adopting a narrative approach has enabled me to generate a model of embodied sport careers. This model illustrates the interlinking processes of the body, social interactions, dramaturgical stages and career which are central to trampoline-gymnasts' experiences. Although this has been created through the exploration of trampoline-gymnasts' lives, its broad nature offers scope for it to be applied to other sporting bodies. Following the presentation of this model, I demonstrate its use by highlighting the contribution this work has made to our knowledge of trampoline/gymnastic bodies and how the stories and narratives that have emerged in

this research might be used to instigate positive change in this and other gymnastic disciplines.

Moving on from an overarching discussion of the findings, I reflect upon the methodological journey this work has taken me on, in the hope that other qualitative researchers might draw upon these experiences to inform future work. My reflections lead into comments about this thesis, what it has achieved, its limitations and recommendations for future research.

'Bringing bodies back in'

We have come a long way since sporting bodies were highlighted as 'missing in action' in the early 1990s (Loy, 1991). There has since been an expansive academic interest in the body in studies of sport and physical activity (Markula, 2015; Sparkes, 1999). However, we still have much to learn from the lived, carnal body in sport and how individuals experience the world (Allen-Collinson, 2009). Markula (2015) maintains that sporting bodies offer a potential pathway to the survival of the academic discipline in which they are housed (i.e. sociology of sport), and subsequently greater cohesion between the still existing tensions of (post)positivism and interpretivism (and everything in-between and surrounding these lenses, Krane and Baird, 2005) present in many sport-related departments. In the current climate, where health dominates research funding opportunities, it is both 'camps' interest in the body, in a myriad of forms (e.g., ill, injured, healthy), that can bridge these tensions and form interdisciplinary interests (Markula, 2015).

With this in mind, I encourage researchers to continue to engage in explorations of the social body in sport and exercise, to expand our knowledge of lived experiences in these contexts and to note how theory plays out in empirical work in order to generate new

ideas. This research, and its combination of embodied theoretical lenses, has demonstrated that such an approach is fruitful in contributing to knowledge of the lived body in sport.

Frank and Goffman: Combining theoretical lenses

Combining the conceptual ideas of Erving Goffman and Arthur Frank whilst acknowledging the critical comments they have each received has produced new contributions to the existing literature on the social body. Some criticisms of social constructionist perspectives of the body highlight the absence of the corporeal fleshy agent as a key limitation of these analyses; instead attention tends to be focused on social structures (Frank, 1990; Shilling, 2012). Even Goffman's interactionist analysis of human agency has been criticised for this (Shilling, 2012). His attention is focused on individual agency, rather than social structures, but the corporeal body is still relatively absent. Thus, the combined analytical lens in the present study contributes to interactionist work by 'bringing the body back in'.

As discussed in chapter two (p.57), this research views Frank's work as an extension of Goffman's earlier ideas of autonomous human agents bound in social meaning systems (shared vocabularies of body idiom). Frank's (1991) theory begins with the lived, fleshy body as the focal point in his analysis of embodiment and the corporeal dimensions of social structures (narrative discourses and institutions). Adopting this body centred approach has enabled me to explore trampoline-gymnasts' phenomenologically grounded experiences within narrative structures. His ideas of embodied stories and narratives, which are drawn upon heavily in this research, provide additional scope to claims that Goffman underestimates the importance of more macro/structural concerns of society (Giddens, 1988; Shilling, 2003). Goffman (1990a) often refers to social scripts that guide individuals' performances of self-identity, but he never really identifies what these are.

However, Frank's (2010) work extends these ideas, acknowledging social and institutional narratives that act upon and influence individuals' lives and decisions. By paying close attention to individuals' storied lives, this research was able to identify particular narrative plots (Frank, 1995) or social scripts (Goffman, 1990a), evidencing clear links between individual experience and wider social structures (Frank, 2000; Somers, 1994). For example, female gymnasts' storied narratives of puberty (i.e. *private* narratives) echoed wider socio-cultural narratives of the rarely discussed menstruating body, a taboo subject shrouded in silence and mystery (Bellis et al., 2006; Clarke and Gilroy, 1993; Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck, 2009). Similarly, male gymnasts' stories of successfully negotiating their gendered identity in backstage spaces reflected culturally accepted narratives of male promiscuity and physicality (Connell, 1987). These narrative structures give meaning to individuals' storied lives and bodies, they were the means by which stories were told, performed, drawn upon and internalised.

Within these examples, and gymnasts' storied lives presented in this thesis more generally (see figure 9), the body and its significance is placed with the individual or the body itself. Goffman has been criticised for theorising the significance of the body as determined by sources outside of the body - that is to say, others' interpretation of shared vocabularies of body idiom (Shilling, 2003)⁵⁶. In contrast, Frank (1991) emphasises the body as a problem for itself rather than for society⁵⁷, though he accepts that it is defined by institutions, narrative discourses and corporeality. The present research adopts the strengths of both perspectives, viewing the body as the starting point central to individuals' lives. It also acknowledges, however, that the ways in which others (other bodies) perceive

⁵⁶ This criticism has been extended to other body theorists, Foucault's discourses and Turner's social systems, for example, but the focus here is the bridging of Goffman and Frank's work.

⁵⁷ Frank acknowledges this idea is developed from Turner's (1984) work

and interpret the body shape individual experiences and possible future embodied selves and identities.

Although Frank's work provides some answers, it too has been the subject of critique. Shilling (2003, p.87) argues that Frank's attention to bodily action in response to body problems 'does not provide us with a fully developed view of the body as integral to human agency'; and more specifically that his work 'lacks detail on the body as central and facilitative of human agency' (Shilling, 2012, p.96). Yet, in drawing upon Goffman's dramaturgical work on body performances in social interaction(s) in the analytical processes of this work, a deeper view of the embodied human agent has emerged. Frank's (1991) typology of body usage enabled me to identify the overarching ways in which trampoline-gymnasts use their bodies and shift between different styles of body usage as they experience their lives. For example, trampoline-gymnasts predominantly displayed mirroring and disciplined bodies, which are defined by predictability and control. Some evidence of communicative and dominating bodies also emerged at times (e.g., *I love to fly* – see p.203, and narrative characterisations of the bitch – see p.180). However, capturing gymnasts' nuanced body practices (e.g., gestures, dress, bodily decorations, movements, positioning in space and emotional expressions) would not have been possible in their current form, had Goffman's (1989, 1990a, 1990b, 2005) work not informed data collection and analysis. Using this interactionist framework focused attention on micro-interactions and self-management revealing individuals' storied experiences within narrative structures. For example, gymnasts who had or were experiencing pain often acted in disciplined ways, continuing their training despite corporeal limitations, but they lived in and through the 'my body hurts' narrative in different ways. For instance, Sophie was scared because of her previous injury; her body trembled when I supported her in somersaulting skills following

her accident. In contrast, Leon, Amy and Georgia did not fear their corporeal limitations, but instead managed their bodies in disciplined ways (i.e. treating aches and pains with ice and anti-inflammatory medication) and lived *through* the 'my body hurts' narrative.

Framing analysis in social interaction, body usage, performance and narrative has produced ideas about how structural and corporeal processes fit together to form individual experience. This research has demonstrated that bodies tell, internalise, act upon and perform stories and narratives. We construct and present ourselves, our bodies, selves and identities, in and through narratives, which are framed by culture and produced by other bodies (Frank, 2000; Taylor, 2005). Paying close attention to individuals' stories and how they are performed over time has allowed conclusions to be made about how people experience and make sense of their lives and bodies in and through narrative structures. Thus this theoretical framing has not only extended the current literature on gymnastic bodies, but also the theoretical literature on social bodies more generally.

The narrative lens in this approach revealed structures within trampoline-gymnasts' storied lives, the embodied lens identified typical styles of body usage, and the interactionist lens provided the intricate, nuanced accounts of how these stories were performed and experienced. Drawing upon a combination of Frank and Goffman's work to make sense of trampoline-gymnasts' storied lives has ultimately produced a more comprehensive understanding of the lived body in trampoline-gymnastics. This combination of theoretical ideas also makes a broader contribution to social constructionist perspectives, and interactionist work in particular, by bringing the corporeal body 'back in'. That said, this heuristic approach sits more centrally within the continuum of macro and micro sociological foci, allowing the fleshy human agent to perform on the dramaturgical stage of structural landscapes. Exploring human agency within narrative structures has

revealed new and interesting insights into the social body in sport, specifically in trampoline-gymnastics. Therefore I have generated a model of embodied careers in sport which illustrates how we might understand not only the lives of these trampoline-gymnasts, but also other sporting bodies.

Coming to understand experiences of sporting bodies: A conceptual model

This model builds upon Donnelly and Young's (1988) more linear ideas about athletic career stages (i.e. pre-socialisation, selection and recruitment, socialisation and acceptance/ ostracism) and how these contribute to individuals' identity construction and confirmation. However, in moving to the more cyclical notion of athletic career evident in this research, the complex web of the body, social interactions and (dramaturgical) stages within gymnasts'⁶⁰ experience(s) become a more prominent feature in this framework. Each of these layered components (i.e. body, social interactions, stages and career) work in conjunction with one another, although the elements within them can act either in isolation or together in various combinations, and can feature more prominently at particular times in a gymnast's career. For example, in the newbies' early stages of entry into this group, bodily performances and body appearance were of central importance. Early ideas of what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast in this group were determined by social interactions with coaches (telling them what to do and how to behave) and other gymnasts (demonstrating desired/ unacceptable behaviours). However, the bodily performances and body appearance prominent within this group were determined by social narratives and institutional discourses. These were enacted in front stage regions (e.g., training halls) and

⁶⁰ This model is created from the exploration of trampoline-gymnasts' lived experiences, but it has been left deliberately broad in places (e.g., 'other *athletes*' rather than gymnasts) so that it might be applied to future studies of bodies in other sport or exercise contexts.

practiced in backstage regions (e.g., home, school, virtual spaces). To better orientate the reader into the ideas of this model, I provide a detailed outline of each of the components, using illustrative examples from this research.

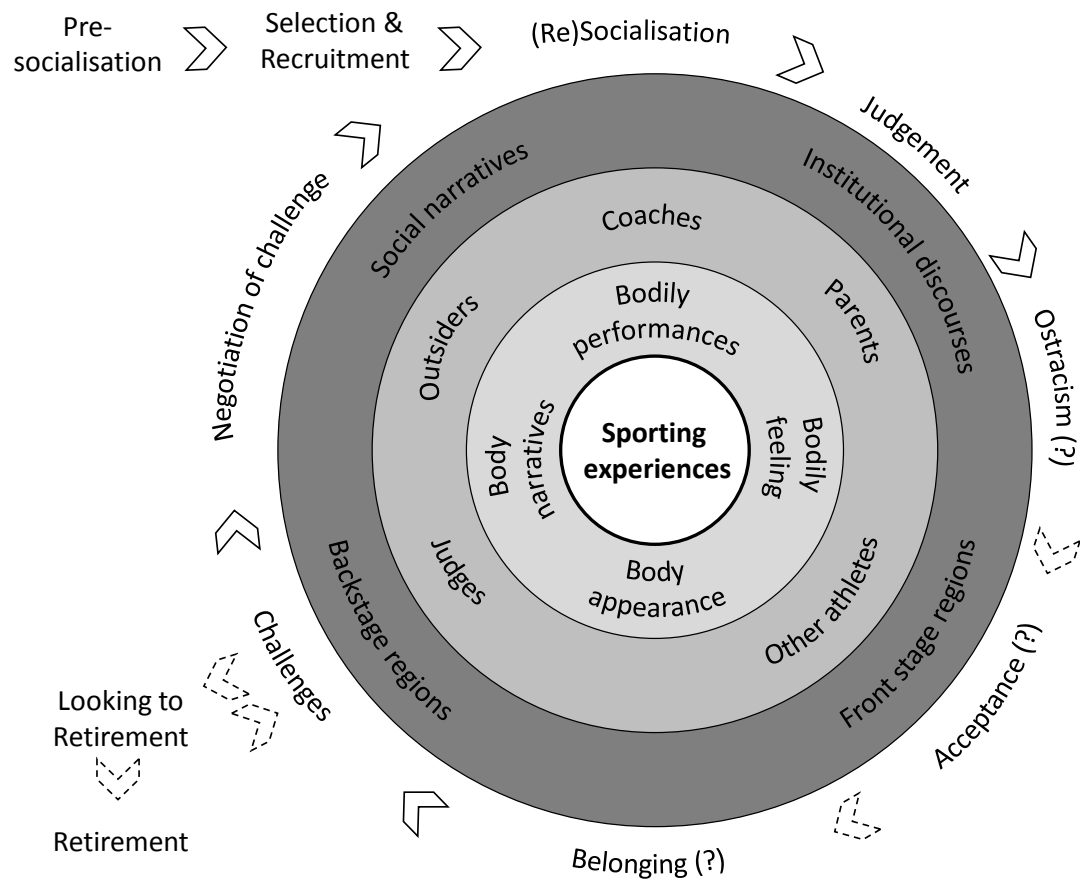


Figure 8. A model of embodied careers in sport.

The Body

The body is central to individuals' sporting experiences and lives. This central component has four key elements—*body appearance*, *body narratives*, *bodily performances* and *bodily feeling*.

- Body appearance refers to the physical body in the world, and how it is shaped and presented to others. The body is a project (Shilling, 2003), (re)constructed through mirroring and disciplined body usage (Frank 1995) that can be (re)moulded over time to inform an individuals' self and social identity (Goffman, 1990b).
- Bodily performances produce and work within narrative structures of (in)authentic role-identity in order to form an individual's sense of self and identity (Goffman, 1990a, 1990b).
- Body narratives are the storied structural plots (narratives) of human experience that emerge from other bodies (Frank, 1995). Individuals draw upon, internalise and act on available cultural narratives to inform ideas about who they are and what they might become (or narrative maps, Pollner and Stein, 1996).
- Bodily feeling refers to phenomenal understanding of the felt body in personal and social ways (Frank, 1995). Individuals experience their bodies in nuanced ways, but collective notions of sporting elements exist. For example, what it is to be scared in high-risk moments (e.g., learning/attempting new skills).

These elements rarely work in isolation; they tend to work in combination, albeit not always in complementary ways. For example, over the course of Imogen's trampoline career her facial scarring and speech impediment following surgery for a cleft lip and palate (body appearance) meant that authentic trampoline performances (bodily performances) could not always be produced. Her breathing pattern was different to other gymnasts (bodily feeling) and she was unable to adopt particular narrative characterisations of being, such as the 'cutie'. In contrast, these elements can work harmoniously for the successful gymnast. Georgia was perceived to have the ideal trampoline body, she was small and pretty (body appearance), aiding her in producing consistently authentic trampoline performances (bodily performances). Her disciplined and mirroring performances coupled

with her gymnastic appearance allowed her to engage in the desired top pack narrative (body narratives), through which she alluded to shared notions of flight sensations (bodily feeling).

Social interactions

Bodies are relational; stories are told and storied lives performed to others with a particular audience in mind (Frank, 2010). As Smith and Sparkes (2009a, p.4) state 'we are relational beings, and narratives and meanings are achieved in relationships'. The groups of people housed within the social interaction component in this model were identified as prominent audience members and/or social actors also performing on the dramaturgical stage of individuals' lives. Thus they are central to body performances, body narratives, body appearance and bodily feeling. In the case of this research coaches, parents, other gymnasts, judges and outsiders were identified as the predominant groups that interacted with these trampoline-gymnasts. The ways in which these groups impacted upon or supported the lives of trampoline-gymnasts fluctuated greatly over their career. For example, parents featured prominently in the early stages of individuals' career providing emotional, financial and logistical support but over time they became almost redundant, often becoming just a form of financial support. 'Top pack' members' parents were rarely seen at training, competitions or club events; these gymnasts had reached a relatively autonomous stage of their career, where even some lower level coaches became redundant to their sporting lives.

I deliberately use the term 'groups' of people as gymnasts' relationships and interactions often extended beyond their own parent(s), coach(es) and friends in the club. As they became embedded into this group, the repertoire of storied lives they were exposed to extended to other gymnasts parents, and gymnasts and coaches from other clubs, all of

which contributed to gymnasts' sporting experiences. In addition, individuals can move to different groups over time, or belong to numerous groups simultaneously. For example, Amy was a gymnast, coach and judge, and she moved between these roles frequently. Incidentally, I note that the word 'judges' in this research is used in the literal sense, but those looking to apply this model, might wish to consider the myriad ways in which individuals are judged and the sources of these judgements (see chapter six, 'Judgement of the body: A singular, dominant body aesthetic', p.210).

Stages

The third component of this model identifies 'stages' as the dramaturgical platforms and parameters for individuals' experiences, split into four elements - *front stage regions*, *backstage regions*, *social narratives* and *institutional discourses*. Collectively, these elements adopt Frank's (1991) body up perspective on social structures (outlined in chapter two). That is, these stages emerge from the actions of bodies and the physical platforms on which bodies perform are constituted in and through embodied discourse. However, there are clear overlaps with Goffman's (1990a) dramaturgy concept.

- Front stage regions refer to physical settings where the individual is on display. For example, training sessions and competition arenas. These spaces require authentic role-identity performances from individuals. Consistent failure to produce authentic performances on these stages can lead to ostracism or stigma (Goffman, 1990b).
- Backstage regions offer spaces for individuals to practice and refine their front stage performances. Previously, these too were physical spaces (Goffman, 1990a), but this now extends to virtual, non-physical spaces as well. For example, these gymnasts' backstage regions were identified as their homes, school and social media.
- Institutional discourses are culturally produced narrative structures which exist within physical spaces and time. Whereas Frank (1991, p.48) outlined discourses generally as 'cognitive mappings of the body's possibilities and limitations... [which] form the normative parameters of how the body can understand itself', these discourses are produced by sporting institutions. The

institutional discourses acting upon the trampoline-gymnasts in this research derived from the governing bodies of the sport (FIG, BG, WG) and as such coupled together cultural values and practices across gymnastic disciplines. However within these institutional discourses there were subtle trampoline discourses that operated within this larger discourse. For example, a code of points (Appendix I) guided judgements of trampoline bodies (all elements of the body component), subsequently dictating the nature of (some) social interactions and front stage spaces, that is training halls and competition arenas.

- Social narratives refer to grand or meta narratives which produce social norms and values for individuals (Somers, 1994), which both enable and restrict individuals' sporting lives. In this research, socially produced gendered narratives permeated gymnasts' ideas about acceptable bodies. Male gymnasts struggled to negotiate their gendered identity in this trampoline group, while female gymnasts conformed to feminine ideals. In other sporting contexts, the reverse is found (e.g., Therberge, 2003). Thus, when institutional discourses act against social narratives, individuals will have to mediate their various identities through and in time and space (front and back stage regions).

Institutional discourses, social narratives and front and back stage regions do not act in isolation from one another, but are all intricately linked. For example, gymnasts' storied narratives of 'horrible' first competitions and 'scary judges' are constituted in nervous body performances (how it appears, how it moves, how it feels) in front stage spaces which are determined by institutional discourses of the dominant leotard aesthetic, how competitions are set-up and run, and how the body is judged. In these moments front stage regions and institutional discourses are at the forefront of lived experiences. Yet backstage regions have provided space(s) to practice, reinforce and relax in preparation for this moment. Socially produced narratives of gender operate in the background, offering ideas of what these bodies should look like and how they should behave, producing challenges where conflictions occur.

Career phases

The career phases in this model contextualise individuals' experiences of being in a sporting group over time and highlight the extent to which they have developed insider knowledge of its practices and values. Progression through these athletic career phases instils a sense of athletic identity in the individual (Donnelly and Young, 1988); and even more so when the athletic career begins at a young age (Stevenson, 1990). In early career phases - pre-socialisation, selection and recruitment, socialisation and acceptance/ostracism mimic Donnelly and Young's (1988) linear career stages, but this research evidenced additional elements of athletic career that featured in individuals' sporting experiences. That is, judgement, belonging, challenges, negotiation of challenges, looking to retirement and retirement. The cyclical nature of these collective career phases moves away from Donnelly and Young's (1988) discrete career *stages*, each with its own beginning and end point, and to overlapping career *phases* to reflect the messy nature of lived experience. The intricacies of each of the career phases in this model have already been outlined in chapter four and discussed in detail in chapters five, six and seven; thus I only briefly remind the reader of the nature of these processes here before moving on to discuss the contribution this framing of sporting experience has provided to our understanding of gymnastic bodies.

- Pre-socialisation refers to the information obtained about a particular sporting group prior to initial participation. Information can be gathered from a range of sources - media, parents, peers and (in)direct contact with group members. In this trampoline group, pre-socialisation was limited to direct and indirect contact with club members through participation in recreational classes and/or watching club performances.
- Selection and recruitment is the process of becoming a member of the sporting group. As discussed in chapter five, this phase took place over time and was dominated by the decisions of coaches and permission of parents. Coaches determined if spaces were available in the club, who was suitable to fill the space, and when to approach relevant parents to negotiate the logistics of attending club sessions (training days and times).

- Socialisation begins on entry and participation within the group, but is a prolonged phase in which individuals learn and adopt the practices and values of this group. Early misconceptions, produced in the pre-socialisation phase become unravelled and eradicated. Initial (body) performances are tested and judged for authenticity, resulting in two of the three forms of deferment - acceptance or ostracism. This is just one form of judgement.
- Judgement of the trampoline body determines if the individual is accepted or ostracised from the sporting group. Although it is central to the initial processes of identity construction, this is an ongoing, reoccurring phase in the career cycle. The body is judged continuously as individuals negotiate body-centred challenges (see below).
- Acceptance, Ostracism and/or Belonging are the three possible outcomes or forms of deferment (Goffman, 1990a) of judgment. Individuals' production of authentic trampoline performances (bodily performances and body appearance) lead to acceptance by the group; they are an authentic member. In contrast, inauthentic trampoline performances can lead to temporary or prolonged ostracism from the group; these individuals are not accepted as members of this group. Ostracism becomes a challenge (see below) that has to be negotiated. Subsequent performances during negotiation of this challenge may allow an individual to become accepted. In conjunction with acceptance and ostracism is belonging. Through the delivery of consistently (in)authentic performances, individuals form a sense of belonging. The most desirable outcome here is to form a sense of belonging in the accepted group. However, it is possible, given the delivery of consistent inauthentic performances, that an individual may form an allegiance, and thus a sense of belonging, with those that do not belong.
- Challenges and negotiation of retirement - Sporting careers are plagued by countless challenges. Examples within this research include ostracism, pubescent bodies, body consciousness, gendered (re)negotiation of masculinities, illness and injury. These have to be negotiated, often over time, in order to produce consistent authentic trampoline performances and be accepted and/or belong in this group. (Re)negotiation of challenges leads to an altered form of socialisation, in which individuals adopt new or adapt practices to achieve the desired values of the group. Alternatively, challenges can test athletic bodies to their limits, and individuals may consider retirement at this point. Individuals' consideration of retirement is often prolonged and consequently they can re-enter the career cycle, attempting to negotiate the challenges they are experiencing, often acknowledging that they will produce inauthentic trampoline performances for a time. Ultimately this is one challenge that must be concluded, either in successful negotiation of the challenge that led to this consideration, or retirement from the sport.

In my illustration of modular components and elements, I give examples from this ethnography, but there is scope for this model to be applied to other studies of the body in sport. Deliberately leaving the terms for each of the elements broad allows researchers and coaches to apply the nuances of sporting groups into these categories. For example, I have termed trampoline/gymnastic discourses as 'institutional discourses', but in future studies these might be football discourses, for example. Similarly, 'judges' in this context played out a 'scary' narrative characterisation and/or role, but individuals who are akin to them exist in other sport contexts, children's football referees or talent scouts for example, might be considered scary and to varying degrees dictate the success of the individual and/or group. Previously ethnographic work has identified variation in practices and values in sporting groups. Donnelly and Young's (1988) rugby players and climbers had commonalities in career phases which were integral to identity construction, but they experienced the world very differently. Stevenson's (1999) swimmers demonstrated further nuances of similar career processes. Thus it seems logical that different sporting groups will yield differentiation in which components and (combinations of) elements are most significant at various points in the life cycle and career. This is something those looking to use this model to frame their analysis, might wish to consider and conclude upon.

Having generated this model, it is important to review how this relates to the current literature on gymnastic bodies and to highlight the contribution it makes to our understanding of trampoline bodies.

Contributing to knowledge: Lived experiences in trampoline-gymnastics

Chapter two provided an extensive review of literature on the gymnastic body, pointing to a lack of knowledge about what it was to be a trampoline-gymnast or what processes they experienced as they moved through their athletic career. Elite WAG had taken centre stage over other disciplines, and male gymnasts of all disciplines had been almost entirely neglected. Many of the studies undertaken were done so in very traditional ways, utilising questionnaires (e.g., Krentz and Warschburger, 2011) and cross-sectional designs (e.g., Abbott and Barber, 2011). Gymnasts' behaviours were often compared to other sporting groups (e.g., De Bruin et al., 2007) and/or those who did not do sport at all (e.g., Abbott and Barber, 2011). A relatively small cluster of qualitative studies was present, in which the lived corporeal gymnast started to emerge. While notable, this work was limited in its focus on elite female artistic gymnasts' (Barker-Ruchti, 2010) and experiences of retirement (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavelle and Robinson, 2007; Warriner and Lavelle, 2008). Again, the male gymnastic body was lost, in all but one study of elite male rhythmic gymnasts (Chimot and Louveau, 2010).

This earlier work has provided an empirical platform for this research, enabling me to look for similar patterns of behaviour and how/why they might occur. However, in recognising its value and limitations, this ethnographic study makes a substantial contribution to our understanding(s) of different types of gymnastic bodies, specifically the trampoline body which has received very little attention previously. This is important because we cannot assume that trampoline-gymnasts have the same experiences as elite artistic or rhythmic gymnasts, and given the serious health and well-being concerns reported in these disciplines we should look to see if this is occurring elsewhere. In doing I have been able to gain new and important insights into gymnastic bodies.

Against the messy backdrop of trampoline-gymnasts' lived experiences over their career (Figure 8 above), I bring forward three points of discussion which weave throughout the preceding chapters of this thesis - issues of control and choice, possible future selves and identities and body matters.

Autonomy and limited options for self-identity

A heavily embedded feature of analysis and discussion throughout the chapters of this thesis was the limited nature of gymnasts' autonomy in making decisions about their lives. Their autonomy changed over time, through the course of their career, yet they were always restricted in some way; never becoming a fully autonomous agent. Studies of sport and exercise groups have yielded contradictory accounts of participants' autonomy. For example, some have used Foucauldian lenses explore how power structures restrict the bodies in the fitness industry (e.g., Markula, 2001, 2003; Pringle and Markula, 2005) and WAG (Barker-Ruchti and Tinning, 2010). Yet, others have argued that sport develops children's autonomy, presenting them with opportunities to make decisions and solve problems (Bailey, Cope and Pearce, 2013). This research highlights the underlying tensions of these ideas, concluding that the trampoline body is neither fully autonomous nor dictated entirely by structural frameworks. Instead, trampoline bodies are autonomous to the extent that they can (re)mould their physical body and alter their bodily performances to fit in, typically in mirroring and disciplined ways. They also experience variations in bodily feeling and engage in particular narratives that they internalise and act upon (Figure 8). However, these autonomous acts are bound by restrictive structural narratives (social narratives and institutional discourses, Figure 8) which are played out in social interactions on stages throughout athletic career processes.

This trampoline club produced the idea, much like Bailey et al. (2013) that coaches should provide gymnasts, often children, with opportunities to make decisions about their sporting lives. The club philosophy read:

The club and its coaches aim to provide an enjoyable and friendly working environment in which the responsibility for attainment and hard work is placed on the gymnast. Coaches will guide gymnasts through their learning processes, encouraging gymnasts to make appropriate and rational decisions about their performance, behaviour and development.

(The club's philosophy statement, taken from the club Handbook, 2012)

Yet, despite the club's stance on developing autonomous gymnasts, this research found that the limited repertoire of narratives that operated in their lives restricted the level of agency they had. For example, they did not make decisions to join this group, this was decided by coaches predominantly and gymnasts' parents (chapter five); they had little choice in the type of body they could construct or how it was judged (chapter six); and choosing what to become after their trampoline career was, in many ways, limited (chapter seven). In order to demonstrate and discuss this more fully, I present a narrative map (Pollner and Stein, 1996) of these gymnasts' possible selves and identities (Markus and Nurius, 1986) as they progress through their career.

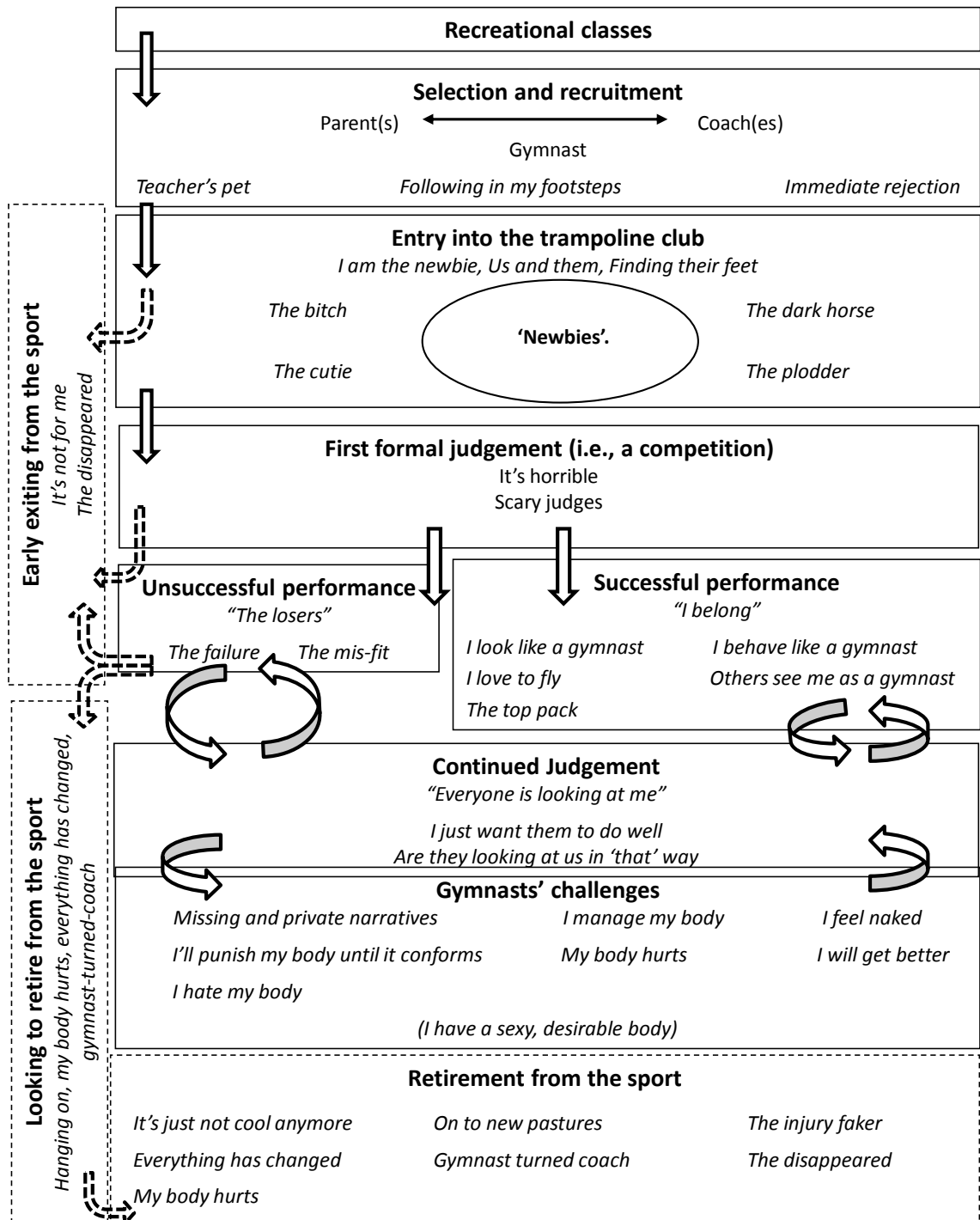


Figure 9. Narrative mapping of trampolining-gymnasts' storied lives

This map illustrates the limited number of body narratives these gymnasts were exposed to in order to inform ideas about their possible future selves and identities as they move through their athletic career. For example, there are just two desired selection and recruitment narratives – *teacher's pet* or *following in my footsteps*. Any deviation away from these body narratives resulted in *immediate rejection*. As well as the limited number of narratives from which to draw upon, they are restrictive in nature. Selection and recruitment narratives, for instance, were determined by social interaction(s) with and between coaches and parents. Coaches acted as decision makers, determining if places were available in the trampoline club, who might be suitable to fill these places and when individuals are recruited. Parents, although important in organising the logistics of getting children to club training on particular days and times, had limited control over their children's selection and recruitment, although some actively sought places for their children (chapter five). Ultimately the gymnasts themselves had very little control and choice in this process. They were always asked if they wanted to join the club, but after decisions of coaches and parents had already been made; this was just a formality. The nuances of trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of early career phases thus produce alternative narratives to other sport groups such as swimming, for example, where parents are the main driving force behind this career phase (Stevenson, 1990) or in rock climbing where participants initiated contact themselves (Donnelly and Young, 1988).

The nature of trampoline clubs (institutional discourses) is such that we (coaches) can only work with a small number of gymnasts at any one time in order to run an effective and safe environment for all members, often no more than eight children per trampoline for recreational classes and 5-6 for club training (BG, 2007). We therefore had to be quite selective about who we recruited into club sessions. As most newbies were children (aged

9 years old, see Appendix C) we had to negotiate their entry into the club with their parents whom they relied upon for emotional, financial and logistical support. That is, supporting them through career phases, paying for membership fees, training costs, competition entry fees, leotards and club kit, and transporting them to and from training and competition venues on a regular basis. Yet, given the possible future embodied selves and identities these children might construct (i.e. *my body hurts, I'll punish my body until it conforms, I feel naked, I have a sexy, desirable body* – see Figure 9), concerns are raised about the limited nature of their autonomy in making informed decisions about the types of body they might construct.

Institutional discourses give little guidance on this process. Documents are provided on how best to select talent, taking into consideration physiological, psychological and social parameters (BG, 2007), but there is no information on how to recruit gymnasts effectively, providing them with some level of autonomy. On reflection of my own practice and the storied narratives produced in this work, I can envisage ways career processes might be adapted to better support the autonomy of potential competitive gymnasts, not only in this club but others as well. Clubs need to be more transparent about the criteria they are using to select potential recruits. Coaches should engage in discussions and debates about selection criteria, justify these decisions appropriately, *and* make these criteria clear to those in recreational classes, both children and their parents. There was a reluctance to do this in the club, as the particular criteria we drew upon from institutional discourses, that is lean, well-proportioned and postured bodies (body appearance), character attributes of perseverance, competitiveness, good behaviour, lack of fear and a desire to learn (BG, 2007); would highlight to parents that their child's body or behaviour were not suitable and in turn lead to complaints. Against the backdrop of contemporary social

narratives of problematic body matters in children (Smolak, Levine and Thompson, 2001) coaches, including myself, did not want to draw attention to these criteria and place these demands on children, for fear of parent backlash. However, if coaches' refined/ adapted selection criteria were more transparent, this might at least taper some of the more negatively experienced narratives in this group. For example, existing members' use of 'us and them' narrative characterisations derived from a lack of openness and perhaps consistently surrounding selection criteria. All gymnasts went through this process but in performing 'us and them' storylines there was a sense that newbies had not earned the right to be in this group, yet they had met coaches' criteria. The coaching environment is complex and messy (Bowes and Jones, 2006); coaching practices are not black and white, there are various shades in-between. However this career phase is certainly one that needs to be observed and discussed, and governing body guidance needs to be given if more inclusive narratives are to emerge in future trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of this sport.

Similarly, gymnasts' experiences of the opposite end of the career spectrum, that is retirement, also posed questions about the level of autonomy individuals had in making decisions about their sporting lives. Experiences of retirement were not within the scope of this research, but gymnasts who were looking to retire from this group were present. The consistent presence of those looking to retire is an important indication of an institutional discourse that sport/trampoline-gymnastics is not for life. Given the deeply engrained self-identity constructed by those in this group over their trampoline career, few gymnasts wanted to retire and so this was experienced as a prolonged and inevitable career phase in which gymnasts' took time to make rational decisions about their future. As demonstrated in Figures 8 and 9 consideration of retirement was fuelled by unsuccessful performances, stemming from a range of challenges (e.g., puberty, ageing, injury, see chapter seven,

p.225) and subsequent judgments about these how these challenges were managed and/or negotiated. However, the repertoire of available narratives they could draw upon to make decisions to stay or go was limited. Many of the available narratives had negative connotations. For example, 'hanging on' narratives where the ageing body continues in the group producing consistently unsuccessful performances was a feared possibility of individuals' future self-identity; as was its counterpart *my body hurts. Everything has changed* narratives were again undesirable. Trampoline bodies were unable to cope with body and institutional changes, many of which individuals had little control or choice over. Equally undesirable, and perhaps more frowned upon were the 'injury fakers', those who used a questionable injury or 'niggle' (see chapter six, p.267) to retire, and 'the disappeared', those who simply just stopped coming to training.

In contrast there were two preferred retirement narratives which enabled some sense of a successful gymnastic self to live on after retirement, either in an altered form or in memory. The 'gymnast-turned-coach' narrative emerged quite prominently as an alternative trampoline self, one that could maintain a sense of trampoline identity and contact with established entanglements (Stevenson, 1999). However, this was not a free choice. Opportunities to progress into trampoline coaching were restricted by gymnasts' age, financial dependence on their parents and their ability to logistically get to and from the course venue(s). In addition, those that entered into this narrative had the potential to restrict progressive change in this sport, often producing a 'I did it, so you will do it as well' rhetoric (also outlined by elite coaches in Barker-Ruchti and Tinning, 2010). Charlie, the previous head coach of this club, who left in the early stages of this research, epitomised this. He was highly resilient to institutional changes to competition structures, for example, and communicated this openly to gymnasts, who internalised these views. Both Emma and

Jessica, whose voices feature in this research, note that Charlie's resistance played its part in their retirement stories (i.e. *everything has changed*). Similarly, gymnasts who chose to move away from the trampoline group after retirement looked to engage in *on to new pastures* narratives, utilising other life changes to end their trampoline career (e.g., university or family relocation). Again, 'on to new pasture' narratives were not a free choice, other life opportunities had to be available to end a trampoline career in this positive way. Thus, there is a limited repertoire of positive retirement narratives to inform trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of ageing and retirement. Success stories of elite artistic gymnasts such as Beth Tweddle are projected in institutional discourses but we hear little about the retirement experiences of lower-level gymnasts and gymnasts from other disciplines. Narratives have the potential to act as a storied resources to inform individuals' bodies, selves and identities (Atkins, 2004; Taylor, 2005), but only if they are available in the first place.

Ultimately trampoline-gymnasts have limited autonomy in making decisions about their future selves and identities and will continue to do so if a full range of available options is not (narratively) provided in institutional discourse. As coaches we often talk about the moral and ethical responsibilities we have to our gymnasts while they are working with us and are in this sport (Hardman et al., 2015), but this could and should be extended to those who are looking to retire. This club was quite nurturing and empathetic of those seeking to retire⁶¹, but this research evidenced other clubs that are less so and perhaps understandably. These issues are not our (coaches) priority in busy, messy coaching environments (Bowes and Jones, 2006) which interplay with our own hectic lives.

⁶¹ Attributed to my research background and interests, see below.

Thus, interventions seeking to broaden the narrative repertoire and disseminating alternative narrative forms should be institutionally guided.

Limited body narratives

While autonomy might be offered in more fruitful ways through adaptations to various career phases, the ways in which the body is (re)constructed and judged in this group and the wider trampoline community was an altogether different web to untangle. This research adopted the view that the lived body is a fleshy malleable and fluid construct developed over time as part of individuals' sense of self and identity (Frank, 1995; Shilling, 2003). The trampoline body evidenced this; the storied lives of trampoline-gymnasts revealed a body that was managed (Goffman, 1990a) and used in mirroring and disciplined ways (Frank, 1991) in order to produce authentic gymnastic performances over time to form a sense of self and identity. However, the embodied challenges within trampoline-gymnasts' careers were predominantly produced and experienced in the context of constraining social narratives and institutional discourses which limited gymnasts' bodies, specifically what they could be (appearance), how they could act (bodily performances), how they experienced their bodies (bodily feeling) and which narratives they could engage in (body narratives).

Socially produced gender narratives featured prominently in the analysis of trampoline-gymnasts' lives. Overarching social narratives of what male and female bodies are and how they should act (Connell, 1987) had dually informed gymnasts' ideas about their lives in this sport. In some ways, traditional ideas of male and female bodies complemented the embedded trampoline discourses this group were trying to conform to. For example, the types of bodies constructed in this trampoline group were aligned to the social narratives of feminine beauty and male muscularity (Connell, 1987; Shilling, 2003).

Female gymnasts were small, lean, and pretty with long hair and feminine cosmetics and decoration. Male gymnasts were lean and muscular, smaller than popular notions of the male body. Both consumed images of the gendered, socially and institutionally idealised body and sought to become it in mirroring ways (Frank, 1991).

While social narratives of femininity and masculinity and the complimentary ways in which they are played out in institutional trampoline discourses exist, these two restrictive elements often worked against gymnasts' experiences of their body, rather than with it. The pubescent trampoline body illustrated this point well. Pubertal changes are not a free choice, but are an inevitable reality of the carnal body. Gymnasts nuanced experiences of this time in their life and trampoline career tell storied narratives of body management, embarrassment (Goffman, 1990b) and heightened body consciousness (i.e. *I manage my body, I feel naked*). Yet, social narratives and institutional discourses do little to recognise this. Institutionally, the pubescent body is a problem to be overcome. BG (2007) acknowledge that in this period of life, a gymnast's limbs grow in length affecting their ability to somersault and twist with their previously established efficiency. This is something gymnasts need to be 'coached' through and overcome. There is almost a clinical approach to these body matters and the lived, fleshy body is lost in governing body guidance. This approach to the body, echoes social narratives of the pubescent body which are traditionally silent, undiscussed realities surrounded by euphemisms and metaphors (Bellis et al., 2006; Clarke and Gilroy, 1993).

The injured trampoline body was approached in much the same way, a problem to be dealt with, preferably away from trampoline settings, by medical institutions. Little guidance is given on rehabilitative practice and stories of the injured or ill body in trampoline-gymnastics are rarely heard or discussed. Yet, much like stories of the

pubescent body, they do exist (*My body hurts, I will get better*). Thus, some stories are tellable if the stage from which they are told and the audience they are enacted to are empathetic to natural human experiences of ageing, injury and, even though not a prominent feature of this analysis, illness too. While on the present dramaturgical stage, these stories are not being allowed to 'breathe' (Frank, 2010, see below). These body matters should not be viewed as a problem for trampoline institutions, but for gymnasts themselves.

The dominance of youthful, attractive, healthy bodies in social narratives, institutional discourses and more specifically this group offered little alternative for other bodies. This research brings forward the consequences of limiting gymnasts' autonomy in making decisions about their body. In attempting to achieve social and institutional values, problematic and concerning body narratives emerged. For example, *I manage my body, I'll punish my body until it conforms, my body hurts and I have a sexy, desirable body*. These narratives are born out of mirroring and disciplined bodies that produced and desired consistent control of appearance, performances and embodied sensations in front and back stage regions, despite the carnal limitations and realities of the lived, messy body (e.g., puberty, ageing and injury). This combination of mirroring and disciplined body, one that desires control, can be a dangerous one, leading to body consciousness, low self-esteem and weight-control behaviours (Krentz and Warschburger, 2011) that have been found to be present in elite gymnastics groups. These types of storied experiences emerged through the narratives presented in this research and this is concerning given the age, competitive level and autonomy these gymnasts had.

Although concerning body matters exist within this trampoline group, the trampoline body is more progressive in comparison to the elite artistic and rhythmic bodies

that dominate the literature. These gymnasts accepted the subtle nuances between trampoline bodies and those in other gymnastic disciplines, operating within trampoline discourses rather than gymnastic ones when they needed to. For example, they acknowledged that trampoline bodies are bigger than gymnastic bodies (artistic and rhythmic in particular), there is less emphasis on being thin and instead lean muscle is desired. Similarly, gymnasts noted the presence of other types of bodies that were rarely seen in other gymnastic communities. Despite contending against social narratives of traditional masculinity, male bodies were on display in this trampoline group and the community in which it was housed. So too were ageing, (post) pubescent and older bodies, although these were not viewed positively in their current form.

BG and its affiliate partners are progressing uniform regulations to try and overcome body issues associated with the pubescent and ageing body, particularly for girls and young women (BG, 2009). Consensus of the uniform adaptations experienced in this research (post-2009 rule change) found that even additional apparel was available, this was not advertised or widely adopted and subsequently it was not useful in achieving these goals (see chapter six, p.211). Yet, British Gymnastics (2013b) continue to adapt and change these regulations. In the 2013-2016 session, a 'unitard with or without sleeves (must be skin tight)' (p.9) became an available option for female gymnasts, giving them some choice to cover more of their body, although when this idea was discussed with gymnasts it too was received negatively. They claimed that a unitard would reveal just as much of the body as it would hide. The legs, hips and 'v' shape would be just as visible. Similarly, male gymnasts are now allowed to wear a 'sleeveless or short sleeved singlet, [and] gym trousers or *gym shorts*' (p.9, added emphasis), allowing them options to both expose and cover more of their body. This latest change was not within the parameters of

this research, it came into effect in September 2013 after this fieldwork had concluded, but it does demonstrate some progression.

'Letting stories breathe'

The important issues across trampolines-gymnasts' career (i.e. issues of control and choice, possible future selves and identities and body matters) evidenced in this ethnographic work, present opportunities for change and progress. I refer to Frank's (2010, p.3) metaphorical notion that stories 'breathe', but while stories cannot actually breathe, they 'animate', they 'work with people, for people and ...*on* people. The pages of this thesis contain the lived stories of the fleshy, corporeal body in trampolines-gymnastics that enjoys, bleeds, grows and hurts. These are human experiences, ones that, at present are institutionally (and socially) problematised as obstacles to overcome often in quite clinical ways. There is little understanding or presence of lived experiences in the limited guidance produced by BG, or indeed other gymnastic institutions.

I suggest sports organisations (e.g., BG) look toward more storied forms of knowledge with the purpose of increasing awareness of gymnasts' lived experiences and making positive changes to the institutional rhetoric which is bound within its traditions. Forums need to be created to discuss the intricate nuanced experiences of life in this, and other gymnastic groups. These platforms should inform not only the institutional demands placed on these young people in terms of adaptations to rules and regulations, but produce ongoing dissemination events about these body matters. BG already host a series of CPD-based workshops around various subjects – child protection, disability, pre-school, elite athletes. Drawing upon the findings of this work, I suggest it might be beneficial to develop other workshops based upon developing autonomous gymnasts, body matters and looking to retirement. Current workshops are aimed at coaches and volunteers, but it might

also be beneficial for gymnasts who are interested in them to attend. These workshops should develop an awareness of these issues and why they are important, and implement guided tasks to inform debates about how we might implement change in our own clubs to move forward. There is the real possibility for impact and change as a result of this ethnographic study, if the governing body were to adopt its findings and recommendations into their policy making and/or coach education programmes.

Being in the field: Reflections on ethnography

Amongst all of the methodological guidance on 'doing' ethnographic work there are few accounts of what it is like to be on the ethnographic playing field, especially in sport and exercise contexts. In order to promote the growing methodological repertoire in sport research, I reflexively draw upon my own nuanced experiences of doing ethnographic work and highlight how this type of research can develop our understanding of individuals' sporting lives and experiences.

Most methodological texts outlining what ethnographic work is and how it might be done, approach their discussion from the notion that the researcher will be an 'outsider', someone who has never met the group which will become the focus of their work. For example, Krane and Baird (2005) highlight the processes of 'gaining entry' and 'fitting in'. However, this was not the case here; I knew this trampoline group and its members prior to the conception of this research idea. In many ways this was an advantageous position to be in. I did not have to experience what I imagine are difficulties trying to gain access to an unknown group and fit in. Actually, once formal access to the group was achieved (see chapter three, p.103) the research progressed quickly. Having insider knowledge, I was privy to the 'who's who' of trampoline experiences. For instance, I knew how long each of these gymnasts had been in this group, what their background was before they arrived and

who had selected and recruited them. I was also aware of particular stories which were of interest to this research. For example, I knew Amy, Georgia and Sophie, had and were still struggling with ideas about what their body was and how to manage it. Needless to say, I certainly had an insider awareness of what experiences were housed within this group at the outset of this research, although other stories certainly emerged that were unexpected.

However, my insider position within this group certainly did not provide me with a 'plain-sailing breeze'. My time in this group was riddled with challenges and tensions, many of which were extenuated by my insider knowledge and/or coaching role. I approach my discussion of these challenges and tensions from two platforms - practical challenges of doing ethnographic work and my own personal story of being in the field, both of which I hope will inform others' ideas about what ethnography is and how they might do it.

Observing logistical nightmares

I refer to the practical challenges of this work as 'logistical nightmares' because, at times, my dual role in the field led to difficulties in the ways I was attempting to effectively collect observational notes in the field⁶². Being an insider and a participant-observer with an essential role in the day-to-day running of each training session, I felt at times it was 'impossible to capture everything' (21th January 2012). The problem here was, as the young inexperienced researcher, I wanted to capture *everything*, almost scared that I would miss something essential to my research. Having discussed my concerns with members of the supervisory team, I soon came to understand that it is okay not to capture absolutely *everything*; I had taken guidance given by particular research guides too literally. I came to accept that I could not be in two places at once, both fulfilling my coaching and research

⁶² Other data collection methods (i.e. interviews, focus groups and collating diary extracts) were less challenging because they took place at times where my role in interactions was predominantly researcher-based.

role and the prolonged nature of this study would enable me to build a full picture of this trampoline group full of rich, descriptive detail. Instead I became more selective in my observations, initially honing in on particular senses (Sparkes, 2008). I aimed to answer the questions 'what do I see?', 'what do I hear?', 'what do I feel?', and 'what do I smell?' In taking this approach, I also came to realise that I had been complacent or certainly naïve in assuming that others (outsiders) would understand what it was like to be in this group which had become engrained into my daily life and who I was. The smell of the sports hall, the coldness of the air in winter and the stuffy suffocating thickness of it in the summer were already 'normal' for me. I knew what people bouncing on trampolines sounded like. I knew if a screw had fallen out on a spotting deck or if somebody had stopped bouncing through my normalised understanding of what a trampoline hall sounded like. Focusing and honing in on these intricacies in early observations allowed me to embed rich detail into subsequent observations.

As the research developed and areas of interest emerged, more content focused questions guided observations. For example, 'what is a cutie performance?', 'how do gymnasts experience their first competition?'. Naturally, within the complexities and messiness of human lives, unexpected 'incidents' quite frequently occurred and were also reported upon (e.g., Michael's injury – see chapter seven, p.256), but I was in a much better position to recall and record these having gone through earlier processes of learning how to write observational notes. In the early stages of the research, I experimented with all types of techniques on how to record observational data – taking the research journal into the training hall, using a dictaphone, jotting in a small notepad, but all of these items attracted the attention of gymnasts who were inquisitive about what I was writing or 'doing', particularly when speaking into a small grey box (dictaphone). These research tools

distracted from the day-to-day flow of training. Instead I became quite practised at 'making notes', on my hands, on my iPad which was always nearby⁶³, or even on trampoline work sheets or spare paper which I could take away with me. Gymnasts were used to me doing this, as their coach, and even recognised when notes were related to the research. 'What are you writing, is it about us?' (Naomi, 8th October, 2012), or 'what is that word, what does it mean?' (Sarah, 5th April, 2012), frequented my conversations around these notes. Although I was always quite secretive in my answers, keen to protect the anonymity of those I was writing about, gymnasts' acknowledgement of what I was doing certainly reassured me that they were aware that this research was going on and reinforced ideas of ongoing and/or reconfirming ethical consent (McFee, 2010). Perhaps it was the inquisitive nature of these children which also made taking observational notes more challenging here. Parents and coaches (adults) were certainly less likely to quiz me on notes, although they still acknowledged what the purpose of them was.

While observational note taking of training sessions certainly became easier as the research progressed, a remaining challenge was doing this in competition spaces. As a coach in this group, I was able to control the pace and timing of training sessions, enabling me to make notes. For example, in two hour sessions gymnasts normally took a 10 minute break for drinks and replenishment allowing me time to scribble down ideas, thoughts, dialogue and observations. However in competition spaces I had no control over the pace of the day and it was not unusual to not have a lunch break or indeed much time away from the trampolines at all. Thus, I had to rely mainly on my memory and again, any notes that I had made on my hands or the competition programme that I always carried. However, there were a number of competitions in which the club only entered one or two gymnasts

⁶³ Although not club owned, the iPad was frequently used by myself, other coaches and the gymnasts themselves to record their routines or skills on performance analysis software (Coaches Eye).

who were of national level which enabled me to sit in the audience for much of the day and capture the same sensory information (Sparkes, 2008) noted in my early observations of the training hall.

In playing in the observational field of ethnographic work, I had to learn on the job, adapt and adopt practices to cope with the restrictive nature of observing while participating. There is no one way to do ethnographic work. Just like the participants under study, this is something I lived through and experienced. It would be unwise not to review research texts to inform ideas about what ethnography is and how it might be done, but this should be viewed as guidance and considered in relation to the study about to be undertaken. This seems like obvious advice, but in actual practice researchers should expect to have to adapt their collection techniques and be open to adopting new practices. There are few forums on researchers' ethnographic experiences in sport and exercise, but these stories need to be shared to extend our knowledge of research methods and how they might be applied.

Experiencing stories: Personal reflections of being in the field

Drawing upon the work of Pitney and Parker (2009), I note that there are multiple voices weaving in and out of this thesis – my researcher voice, my coaching voice and the voices of the gymnasts, parents and coaches who took part in this work. I also recognise that I exist in the stories of these gymnasts, parents and coaches; I was integral to their lives and experiences as a teacher, manager, friend, colleague and researcher. This relationship was noted early on as a potential challenge within this work, but from ethical and methodological standpoints I feel I have succeeded in managing my dual coach/researcher role. However, these roles did not always exist harmoniously, there were often tensions between these roles, one conflicting with the other and elements of this still remain in the

chapters of this thesis. In chapter seven, for example, I provide an 'adapted extract' from the research journal, highlighting that I have deliberately edited out my own personal experience of gymnasts' lives. The focus of this research was always the gymnasts in this group and how they experienced their trampoline career. I wanted their storied lives to become the focus and to give them a voice through this research. Gymnasts' voices are rarely heard in research, often silenced by traditional designs (see chapter two, p.81). Bringing these voices forward was not only a key part of the ethical and moral grounding of this research design (McFee, 2010) but also essential to the focus of this study (Pitney and Parker, 2009). Thus, removing or editing my voice, or more importantly my coaching voice, out of some extracts was quite important and allowed the gymnasts' stories to emerge more prominently. However, in doing so the nuances of doing ethnographic work have been (partially) lost. In attempting to resurface these ideas, I draw upon three key moments of my time in the field where tensions between researcher and coaching roles emerged. My earlier reflections around the practicalities of collecting observational data (above), although important, are perhaps a little superficial in comparison to these emotive notations.

The first moment I reflect upon is my story⁶⁴ of Michael's catastrophic injury in chapter seven, in which I note that I have omitted certain details from the extract which express my sense of guilt of what had happened to him. Ironically, I use the word guilt although there was no fault here; this was a freak inexplicable accident. As a researcher this was a difficult story to tell; I could not simply remove my emotive lived coaching experience and replace this with a researcher's analytical hat. I was (narratively) connected to the injured gymnast. I felt extremely upset about the incident at the time and even

⁶⁴ I deliberately note that this is 'my story' of his injury, both here and in the previous chapter, as Michael himself had very little memory of what happened in the immediate aftermath of it when I asked him.

reporting on it later in the writing up of this research was difficult and emotional. This was a traumatic incident, not only for Michael, but for those who were there when he broke his leg.

Stories of the injured and ill sporting body are important to tell. They contain important moments of sporting lives in which sporting identities and sporting bodies are tested, sometimes within its limits. As such they have been studied in a myriad of ways (see chapter two, p.67). However, in already having, and continuing to have, a close working relationship with Michael, this was not an easy part of the research; and it almost brought it to halt for a short time. My focus became more on coaching myself, the coaches and other gymnasts who had been present at the event to overcome it, and this comes through in the subsequent fieldnotes taken (see chapter seven, p.256). Effectively this one incident sent ripples through my coaching self and had consequences for my research focus, at least for a short time. On reflection, I think the subsequent focus on how everyone in this trampoline group 'moved on' from this event was important to this research. Ethnographic designs allow this type of emergent work to be undertaken (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), but Michael's injury certainly distracted from the original planned focus, which was not injury at all but '...competition organisation - how does the organisational structure of these competitions impact upon gymnasts experiences?' (July 2nd 2012). I cannot help but wonder if I had simply been a researcher in this group, if I would have just reported on the injury and returned more quickly to the original focus.

The second moment, was a conversation with Joanna's mother about her worrying eating habits and possibly other self-harming behaviours (3rd March 2012, see chapter six, p.238). My reflections at the time illustrate my shock and worry that these types of behaviours might have been going on 'under my nose'.

I'm shocked. I have noticed Jo's weight loss, particularly after Christmas when I commented on it to both her and her mum (see 4th January 2012 entry), but I certainly have never seen any evidence of her self-harming. No cuts or burn marks on her arms, legs, stomach. We see so much of their bodies, it surely would be impossible to miss these signs. Is this going on right under my nose and I haven't been realising it? If it has, I feel as though I have failed. Failed to spot it and failed to stop it. I can't imagine why she would do this to herself.
(Fieldnotes, 3rd March 2012)

Throughout my time in the field and coaching more generally, I never experienced evidence of Joanna, or any other gymnast for that matter, self-harming and that is why I perhaps found some of their stories so difficult to hear and comprehend. Amy and Georgia's control of their bodies, in similar ways, that is, disordered eating, were not as shocking to me, but their stories were also quite hurtful and frustrating as I struggled to understand why these people, for whom I cared (Hardman et al., 2015), would act in these ways. My frustration with stories of the 'I will punish my body until it conforms' narrative certainly shines through some of the focus group data:

RL: What did you have to eat yesterday for example?
Amy: A sandwich.
RL: When you say a sandwich, what do you mean?
Amy: A piece of bread cut in half with ham.
RL: So two pieces of bread...
Amy: Well no, one.
RL: One!
(...)
RL: Butter?
Amy: No, I don't really like it.
RL: Do I need to ask how many pieces of ham?
Amy: One piece of ham.
RL: Ok, well what did you have with it?
Amy: Some orange juice.
RL: Juice?
Amy: Yeah one of those little carton things. [Pause] That's normal for me. Generally no breakfast, well maybe an apple, then a sandwich, and then maybe whatever my mum makes for dinner, but sometimes I don't have that or I just have a bit, it depends what she makes.
RL: But you exercise so much as well, you need to eat.
(Focus group with female gymnasts, 12th July 2012)

As their coach, I was concerned about these gymnasts' attitudes toward their bodies and their long-term health, more so than as a researcher. I have publicised my ethic of caring for those with whom I work and more specifically those in this trampoline group quite openly (Hardman et al., 2015). My ethic of care extends beyond typical duty of care in

response to 'sue culture', and more towards a nurturing framework not all that dissimilar to maternal care. My own gendered experiences of the world and my female body were certainly present in these discussions as well. Although frustrated, I have also battled with my own body challenges in this sport and more widely, especially when I was younger, so I was empathetic or certainly understanding of what these girls were going through. Thus, in these research moments, tensions between my role as researcher and coach, and more specifically my coaching philosophy and how this is embedded in an ethic of care are in contention. Again, I could not simply remove my coaching self from these conversations; I was (partially) responsible for the health and well-being of these girls and felt obliged to advise them on the nutritional value of food and that calories were not a means of restricting diet but calculating the energy they needed to do sport. This advice often seemed to fall on deaf ears, but it was given from a coaching standpoint and not a research position⁶⁵. Nevertheless, these and other storied narratives *the losers*, *the failure* and *the misfit* for example, were difficult to listen to, experience and live through not only because of my closeness to the individual at the centre of these stories, but also the social interactions that surrounded these tales. For example, in the revelation of the source of Imogen's 'mis-fit' narrative (see chapter five, p.190), I note my disappointment with those with whom I worked:

I sat there on the crash mat quite devastated. I was a little shell-shocked by what he had said. I felt so naïve not to have even contemplated that the reason the girls had ostracised Imogen was a physical and verbal deficiency. I felt naïve and disappointed. Disappointed that these girls, who I had known for years, since they were around five years old, could feel and act that way toward someone. I assumed that because she was younger than them, that because she had a speech impairment that they would have been more kind and understanding.
(Fieldnotes, 5th March 2012)

Coaches revealed that they too all felt a bit awkward around Imogen. I found it difficult to fathom how the people with whom I worked could be so callous towards those who did not

⁶⁵ This echoes ethical decisions made early on in the research process, during which it was decided that should ethical/moral concerns arise I would deal with them in my coaching capacity.

fit in. This I did find shocking and unexpected and perhaps this is the naivety of the novice researcher shining through this work. Therein lies the conflict of the coach/researcher role. Following these types of observations I felt a sense that I should take some action, as a coach with privileged researcher knowledge. However I had to ask myself, 'do I sit back and watch as the researcher and continue to observe?' After all nobody has been hurt or bullied. For Imogen this was business as usual, it was how she experienced the world on a daily basis.

In sum, my coach/researcher role led me into a tangled web of ethical and representational decisions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; McFee 2010). Although I was central to the lives of trampoline-gymnasts in this club as their coach, the focus of the research and my coaching practice was them; their experiences, safety and well-being were paramount at all times. Early on in the research I faced the question 'do I do what coaches do or what a researcher does?'. These two roles became less distinct as the research progressed. Ultimately, I became a privileged coach, simultaneously drawing upon both coaching and research knowledge to make decisions in my coaching practice. My coach/research role was one that was not separated out into times where I took on the persona of a coach and other times a researcher. Instead the coach/ researcher role became integrated as an inherent part of my coaching identity. Thus, during this research, and since its conclusion, my dual role has influenced the practices of my coaching colleagues, the gymnasts with whom we worked and the nature of this trampoline club more generally. Both the coaches and gymnasts in this group became more aware of the underlying, research-based issues in this sport. Focus groups and interviews led them to question particular trampoline practices. For example, gymnasts asked 'why don't we wear leggings now that the rules have changed?' and 'why aren't we allowed to wear different

combinations of uniform if we are a team? Does it really matter if one person has shorts on and others don't? (12th July 2012, focus group with female gymnasts about uniform regulations). Similarly, coaches in the club, myself included, have since considered and questioned day-to-day trampoline practices. As a result of our focus groups discussions, we are acutely aware of the trampoline environment we create and how our own stories and bodies influence and shape our gymnasts' experiences.

My own critical reflections of my practice are a lengthy tale of ambitious plans for change. The crux of these plans are to develop gymnasts' autonomy and positive experiences. Developing a selection and recruitment process that centralises the gymnast will be challenging. However, I am certainly more aware of where the gymnast fits in this process currently and how important it is that they become more involved in the pivotal decision to begin their trampoline career, especially given the nature of the potential body narratives and selves these children may potentially engage with (e.g., my body hurts). Becoming aware of the limited narratives available to trampoline-gymnasts, and the storied experiences that operate within them, has enabled me to guide them toward the preferred, positive narratives identified in this research (e.g., I belong, gymnast-turned-coach). More importantly, I have and continue to consider how we (coaches) might expand the narrative repertoire trampoline-gymnasts, and gymnasts from other gymnastic disciplines, are exposed to. Again, this is a challenging task and one that will take time, but it is a future avenue that I wish to pursue as a coach/researcher (see 'letting stories breathe, p.299).

This research positively impacted on this trampoline group, allowing them to discuss their experiences, voice their concerns and reflexively question why we do things in certain ways. Although the study formally ended in March 2013, its legacy lives on in the stories that have been shared and my new, privileged coaching self.

Directions for future research

This research has made clear contributions to our knowledge and understanding of gymnastic bodies and the body in sporting contexts more generally, but it is not without its limitations. The aims, scope and timescale of this research, although necessary, placed certain restrictions on the ways in which the people in this group were studied. In addition, as with all good research, this work has produced further questions which were unable to be answered in this study. Drawing upon key limitations of this work and the questions it has produced, I hope to guide researchers' directions for future work.

The scope and timescale of this work produced questions about trampoline bodies which could not be fully answered in this research. These questions cover three topic areas, which might be extended to wider gymnastic and sport communities - male bodies, children in sport and retirement from athletic career. Male bodies featured prominently in this research, but they were not an explicit focus, in part echoing the absent male body in research on gymnastics (see chapter two, p.81) and certainly producing unanswered questions. For example, what are male gymnasts' experiences of the pubescent body? Do gymnastic bodies have gender varied longevity in relation to pubescent changes and experiences? What are male gymnasts' experiences of gender negotiation in front and back stage regions? Many of these questions derived from my own gendered experience and role in the world. These young male gymnasts were unsurprisingly not forthcoming in telling their female coach, how they experienced their body and its changes (see chapter six, p.231). Therefore, those wishing to approach these questions should consider their research and gendered positioning carefully before proceeding.

The broad focus of this work also produced further questions about children in sport, particularly those in aesthetic sports. Given the concerning types of body narratives

these children and young people engaged in and experienced (see Figure 9) further exploration of children's experiences in sport is needed. This trampoline club was quite liberal in nature, emphasising values of enjoyment, health and social development, but this leaves questions about other, stricter environments and groups. How much autonomy do they have? How are children selected and recruited in other sporting/gymnastic groups? What types of narratives are they exposed to? Which of these do they tend to internalise and act upon? Moreover, this research highlighted concerning storied narratives of adult practices supported by the dominant leotard aesthetic, particularly in young girls. For example, wearing thonged underwear, using sexual innuendos and entering relationships of a sexual nature early in their lives (see chapter six, p.240). The extent to which the '*I have a sexy, desirable body*' narrative is supported or produced within institutional, trampoline discourses or whether it is a product of wider social narratives remains unclear. Few studies have sought to explore these types of practices in sporting contexts, yet the sexualised body in children is a contemporary social concern (Papadopoulos, 2010). From this work, we must ask, do sporting practices encourage the sexualisation of young girls? Do children learn sexualised, adult practices from sport?

As well as particular groups of participants, this work also highlighted questions surrounding particular career phases. Trampoline-gymnasts' experiences of retirement were not within the aims or scope of this research, although this career phase is acknowledged in Figures 8 and 9. Instead, gymnasts approach to retirement was explored, revealing a focus on positive retirement narratives as a source of identifying preferred future selves and identities. Moreover, the process of looking to retire was a prolonged period in gymnasts' lives, one that was considered and questioned. Thus, the findings of this research provide a contrast to earlier work on elite gymnasts which reports bodies in

chaos, revelling in a loss of control (Warriner and Lavelle, 2008). There is a difference in the level of competition here, but there is the possibility that lessons might be learned from other gymnastic disciplines and other sporting identities on positive retirement. Perhaps positive narratives of retirement were not available to the gymnasts in Warriner and Lavelle's (2008) study. Researchers should look to not only explore gymnasts' experiences of retirement across various gymnastic disciplines, and other aesthetic sports, to identify potential narrative resources for these athletes to draw and act upon. There might be scope for these narratives to be disseminated to athletes through governing body workshops aimed at coaches and gymnasts considering retirement to encourage an array of positive exit pathways (see below).

In addition to questions raised about gymnasts, this research also identifies those who are integral to their lives as worthy sources of study. Both coaches and parents were central to these gymnasts' sporting experiences, just as they are in most children's sporting lives (Malina, 2009). Future work might look to follow childrens'/athletes' storied lives more closely alongside that of their coach(es) and/or parent(s). As the coach/researcher who was immersed in this group and the wider trampoline community, I was able to make connections between gymnasts and their parents and coaches. For example, when gymnasts identified a perceived judgement from their parents, I was able to shift the focus of inquiry to parents (see chapter six, p.216). A study focusing more closely on this link might produce a more in-depth picture of the ways in which parents support or pressurise their children in sport, and ultimately draw conclusions about the optimal role parents should play. Given the sensationalising of the overzealous gymnastic parent in the 1990s (Ryan, 1996; Sey, 2008) there have been few studies that have closely examined this relationship in gymnastic settings. Some studies have emerged looking at the gendered

behaviours of parents toward their children's sport (Wuerth et al., 2004) but these are becoming outdated; behaviours change and need further exploration. Similarly, the prominence of coaches and the gymnast-turned-coach narrative in this research suggests that this sporting relationship is another avenue worthy of further exploration. Researchers should look to explore the influence coaches have on their athletes (as noted in chapter five). How do coaches aid body construction? How do they support or work against institutional discourses and/or social narratives? Do coaches' narratives (i.e. *giving something back*, see chapter seven, p.264) inform ideas for athletes' possible future selves and identities?

Finally, in this chapter I have outlined a model of embodied sporting careers and how this might be used to understand individual's embodied career in sport. I encourage future researchers to apply and adapt this model to inform other nuanced accounts of the lived body in sport, utilising ethnographic or longitudinal designs. Moreover, I have highlighted the idea of letting stories breathe (Frank, 2010). Researchers should look to intervention-based studies that utilise storied knowledge they have obtained in their work. Expanding the narrative repertoire available to these and other athletes is likely to produce change and subsequent prolonged and healthy participation in this and other sports.

Final reflections

In my closing thoughts on this thesis and the research processes that have led to its creation, I return to and reflect upon the aim and objectives of this ethnography and also the judgement criteria set out in chapter three (see section on 'Judgement criteria for qualitative research').

The aim of the research was to explore the embodied lives of trampoline-gymnasts in one trampoline club. The underlying objectives associated with this aim were to a) understand how trampoline-gymnasts (re)construct and perform their embodied identity over their career, b) form ideas of how relationships with others (e.g., coaches and parents) support these constructions, c) explore the consequences of constructing a trampoline body, d) explore how gymnasts' storied lives are narratively constructed and understood, and e) enable trampoline-gymnasts' stories and voices to be heard. This aim and objectives have been achieved through the narrative approach taken. Close attention to gymnasts' stories and storied lives, through a combination of interactionist and embodied narrative lenses, has revealed how trampoline bodies, selves and identities are narratively constructed, understood and experienced over time. Social actors (e.g., coaches, parents, other gymnasts) and the narratives they produce in their own storied lives are instrumental in the (re)construction of trampoline bodies. Coaches, parents and gymnasts' bodies perform and tell stories which, in turn, inform trampoline-gymnasts' ideas of their own bodies, selves and identities (Frank, 1995). Constructing trampoline bodies and identities results in a sense of belonging, long-lasting friendships and working relationships. Moreover, these young people develop a sense of accomplishment and awareness of their body through embodied sensations of flight and movement on the trampoline. However, this body has concerning issues. Trampoline-gymnasts' mirroring and disciplined bodies produce narrow

identities; they have little autonomy in making decisions about their sporting lives, the bodies they construct and the way their bodies are judged. Gymnasts' stories of their lives, and the narratives within them, have been presented in this thesis, giving them a rarely heard voice. These stories have the potential to become a platform for change if they are allowed to 'breathe'.

Earlier in this thesis, I highlighted a set of judgement criteria which might be used to determine the quality of this work. To briefly re-cap this eight point criteria was – a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical soundness and meaningful coherence (Richardson, 2000; Tracy, 2010). As I explained then, I feel that this thesis meets all of these criteria in some way. Not only has this research met its aim and objectives, but it has engaged with many topics that are timely and echo wider social concerns, for example young people's autonomy, issues of puberty in sport and (positive) ageing. It has contributed to our knowledge of the social world, the socially constructed corporeal body and in the gymnastic body in particular. The ethical research design used was rigorous and complementary combinations of theoretical constructs have been used to make sense of individuals' experiences, producing thick descriptive detail of their lives. As part of this design, I have brought the rarely heard voices of these trampoline-gymnasts to life, utilising creative non-fictions, modified realist tales and my own confessional tale (see chapter three, p.122). I hope this has been engaging for the reader and allowed them to delve into a world that they might not have been exposed to.

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APPENDICES

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| Appendix A | Letter to the club's Vice Chair, Secretary and two Welfare Officers asking for consent |
| Appendix B | Newsletter |
| Appendix C | Profiles of participants |
| Appendix D | Extract from research journal |
| Appendix E | Examples of interview schedules |
| Appendix F | Examples of analytical processes |
| Appendix G | Overarching organisation of the analysis/findings. |
| Appendix H | Informed consent packs |
| Appendix I | Extract from the FIG code of points |

Appendix A: Letter to gatekeepers

Dated: 3rd November 2011

Dear Lisa,

As you know I am currently studying for a research degree (PhD) at University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC). As part of my research I am looking to explore the experiences of trampoline-gymnasts and how taking part in trampoline-gymnastics helps them form a sense of who they are and how this changes over time, if at all.

In order to do this I would like to undertake an 18 month ethnographic study in our club. Ethnographic studies are quite broad in the ways in which information is collected, but it is expected that this one will involve me observing and talking to our club gymnasts, parents and coaches and maybe even those from other clubs at times and collating club documents. Observations will only be recorded in note format, after each session and/or competition. There will not be any visual recording equipment in the hall, although a dictaphone might be used to record my own voice to ensure that my notes are accurate and as full as possible. Interviews and focus groups (group conversations about a particular topic) with gymnasts, coaches and parents are also likely to take place, although not in club time. In addition, extracts may be taken from gymnasts training diaries if the thoughts and feelings written in them might be useful to this research. Similarly, gymnasts and/or coaches may be asked to write their thoughts on a particular topic to aid the research. Any additional forms of data collection that are not mentioned here, will be discussed with you verbally before they are implemented.

No one in the club will take part in any stage of the study without first agreeing. Information sheets and consent forms (see attached) will be given to all gymnasts, coaches and their parents before observations begin. Those that take part in interviews and focus groups will be required to give additional consent. All those under the age of 18 years old will be required to get the permission of their parent(s) to take part.

The results of the study are likely to be published in the public domain, in an academic journal or book. However the names of all those who take part and people they mention will be removed and replaced. The name 'Cardiff Academy of Trampoline Gymnastics' and any of the abbreviations we use for it will also be removed and replaced. No one will know that this club and its members took part in this research.

I do not foresee any realistic potential for harm of the club or its members if you choose to allow me to undertake this project in our club. All potential issues have been thoroughly discussed and considered among the research team at UWIC. Ethical approval for this research, in which any potential issues have been highlighted and steps put in place to limit or eradicate them, has been sought and granted by the university ethics committee. The research will also not affect my ability to coach as all research-related activities will take place outside of club time. I propose that this is a useful opportunity for our gymnasts to reflect on their time in sport, and for us, as a club to become more

progressive and sensitive to the needs of our gymnasts, by understanding their experiences.

For the research to go ahead, I need you to reply to me in writing as soon as possible, stating that you are happy for the research to go ahead. This can be given to me directly or emailed (see below).

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor at UWIC, Dr. Carly Stewart (see below).

Best Wishes

Rhiannon

Rhiannon Lord (Principal researcher)

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Dr. Carly Stewart (Supervisor)

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Appendix B: Club newsletter

[Club logo removed.]

Dear Parent/Guardian/Club member,

Newsletter Date: 14/11/2011

There are a number of notices we'd like to inform you about, all of which have been posted on our Facebook group page.

Club Meeting 7th November

Thank you to all those that attended the meeting last week, it was very productive and the following points were raised:

- The club will aim to compete at least three of the four regional grading next year. they are scheduled for January, April, June and October. Dates and venues will be released as soon as possible.
- In addition the club will also look to have a presence at Welsh Nationals in December 2012. Club members are invited to attend this competition this in year in preparation for this.
- From the new year, the club will be aiming to provide all communications in electronic formats (text, email and Facebook). Paper newsletters will not be produced from January 2012.
- From next month, Rhiannon will be carrying out a research project which is due to last 18 months.
 - The project is part of her PhD study with UWIC. She is looking to understand gymnasts experiences of trampolining.
 - Everyone will have now received a participation information sheet and consent form which you must sign before you can take part. All those under the age of 18 years old will need their parents to sign to say its okay for them to take part.
 - Can you please return all forms to Rhiannon before **21st November** so that she can start the project. If you need replacement sheets and forms ask Rhiannon.
 - The main question raised about the project in the meeting was 'if we agree to take part in the observations, do we have to take part in the interviews and focus groups which will be outside of club time?'. The answer is, no, not if you don't want to. If you get asked but don't want to take part just let her know.
 - If you have any further questions about the project please ask her, or use the contact details on the bottom of the information sheet, preferably within the next two weeks.

- The fundraising committee are looking to organise a race night early in the new year.
- With the expectation that there will be a increase in club members in the new year, the club is looking to organise an overnight team building in the summer months in place of the usual activities.
- Anyone looking to help out with fundraising or organisation in the club should contact Rhiannon, Nikki Matthews or Jenny Stone
- Club officer positions has been appointed and confirmed for this year (2011/2012). These will be revisited before the new membership year (September 2012).

Club trip - Welsh National Championships 2011

With the club's focus on getting more of our gymnasts to Welsh Nationals, we would like as many of you as possible to attend this year's competition. It is being held at WIS (Sophia Gardens) on 11th December. Lance Stephens will be competing in this event at 11.30am, so it would be nice if you were there to support him. This is a great opportunity to see FIG A and B gymnasts competing and look at the level you would need to achieve to enter. Coaches will be at the event by 10.30am. However, younger members will need parental supervision.

Club Fundraising - Christmas raffle tickets

Raffle tickets have been distributed to all club members of the last two weeks. Each member is expected to sell 10 tickets (£1 each). However, if you can sell more please ask one of the coaches for another book. We also need your support in putting together the Christmas hamper. please can you donate hamper products (Christmas pudding, chocolates, wine, etc.) and return raffle ticket stubs and money raised on or before **16th December**.

Competition on 22nd January 2012 @ Maesteg Sports Centre - Deadline for entry 16th DECEMBER

The next competition will be on 22nd January 2012 at Maesteg Sports Centre. Due to the Christmas period, the deadline for entries will be **Friday 16th December**. To enter you need to pay £7 (cash, cheque or bank transfer) and tell us your date of birth, ASAP.

A new trampoline technical committee is being elected at the moment and this has resulted in a new competition organiser. Hopefully this will not impact us too much, but we will let you know if there are any changes.

Christmas social and annual Club presentation night - Tuesday 20th December

This year's Christmas social will take place at Cardiff's Winter Wonderland and is free for all club members. Parents and family members are welcome to join us, but will have to pay their skating fee. For those that just want to watch there is a refreshments area. If you haven't already done so, you need to confirm that you will be attending with Rhiannon before **Friday 16th December**. Coaches have limited places in their cars, therefore we ask that you try to arrange transport into the town centre among each other first. We will be meeting on the museum steps at 5pm for a 5.30 skating slot. The session will last an hour and we will spend a further 30 minutes or so at Winter Wonderland to

allow members to 'explore'. Gymnasts will need to be back at Pentwyn Leisure Centre by 7.30pm for the club's annual presentation evening. Food and soft drinks will be provided and the bar will be open for parents (alcohol will not be free!). Votes for 'Club person of the year' need to be given to Rhiannon or Jenna before **16th December**.

It's been a great year, we hope you can join us to celebrate,
Cardiff Academy of Trampoline Gymnastics

Appendix C: Participant profiles

Each profile title provides the reader with the gymnast/coach's age, position within the club and/or national competition structure over the course of the research. The profiles extend upon this key information, providing information on the individual to date (2015). Parents and siblings who feature in the research have been highlighted in **bold** to enable connections to be made between individuals.

Erin, aged 9-10 years old, Levels I-F

Erin joined the club in July 2012, aged 9 years old. She was invited by Rhiannon having participated in recreational classes since 2007. Despite not having a gymnastic background Erin's parents **Steve** and **Trisha** were prominent in club events, both holding places on the club's fundraising committee (2012-2013). Steve later attended a judging course to better understand his daughter's sport, although never formally used the qualification. Elin retired in 2014 unable to cope with a competition restructure and change in coaching staff.

Amy, aged 15-16years old, Levels G-D, Coach

Amy joined the club in 2009 aged 13 years old having been a competitive artistic gymnast and trampoline gymnast at another club. She attended a trial to assess her suitability for the club before coaching staff engaged in negotiations for a club transfer. Neither of her parents, Nina or Nathan were particularly active in the club. They occasionally attended competitions and presentation nights, but Amy preferred them not to attend club events. In 2012 Amy attended a level 1 UKCC coaching course, having become an integral member of the club. Amy is currently retired from competitive trampoline gymnastics, although competes in the UK university structure (BUCS). She has a leading role in the club's coaching staff having completed her level two coaching qualification (2015).

Emma, aged 18-19 years old, Volunteer Coach

A former gymnast of the club for a number of years, Emma continued to help out at the club, although never obtained any formal coaching qualifications. She took small groups of children on the trampoline or for floor exercises and undertook a number of administrative tasks (e.g., ordering club kit, assembling training diaries etc.). She acted as the club's welfare officer (2010-2012) having attended the appropriate courses.

Eva, aged 8-10 years old, Levels I-F

Eva joined the club in July 2012 having attended recreational class since 2009. She was invited to attend club training sessions after being invited by Rhiannon. Eva's mother, **Jade**, was very active in the club taking on leading roles on the fundraising committee and helping club gymnasts with their conditioning exercises. She also supported the club's administrative tasks (2012-2014). Eva still remains in the club (2015).

Georgia, aged 18-19 years old, Levels E-C, Volunteer Coach

Georgia was a member of the club since she was 11 years old, prior to my arrival at the club, along with her sister **Kimberley**. She had experienced a number of coaches and competition restructures during her time at the club. Georgia was an integral member of the club and undertook small coaching tasks in preparation for her UKCC level one course, although she never did so due to financial barriers. She is now retired having married her fiancé (2014) and giving birth to a baby boy (2015).

Kimberley, aged 15 years old, Level G

Kimberley was a member of the club, prior to my arrival at the club, along with her sister **Georgia**. Early in their career, their mother **Lisa** regularly attended club events and competitions, but she became a less frequent face as the girls got older. Kimberley retired from the club in 2012, shortly after the research began, following frustrations with a competition restructure and other interests. Kimberley became pregnant in 2012 (miscarriage) and again in 2012, giving birth to a baby girl in 2013.

Cecilia, aged 16 years old, Level H

Cecilia joined the club in July 2012, along with her sister **Lacy** having participated in recreational classes for a number of years. She only attended for a few months, before retiring, unable to gain acceptable status within the group for competing at a lower than expected level.

Lacy, aged 11 years old, Level G

Lacy joined the club in July 2012, along with her sister **Cecilia**. Their mother **Janet** was very forceful in pursuing places in the club for her daughters, and although Lacy was talented, Cecilia was less of an asset, but the two came as a pair. Consequently, when Cecilia retired shortly after joining (2012), so did Lacy, having become reliant upon her sister's company in training.

Caitlin, aged 11-12 years old, Level G

Caitlin joined the club in 2008 with her friends Sophie, Naomi and Ria, having attended recreational classes for a year or so prior. Caitlin's parents **Brenda** and **James** were frequent faces at the club. Caitlin retired from the club in 2012 following claims of an ongoing back problem.

Abbie, aged 12-13 years old, Level G-E, Volunteer Coach

Abbie was invited to join the club by Rhiannon in 2012. She had been attending recreational classes for a year or so before this. Abbie quickly integrated into the group and progressed well and beyond expectations of the coaches. She quickly began volunteering her time to help run the recreational classes, taking small groups of children to do floor exercises. Abbie is still in the club and is looking to undertake her level one coaching certificate (2015).

Jamie, aged 13-14 years old, Level G-F

Jamie was invited to join the club by Rhiannon in 2012. He had been attending recreational classes for three years prior. Jamie was a very quiet member of the group, although he attended most club events and competitions. Jamie is still a member of the club.

Robbie, aged 12 years old, Level G

Robbie had been a club member prior to my arrival and had been competitively involved in the club since he was eight years old. His sister, **Kirsten**, also attended the club and his father **Peter** was a frequent face. Robbie retired in 2012 after becoming frequently absent for prolonged periods of time. Peter later revealed that he felt 'it wasn't cool anymore'.

Kirsten, aged 17 years old, Level E

Kirsten had been a club member for a number of years prior to my arrival. She retired in 2012 due to problems with knee pain when bouncing and wanting to focus on university. She had also had a number of problems coming to terms with the new competition structure implemented in 2010. Unlike others who went to university, Kimberley did not take part in BUCS competitions.

Luke, aged 18-19 years old, Level F-D, Coach

Luke was invited to the club by Rhiannon after demonstrating considerable talent in an adult recreational class in 2010. He quickly became part of the group and progressed quickly through the grading system. Having become an integral part of the group he began volunteering as a coach in recreational sessions and later attended a level one coaching course (2012). Luke is still a member of the club, taking on a leading role in the club's coaching staff having obtained his level two qualification and is still actively competing (2015).

Sarah, aged 6-7 years old, Levels I-G

Sarah was invited to the club in 2012 by Rhiannon having taken part in recreational classes for a year. Her mother **Katherine** was a prominent member of the fundraising committee and a frequent face at competitions and club events. Sarah retired in 2014 to pursue her athletic talents in cheerleading and athletics.

Hannah, aged 10-11 years old, Level I-F

Hannah was invited to the club in July 2012 by Rhiannon having taken part in recreational classes for two years. Although a prominent member of the club, her parents were not very involved in club life and often she would rely on transport from other members parent to and from training and club events. Hannah is still a member of the club (2015).

Yasmin, aged 9-10 years old, Level G-F

Yasmin became a club member in 2008, but found it difficult to fit in despite demonstrating an excellent technical ability on the trampoline. She retired in 2012 as her family relocated back to Africa. Although her father, Mark, informed Rhiannon of the impending move, she just suddenly stopped attending sessions.

Michael, aged 12-14 years old, Levels H-F

Michael became a member of the club in 2010, having attended recreational classes for a number of years. Following a catastrophic injury in 2012 (broken femur) Michael quickly returned to the club and began competing again. He is still a member of the club, actively competing and is looking to become a coach as soon as a level one coaching course is available in the local area (2015).

Charlotte, aged 9-11 years old, Level G-F

Charlotte was invited to the club in July 2012 having taken part in recreational classes for two years prior. She was a very able gymnast but found it difficult to fit in and had problems competing in front of others. Her mother **Connie** could be quite vocal at competitions when things did not go in Charlotte's favour. Charlotte retired in 2014 giving no reason, she simply stopped coming.

Elin, aged 9-11 years old, Level 1-F

Elin was invited to the club in July 2012 having taken part in recreational classes for a number of years. She was a very able gymnast in the beginning, progressing quickly, but following early success in competition, found level F incredibly difficult and her progress slowed. Her mother **Nancy**, a P.E. teacher, was very active in the club, taking on a leading role on the fundraising committee and taking groups of gymnasts for conditioning sessions. Elin is still an active gymnast in the club (2015).

Natalie, aged 9 years old, Level I

Natalie was invited to the club in 2012 having excelled in her recreational group. She did not take part in the research long, but is still a member of the club to date (2015).

Amelia, aged 8 years old, Level I

Amelia joined the club in 2012 having been invited by Rhiannon and taking part in recreational classes for a year. She progressed quickly and fitted in well. She left the club in 2014 due to a family relocation to Australia. She has since begun trampoline-gymnastics again and is currently getting to grips with the Australian structure (2015).

Ryan, aged 9-10 years old, Level I-G

Ryan was invited to the club in 2012 by Rhiannon. He progressed relatively quickly given his age. His mother was very prominent in the club, becoming involved in fundraising activities and always attending club events. Ryan has recently returned to competitive trampoline-gymnastics following a catastrophic injury (broken radius and ulna) in 2014.

Claire, aged 11 years old, Level G

Claire was with the club for only a short time. She was invited to the club in 2012 by Rhiannon having excelled in recreational classes. However she was not able to fully commit to training and competitions and subsequently retired in the same year, just four months after she started. She did not return to recreational trampoline classes.

Joanna, aged 11-13 years old, Level G-F, Volunteer Coach

Joanna was invited to the club in July 2012 and found it initially very difficult to fit in. Her competition debut was delayed due to family holidays and school commitments. However she eventually became a central member of the group and began volunteering in recreational classes. Joanna retired from competitive trampoline-gymnastics in 2014 following changes to coaching staff.

Ella, aged 12-13 years old, Level G-F

Ella had been a member of the club for two years when the research commenced in 2012. She made slow progress and often missed training due to school commitments. Ella is still a member of the club and maintains similar commitment patterns.

Imogen, aged 8-10 years old, Level I-G

Imogen, **Ella's** younger sister, joined the club in 2012. She made slow progress in the competition structure, despite the coaches expectations that she would be successful. Imogen found it difficult to fit into the group. She had a speech impediment due to a cleft

lip and pallet. Imogen replied heavily on Ella to communicate with other member and for company in training. She retired in 2014 following a change in coaching staff.

Hywel, aged 6 years old, Level I

Hywel was not involved in the research for very long. He was invited to the club in July 2012 having demonstrated great potential in recreational classes. Yet he found it difficult to fit into the group as there were no boys of his age. Despite his mum, Michelle, trying to persuade him otherwise, he retired after just three months in the group. He did not return to recreational trampoline-gymnastics.

Lola, aged 8-10 years old, Level I-G

Lola was **Hywel's** sister and had been a member of the club since 2010. She progressed quickly and was exceptionally small for her age, giving her the 'cute' factor. Lola retired from the group in 2012 giving no reason for her exit.

Carrie, aged 20-21 years old, Level G-E, Coach

Carrie came to the club in 2010 having relocated to attend university. She was a level one coach on arrival and later obtained her level two qualification (2012) providing coaching staff with support when required. Carrie drifted to other clubs in 2012 due to friendships formed with other coaches in the local area. She still competes and coaches (2015) although not for the club in this research.

Ian, aged 14 years old, Level G

Ian was invited to the club in 2012 having attended recreational classes for six months, in which he progressed exceptionally quickly. Yet he was never really able to master skills to the level required for competitive trampoline-gymnastics. Although he could perform them, they were 'messy'. He retired from competitive trampoline-gymnastics in 2012 to pursue his interests in rugby.

Jessica, aged 19-21 years old, Coach

Jessica was a former member of the club and retired from competitive trampoline-gymnastic following the national competition restructure in 2009. However, she became a level one trampoline coach in 2012 and later completed her level two course in 2012. While she did not compete for this club during this research she did compete for her university in the BUCS competitive structure. Jessica retired from coaching in 2014.

Lewis, aged 9 years old, Level I-G

Lewis was invited to the club in 2012 and progressed very quickly. His parents had a gymnastic background and his brother competed in male artistic gymnastic for Wales and Great Britain. Thus a lot of the family time was dedicated to Lewis' brother and his training. Lewis excelled in this group, but drifted away in 2013. Eventually failing to come back to training, with not reason cited.

Sophie, aged 11-13 years old, Level G, Volunteer Coach

Sophie had been a member of the club since 2008 having been invited along with her friends **Caitlin, Naomi and Ria**. Her mother, **Christina**, was a frequent face among the parents attending all competitions and club events, helping out where possible. Having suffered a catastrophic injury in 2012, Sophie never really fully recovered; she stopped progressing. However, she did enjoy volunteering in recreational classes and hoped to

become a coach when she was old enough. Sophie formally retired in 2014, but still helped out with recreational sessions on a Saturday morning (2015).

Leon, aged 11-13 years old, Levels E-C, Volunteer Coach

Leon had been a member of the club since 2008. He was prominent and central character in the club. He was the youngest national performer the club had ever had and his early and quick progression through the national structure had resulted in the club struggling to meet his training needs. Therefore he became a member of two clubs, myself and another coach Martin sharing the role of his coach. His grandmother and mother were frequent faces at competitions and events, but did not feature prominently in this research. Having become such a central member of the group he too became a volunteer coach, helping out in recreational classes, utilising opportunities to get extra training. Leon still competes at national level (2015).

Naomi, aged 11-12 years old, Level G-F, Volunteer Coach

Naomi had been a member of the club since 2008 along with her sister **Ria**. She progressed quickly, but faced challenges when converting to a new competition structure in 2010. Her mother was a frequent face at most club events and supported the club where possible. Having become a central member of the group she began volunteering for the club, aiding coaches in recreational sessions. However, following a competition restructure in 2013, she retired (2014) and stopped volunteering.

Ria, aged 9-11 years old, Level G-E

Ria had been a member of the club since 2008, along with her sister Naomi. Her progression was quick and beyond the level of her sister, which caused some friction toward the end of this research. However, in 2012 Ria, a diagnosed coeliac, became ill having consumed gluten. Consequently she developed a fear of eating and became too unwell to continue her training. She later returned in 2014 and is still competing for the club (2015).

Sarina, aged 14 years old, Level G

Sarina joined the club in 2012 and proved to progress at a disappointingly slow pace. She plodded along in the group and was frequently absent from the group due to school commitments. She is still a member of the club, although will retire later this year (2015) to focus on her university career.

Numeric profiles of participants

A total of 36 gymnasts took part in this research. However these 36 gymnasts were not at the club at the same time. Of the 16 original members⁶⁶ at the outset of the research, 3 retired in early 2012 (Kimberley, Robbie and Kirsten). Already low on numbers the club recruited six new members in the first half of 2012 (Abbie, Sarah, Ryan, Jamie, Imogen and Ian). With the arrival of new coaching staff (Jessica) a further ten were recruited in July 2012⁶⁷. However four of these new recruits retired after a short time in the club (Hywel, Claire, Cecilia and Lacy). Consequently another four gymnasts were recruited in 2012 (Lewis, Sarina, Natalie and Amelia).

⁶⁶ Amy, Georgia, Kimberley, Caitlin, Robbie, Kirsten, Luke, Yasmin, Michael, Ella, Carrie, Sophie, Leon, Naomi and Ria were all members of the club prior to this research commencing.

⁶⁷ Erin, Eva, Cecilia, Lacy, Hannah, Charlotte, Elin, Joanna, Hywel and Claire were recruited in July 2012.

Age of participants who completed the project

| Completing Female (N= 22) Aged 6-21years old | At the beginning⁶⁸ | At the end⁶⁹ |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Average | 11 years old | 12 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | 9 years old | 10 years old |
| Median (Middle) | 9.5 years old | 11 years old |

| Completing Male (N= 7) Aged 9-19 years old | At the beginning | At the end |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Average | 12 years old | 13 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | 9 years old | 14 years old |
| Median (Middle) | 12 years old | 14 years old |

| Total Completing (N=29) Aged 6-21years old | At the beginning | At the end |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Average | 11 years old | 11 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | 9 years old | 10 years old |
| Median (Middle) | 11 years old | 11 years old |

⁶⁸ Age when entering the project. Note: Gymnasts could start the project at any time during the 18 month data collection period.

⁶⁹ Age at the end of the project

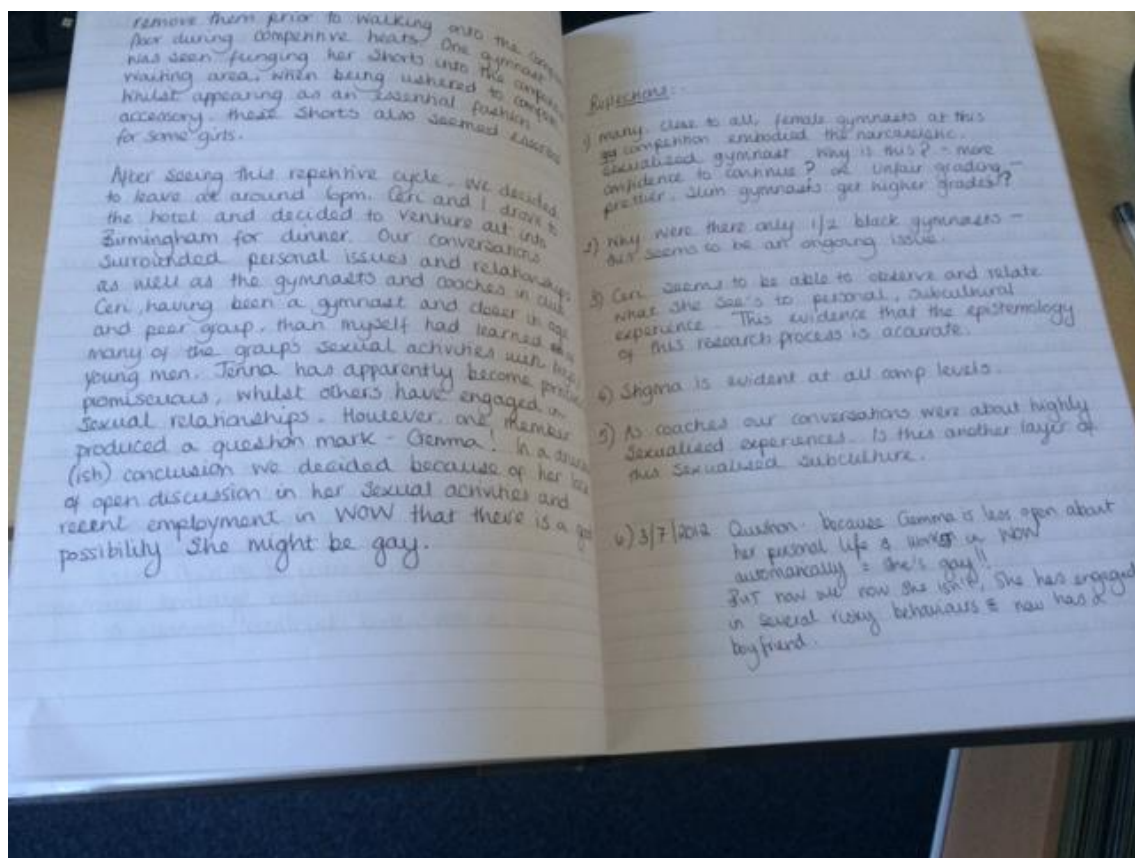
Age of retirement from trampoline-gymnastics (during data collection period)

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Retired Female (N= 5) Aged 11-17 years old | |
| Average | 12 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | 11 years old |
| Median (Middle) | 16 years old |

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Retired Male (N= 2) Aged 6-12 years old | |
| Average | 9 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | - |
| Median (Middle) | - |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Total Retired (N=7) Aged 6-17 years old | |
| Average | 13 years old |
| Mode (Most common) | 11 years old |
| Median (Middle) | 12 years old |

Appendix D: Extract from research journal



Appendix E: Examples of interview schedules

Interview Schedule for parents interviews

Participants: Jade, Nancy, Trish and Steve

Venue/ appointment times: PLC bar (Jade 22nd 1pm, Trisha and Steve 23rd 6pm, Nancy 25th 10am)

Topic: Parents of gymnasts. What they think of their child competing in this sport.

-Thanks for giving up your time

-Remind them they will be recorded, but anonymity will be maintained

How old was your child when they started trampolining?

- (and gymnastics if applicable)
- Was this good/bad?

How did they get into trampolining (before club)?

- Why trampolining?
- Why not other sports?
- How did they get into a club?

How long had they been bouncing before coming into club?

- Why the interest in club sport?
- Has this been a good thing?
- Have there been a negatives?

How do you feel about your child competing in trampolining and being part of a club?

- Dedicated training/time impact on your life?
- Positive/negative experiences?

Interview schedule for focus group with (female) coaches

Participants: Jessica, Emma, Cassie

Date/Venue: PLC Boardroom 10/07/12

Topic title: Coaching trampoline gymnasts: Identities, socialisation, uniforms and handling.

-Thanks for giving up your time

-Remind them they will be recorded, but anonymity will be maintained

1. Experiences of becoming coaches

- -(Keeping in mind, all have been or are still competing gymnasts) Are you a coach or a gymnast?
- -What are your experiences of becoming a coach and fitting into the coaching role? Do these issues still impact on you now?
- -If you are retired what are your experiences of retirement? What are the effects of retiring/not training etc?
- Explain that I have had a think about some of the issues coaches face when teaching trampoline gymnasts and we are going to talk about these first and then have a discussion about any other issues we face when coaching trampoline gymnasts.

2. Introducing new gymnasts to the group/ Fitting in, why do some people fit in and others don't?

- -How do you think people become integrated into the club?
- -Can you think of anybody that doesn't seem to fit in?
- -Are there gendered differences to fitting in?
- -Specific examples to raise - Isobel Ray, Chloe Luff-Evans

3. Touch and manually handling gymnasts

- -Do you feel comfortable handling children? Both on and off trampoline?
- -Could you foresee any problems if we didn't touch/handle children at all? Would there be an emotional/relationship impact?
- -What are your experiences of 'touch' and or handling as a gymnast/coach?

4. Uniform regulations

- -How do the gymnasts become aware of what uniform/clothing to wear?
- -How do coaches promote/enforce uniform regulations in the club?
- -Is this right/wrong? Do we allow our own discomforts to impact on those we coach?
- -Are there any current trends in the gymnasts in our club/other clubs?
- -What are your experiences of uniform and clothing in the sport? How do others enforce or promote uniform regulations to the gymnasts?

5. Are there any other issues that we, as coaches, come across regularly when coaching trampoline gymnasts?

Interview Schedule for focus group/ interview with female gymnasts

Participants: Amy, Georgia, Joanna

Venue/appointments: PLC bar (Georgia 10th July 3pm; Amy and Joanna 12th July after training)

Title: Body image, problematic eating.

-Thanks for giving up your time

-Remind them they will be recorded, but anonymity will be maintained

1. Can you describe your experiences of your eating patterns in trampolining?

-What did a typical day's nutrition consist of?

-Were there any other weight-control behaviours involved? e.g. laxatives, vomiting, excessive exercise

-Were your parents aware of your weight-control behaviours? How long was it before they noticed? How did it come to their attention?

-Did your coach become aware of your weight-control behaviours? How long was it before they noticed? How did it come to their attention?

-Did you or a family member seek medical help for your weight-control behaviours from a doctor or other practitioner?

-Do these weight-control patterns still exist?

-How did your body feel when you engaged in these eating behaviours? Good/bad. Does it impact on other daily activities or trampolining training?

-What was the impact on people around you - friends, family?

2. WHY did you engage in these weight-control behaviours?

-Are these eating trends directly related to trampolining or are there other outside issues? Do these issues inter-relate with the trampolining subculture?

-Did you experience pressure from someone in particular? Coaches, judges, officials, other gymnasts, friends?

-Did peers or family members encourage you or give you praise when you lost weight? Was this a good feeling or bad?

-Would you say that these are normal behaviours in people of your age? OR in people in this sport?

Interview Schedule for focus group with male gymnasts

Participants: Luke, Leon, Lewis, Jamie

Venue: PLC bar (16th August 2012)

Topic: Male gymnasts' experiences of the sport/uniform

-Thanks for giving up your time

-Remind them they will be recorded, but anonymity will be maintained

How did you join the sport?

As a guy, how do you see the sport? How do your friends perceive it?

- How did you come to be involved
- Is this something you do with your friends from school?
- How you ever been teased for bouncing? Why? What do people say/
 -

How did you feel when you first put on a leotard (and stirrups)?

- Were you expecting to wear a leotard? Was it a shock?
- Do you like wearing it?
- What would you rather wear?
- Why do none of you wear leotards in training?
- How does your body feel when you move in a leotard?
- How do you feel about wearing your uniform now?

Appendix F: Examples of analytical processes

Narrative thematic analysis/ Structural analysis

| Written piece 'Jess': What is it like to wear a leotard | Notes |
|--|---|
| <p>Basically, I feel naked.</p> <p>You may as well be as there is nothing flattering about a leotard – it clings to all you lumps and bumps whilst the elastic exaggerates it all (especially your bum!) It leaves nothing to the imagination whatsoever.</p> <p>I don't like sitting down in it as I look down and see my stomach rolls, and my legs look huge, and you can see stretch marks and cellulite on the tops of my legs.</p> <p>I once had a skin tag on the top of my inner leg and hated wearing a leotard until I got it removed, as I knew people would see it and be looking and wondering what it was.</p> <p>I felt really uncomfortable having this photo taken because I can see the rolls on my stomach (despite massively breathing in).</p> <p>The worst move is straddle as anybody stood looking up at you has a direct view between your legs. It is also massively unflattering as the leotard sticks to you stomach rolls, which become more visible as you reach forward. And somersaults as your bum is stuck up in the air. Unfortunately, it is at these stages of your routine that photographers love to capture the most.</p> <p>I feel that the crowd, and often the judges even, are more likely to be looking at your body than your trampolining – especially when you know people on the panel / in the crowd that you have regularly heard making comments throughout other people's routines. Whether negative (about somebody being fat, or hairy or having a strange birth mark or skin defect), or positive (about how skinny somebody is but has massive boobs, or an amazing bum), you are there to get judged on your trampolining, not whether you look good in a leotard (more likely not!).</p> | <p>Possible narrative 'I feel naked.'</p> <p>Body matters – sexualisation/exposure of the body through trampoline practices.</p> <p>Emphasis on body/ the way it feels bum, legs, stomach.</p> <p>Mirroring/'perfect' body</p> <p>Body matters – sexualisation/exposure of the body through trampoline practices.</p> <p>Photographers rolls in discomfort? These pictures are there for everyone to see.</p> <p>Judgement of the body – Everyone is looking at me narrative. Not just judges!</p> |

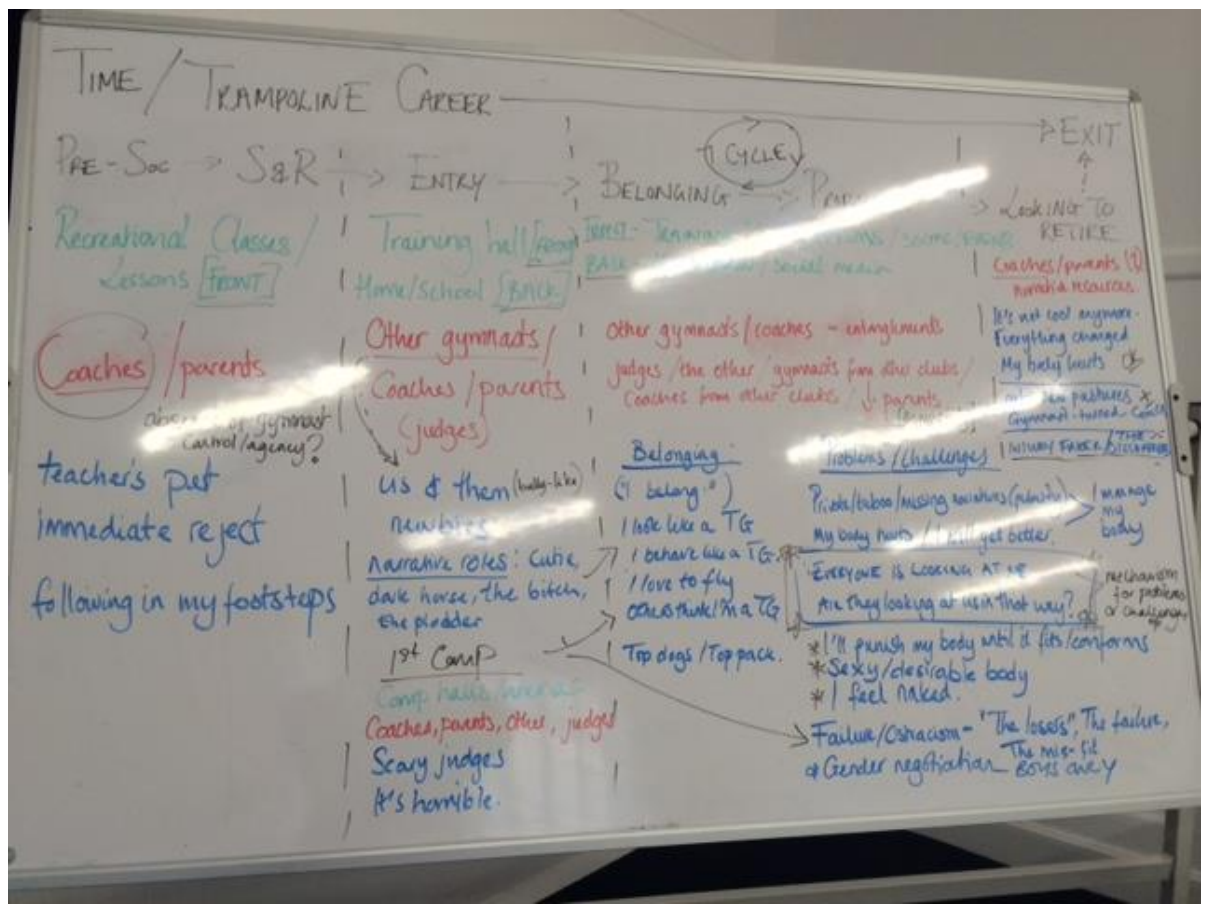
| | |
|--|--|
| <p>You can put shorts on, but they only add about an inch on the side of you[r] leg, and less than half an inch on your inner leg. Recently I have been competing without shorts as I think my legs look longer and it's less elastic going around your waist (my muffin top) and the tops of your legs. I always spend the extra time before competitions making sure I am 'tidy' as you have a strip of material less than 2 inches covering you between your legs, so you actually have no choice if you don't want people to see hair.</p> <p>Another problem I encounter when not wearing shorts is that if you wear knickers underneath the elastic lines are often visible and unflattering, and they often come out as the leotard rises above my hipbone as I bounce. If I don't wear knickers I worry as I struggle with incontinency when trampolining, and am concerned that I could get a wet patch, especially with lighter leotards.</p> | <p>Institutional rules and regs and how they dictate to the body</p> <p>Mirroring/'perfect' body</p> <p>Body matters – managing the body</p> <p>-combination of mirroring body and body/impression management (Frank/Goffman)</p> <p>Mirroring/'perfect' body</p> <p>Body matters –aesthetics and corporeal body matters for not work harmoniously</p> |
|--|--|

Performative analysis

| Fieldnotes 2 nd November: Analytical focus how do gymnasts perform narrative roles identified as 'the bitch'. | Notes |
|---|---|
| <p>Nancy attracted my attention as I was preparing to begin the warm up. I asked Jessica to take over, handing her my list of warm-up exercises. We exchanged niceties before she approached the real purpose of this discussion:</p> <p>Nancy: I'm not sure if you are aware, and I don't want to cause trouble, but I've heard that some of the girls are having problems with one of them, just saying not nice things. Just being a bit bitchy.</p> <p>RL: Oh right, well what's going on?</p> <p>Nancy: Well I don't want to name names, but it's Hannah. Which was a bit surprising, you know, I give her a lift home and help out and she always seems pleasant, but when she gets out of the car, the girls start telling me how she's said they aren't good enough to go to Welsh nationals. It's like she's got a superior attitude, like she's better than them apparently. She tells them when to get off the trampoline and stuff.</p> <p>RL: Ok well I'll speak to the other coaches and then probably pull her in and have a little chat.</p> <p>I returned to the mats where J was perched on top barking orders at the red trampoline to get on with the warm-up she'd set.</p> <p>J: What was that about?</p> <p>RL: Nancy reckons that Hannah is bullying some of the girls, well picking on them a bit about going to nationals.</p> <p>J: Oh for goodness sake, it's so childish.</p> <p>RL: Well they are kids. We'll have to call her in later and have a chat.</p> <p>J: There's always one bitchy one though isn't there. It's just a pain, can't they keep this stuff in the playground. I deal with it all day, I don't want to deal with it here as well.</p> <p>RL: Joys of working with kids.</p> <p>I turned my attention to Hannah. She was slightly taller than the others, and seemed slightly older, more teenage in her years. Her stance was one of superiority as she stood waiting for</p> | <p>Narrative role</p> <p>There's something false then about their front stage performances? And in back stage spaces they change? Nancy: She's above her station.</p> <p>Bitch role learned in the playground/ back stage settings? Or certainly practiced there as well. Is this indicative of wider social narratives of teenage girls then?</p> <p>Performing superior attitude.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>her go, hands on hips, almost impatient and annoyed at having to wait her turn. In contrast, Erin seemed to slump off the trampoline, almost bored with the whole affair. She has progressed a lot slower than Hannah and Elin.</p> <p>RL: Erin! Wakey wakey! I called. You need to be thinking about how this back somersault is going to get tighter otherwise we won't be able to enter you into nationals, not if you can't land it.</p> <p>She nodded and smiled, not filling me with confidence, although she plodded off the mat behind here and began practicing nice tight tuck shapes on the floor.</p> | <p>Plodder's perform their role very differently, almost a laissez-faire attitude to what is going on.</p> |
|--|--|

Appendix G: Overarching organisation of the analysis/findings



Appendix H: Informed consent packs

[Club and university logos removed]

Dear Parent/Guardian/Club member,

It was agreed on 7th November 2011, at CATG's general meeting that the club would allow a 'long-term' research project to be conducted with its members from November 2011, for a period of 18 months. This information pack has been produced to explain the project.

Each pack contains:

- This introductory letter
- An information sheet for parents and members over 18 years old
- An information sheet for children (those under 18 years old)
- Consent forms to be signed by all club members and their parents.
- These packs need to be read, completed and returned to Rhiannon **no later than 21st November 2012**, even if you decide not to take part.

Although information sheets are provided the main things you need to know are:

- The main researcher from UWIC/Cardiff Met will be Rhiannon Lord
- What she will be doing initially is just taking notes on what she see's and hears in training sessions.
- Club members and parents carry on as normal, with no additional tasks or training.
- If Rhiannon asks you to take part in an interview, group conversation or do a piece of writing you will have to sign a separate form, but you don't have to take part in these activities if you don't want to.
- The information recorded is likely to be published in a book, journal, magazine or sent in a report to British Gymnastics.
- Even if you give your consent now, you can withdraw from the project at any time and you don't have to give a reason.

These packs have been prepared with individual families in mind and little slips of paper have been attached to each information sheet/consent form explaining who needs to read what and who needs to fill in which form, as this process can be a little bit confusing. If you have any questions, please ask Rhiannon.

Note for parents: Many parents will find they have also been asked to participate in the project. At this initial stage, this just means when you come in to drop off or collect your child(ren) you may be included in the notes about the session. If at a later time you're asked to take part in an interview or group discussion and you do not want to, that is fine, just say you'd rather not. If you are a parent and do not have a form to fill in as a participant, but would like to take part, please speak to Rhiannon.

If you have any questions, please speak to Rhiannon

Title of the project: The Body, narrative And Identity Construction in Trampoline-Gymnastics

ADULT/PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Background

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of how young people participating in trampoline-gymnastics form ideas about who they are and how this impacts their daily lives.

The research findings will be submitted to Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan university (UWIC) for assessment, with the possibility of further publication.

Your participation in the research project

Why have you been asked to participate?

You/ your child(ren) have been invited to participate in this study because they are in some way involve in trampoline-gymnastics. For example, you participate in it, your child(ren) participate, you are a practising trampoline coach; or you are a judge or official or a combination of these. Therefore you have had experience of the process trampoline-gymnasts go through when developing ideas about who they are. Your experiences are valuable to this research.

What would happen if you/your child agree to take part?

The research project will consist mainly of me observing you/your child in training sessions, competitions and other club events. There will not be any visual recording devices or hidden audio devices involved in this process. After each training session I will just write down what I have seen and heard. You/your child do not have to do anything differently.

You/your child may also be asked to take part in an interview or focus group to discuss things I have seen or heard in training or at competitions. If this happens there are some notes below about what to expect. You/your child do not have to take part in these activities if you do not want to, just tell me when you are asked to attend that you would rather not.

Interviews: I will contact you to make an appointment at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview should last about an hour to 90 minutes. Your interview is likely to be a one-off recorded conversation. However you/your child may be asked to meet again at a later date to follow-up on some of things discussed or to clarify what you meant.

Although the word 'interview' is used, these sessions are just recorded conversations.

Focus group: I will contact you inviting you to a focus group about a particular topic. This should take approximately an hour. This is likely to be a one-off recorded session. However, you may be asked to meet again and clarify or discuss further your comments in the session.

A focus group is just a recorded conversation among a group of people.

Are there any risks?

I do not believe there are any significant risks to you, your child's or the club's integrity if you take part. Any potentially sensitive issues will be dealt with care and tact and I will respect the privacy of all participants.

Your rights

You/your child reserve the right to withdraw from the project or the interviews/focus groups at any time, without giving a reason. Also if you do not want to answer a particular question but would like to remain in the project, please say that is what you would prefer to do and I will move on to another question.

What happens to the results?

Any notes that I make on you or your child will be written up and kept securely locked in a filing cabinet at Cardiff Met/UWIC. All interviews and focus groups that are recorded will be transcribed and securely kept as an electronic file on a password protected PC. The data will be coded, removing all names, but we keep a record of the codes to compare each person's views. We will move any description or names that might identify you.

What happens next?

With this letter you will find an informed consent form for you (and your child) to sign. This should be completed and given back to the research (Rhiannon Lord). This does not effect your right to withdraw.

How we protect your privacy?

The researcher working on the study will respect you/your child's privacy. We have taken careful steps to make sure that you/your child cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

However there is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Whilst every step will be taken to protect your identity (anonymity), it might be possible that confidentiality will be broken, should you/your child disclose something which I might legally need to report on.

All information about you/your child will be stored securely. We will keep the consent forms and assent forms for 10 years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Met/UWIC.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, using the email address below.

Rhiannon Lord

cstewart@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Title of the project: The Body, narrative And Identity Construction in Trampoline-Gymnastics

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET

Why you?

I am very interested in finding out about how you feel about being a trampolinist.

What will happen?

For most of the project I will just write notes about what I see and hear at your training sessions and competitions in a note book. There will be no cameras recording you.

Do you have to?

No you don't. No one is forcing you. And if you start and decide you don't want to carry on that's fine. There's no problem, just tell me.

What do I do?

After we've had the discussion we will write up a report on what we talked about. The report will be given to the university and might get printed in a magazine or university book. If we do this, we won't say that you took part. No one will know it is you or your family.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions, just ask. You can ask yourself or get your mum or your dad to ask me.

Rhiannon Lord

cstewart@cardiffmet.ac.uk

UWIC PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that the participation of my child(ren) is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with UWIC, and the trampoline club, and or our legal rights, will not be affected.
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my child(ren) will not be identified.
5. I agree for my child(ren) to take part in the project.

☐☐☐☐☐

Name of Child(ren)

Name of Parent / Guardian

Signature of Parent / Guardian

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

UWIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming .

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

3. I also understand that if this happens, my relationships with the trampoline club, UWIC, and my legal rights, will not be affected.

☐

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that I will not be identified.

☐

5. I agree to take part in this part of the project.

☐

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of person taking consent:

Signature of person taking consent :

Date


* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.


CHILD'S ASSENT FORM


Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming

Please fill this form by ticking the face by each question that you think is best for you.

If you agree, tick this face 

If you aren't sure, tick this face 

If you disagree, tick this face 

I understand the project and I know what will happen

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered

I know I can stop at any time and that it will be OK

I know that information about me might go into a book or magazine, but nobody will ever know that it's me

I am happy to be recorded if we have a discussion

Your Name :

Date

Your Signature

Name of person taking consent:

Signature of person taking consent

Date:

Dear Emma,

You may remember that some time ago you agreed to be part of a research project that is currently running at your trampoline club. We would like to invite you to take part in an interview to discuss:

'Your experiences of trampolining'.

If you do not want to take part in this part of the project, that is fine just let Rhiannon know.

However if you would like to take part we can arrange a time and place that is convenient for us.

Before you decide, there is an information sheet attached to this letter outlining this part of the project. Please read this and feel free to ask questions before the focus group takes place. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you are happy to take part.

Regards
Rhiannon

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics
Interview title: Your experiences of trampoline-gymnastics

Adult Information Sheet

Background

The aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of how young people participating in competitive trampoline-gymnasts form ideas about who they are and how this impacts in their daily lives.

The research findings will be submitted to Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University (formerly UWIC) for assesment with the possibility of further publication.

Your participation in the research project

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this interview as you are a gymnast in trampoline gymnastics. Your experiences and opinions are valuable to this research.

What would happen if you agree to take part in the research project?

If you would like to take part, just let me know and we can arrange a time and place that is suitable and convenient. The interview will last around an hour to 90 minute and will be recorded on a dictaphone. A research interview is more relaxed than a job interview, it is more like a chat about a particular topic which is recorded. This is likely to be a one-off, recorded session. However if the researcher feels it viable, you may be asked to meet the researcher again at your convenience to clarify or expand on some of the aspects you mention.

Are there any risks?

I do not believe there are any significant risks to you or your club's integrity if you take part. Any potentially sensitive issues will be dealt with care and tact and I will respect the privacy of all participants.

Your rights

You reserve the right to withdraw from the project or interview at any point without giving a reason. Also if you do not want to answer a particular question but would like to remain on the project, please say that you'd prefer not to answer that particular question and I will move on.

What happens to the results of the evaluation?

These recorded conversations will be transcribed and securely kept as an electronic file on a private PC. Data that is printed out will be filed and securely kept in a locked cabinet at Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC). The data will be coded so that we can remove names, but we need to keep a record of the codes to compare each person's views. There will be no description that would identify individuals. We will also remove any description of you, your family, where you live, and so on.

What happens next?

With this letter you'll find an informed consent form, this should be completed and given back to the researcher. This does not affect your right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

How I protect your privacy:

The researcher working on the study will respect your privacy. We have taken very careful steps to make sure that you cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

However there is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Whilst every step will be taken to protect your identity (anonymity) it might be possible that confidentiality may not be kept in the event that you/your child disclose something that I might legally have to share with another authority. Also please remember that the information you/your child give me will be shared with others, although they will not know who you are.

All the information about you will be stored securely. At the end of the evaluation study we will destroy the information we have gathered about you. We will only keep the consent and assent forms with your name and address. We keep these for ten years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, using the email address below.

Yours Faithfully,

Rhiannon Lord
E-mail: cstewart@uwic.ac.uk

UWIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming .

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, my relationships with the trampoline club, UWIC, and my legal rights, will not be affected.
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that I will not be identified.
5. I agree to take part in this part of the project.

☐☐☐☐☐

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent

Date

Dear Coach

You may remember that some time ago you agreed to be part of a research project that is currently running at your trampoline club. We would like to invite you to take part in a focus group to discuss:

The issues we face when coaching trampoline-gymnasts.

If you do not want to take part in this part of the project, that is fine just let Rhiannon know.

However if you would like to take part there will be a focus group on 10th July at 1.30pm in the boardroom at Pentwyn leisure Centre.

Before you decide, there is an information sheet attached to this letter outlining this part of the project. Please read this and feel free to ask questions before the focus group takes place. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you are happy to take part.

Regards
Rhiannon

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics
Focus Group Title: Coaching trampoline gymnasts, identities, socialisation, uniforms and handling

Adult Information Sheet

Background

The aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of how young people participating in competitive trampoline gymnastics form ideas about who they are and how this impacts in their daily lives.

The research findings will be submitted to Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC) for assesment with the possibility of further publication.

Your participation in the research project

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study as you are a coach in trampoline gymnastics. Therefore you have had experience of the process of young trampoline gymnasts developing ideas about who they are. Your experiences and opinions are valuable to this research.

What would happen if you agree to take part in the research project?

You will be asked to take part in a focus group to discuss '*Coaching trampoline gymnasts, identities, socialisation, uniforms and handling*' .

This focus group will take place on the 15th February 2012 in Pentwyn Leisure Centre's Boardroom, at 1.30pm. This should take approximately 2 hours. This is likely to be a one-off, recorded session. However if the researcher feels it viable, you may be asked to meet the researcher again for an interview at your convenience to clarify or expand on some of the aspects you mentioned in the focus group.

A focus group is a recorded discussion among a group of people.

Are there any risks?

I do not believe there are any significant risks to you, your child's or club's integrity if you take part. Any potentially sensitive issues will be dealt with care and tact and I will respect the privacy of all participants.

Your rights

You reserve the right to withdraw from the project or focus group at any point without giving a reason. Also if you do not want to answer a particular question but would like to remain on the project, please say that you'd prefer not to answer that particular question and I will move on.

What happens to the results of the evaluation?

These recorded conversations will be transcribed and securely kept as an electronic file on a private PC. Data that is printed out will be filed and securely kept in a locked cabinet at Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC). The data will be coded so that we can remove names, but we

need to keep a record of the codes to compare each person's views. There will be no description that would identify individuals. We will also remove any description of you, your family, where you live, and so on.

What happens next?

With this letter you'll find an informed consent form, this should be completed and given back to the researcher. This does not affect your right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

How I protect your privacy:

The researcher working on the study will respect your privacy. We have taken very careful steps to make sure that you cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

However there is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Whilst every step will be taken to protect your identity (anonymity) it might be possible that confidentiality may not be kept in the event that you/your child disclose something that I might legally have to share with another authority. Also please remember that the information you/your child give me will be shared with others, although they will not know who you are.

All the information about you will be stored securely. At the end of the evaluation study we will destroy the information we have gathered about you. We will only keep the consent and assent forms with your name and address. We keep these for ten years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, using the email address below.

Yours Faithfully,

Rhiannon Lord
E-mail: cstewart@uwic.ac.uk

UWIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming .

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information,
ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary
and that I can stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, my relationships with the trampoline club, UWIC, and my legal rights, will not be affected.
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that I will not be identified.
5. I agree to take part in this part of the project.

☐☐☐☐☐

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files

Dear Nancy and Elin,

You may remember that some time ago you agreed to be part of a research project that is currently running at your trampoline club. Elin has written accounts in her training diary of what it feels like to bounce on a trampoline which I would like use in this research project.

In order to use this diary, I need your permission to use it.

Before you decide if you want to consent to this, there is an information sheet attached to this letter outlining this part of the project. Please read this and feel free to ask questions

Regards
Rhiannon

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Request for consent to copy training diary

Parent Information Sheet

Background

The aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of how young people participating in competitive trampoline-gymnasts form ideas about who they are and how this impacts in their daily lives.

The research findings will be submitted to Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University (formerly UWIC) for assesment with the possibility of further publication.

Your child(ren)'s participation in the research project

Why have they been asked to participate?

As you know, your child(ren) write in their training diaries frequently, reporting on what activities they have undertaken in the week, to what they have eaten, what conditioning exercises they have completed to what tasks they completed in training and how they felt about this. The written work of your child is important to this research. We are requesting your consent to copy your child's diary in part or full for the purpose of this research.

What would happen if you agree?

You and your child do not have to do anything. Extracts from the diary will be taken and word processed for clarity. Where necessary you or your child may be asked to clarify ambiguous words or comments, but this will take place in club training.

Are there any risks?

I do not believe there are any significant risks to you or your club's integrity if you agree. Any potentially sensitive issues will be dealt with care and tact and I will respect the privacy of all participants.

Your rights

You reserve the right to withdraw the diary (extract) from the research without giving a reason.

What happens to the results of the evaluation?

Diary entries will be word processed and systematically analysed. The words within your child(ren)'s diary may appear in the final thesis submitting to the university and/or an academic journal, book or magazine.

What happens next?

With this letter you'll find an informed consent form, this should be completed by you and your child and given back to the researcher. This does not affect your right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

How I protect your privacy:

The researcher working on the study will respect your privacy. We have taken very careful steps to make sure that you cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

However there is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Whilst every step will be taken to protect your identity (anonymity) it might be possible that confidentiality may not be kept in the event that you/your child disclose something that I might legally have to share with another authority. Also please remember that the information you/your child give me will be shared with others, although they will not know who you are.

All the information about you will be stored securely. At the end of the evaluation study we will destroy the information we have gathered about you. We will only keep the consent and assent forms with your name and address. We keep these for ten years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, using the email address below.

Yours Faithfully,

Rhiannon Lord
E-mail: cstewart@uwic.ac.uk

Title of the project: The Body, narrative And Identity Construction in Trampoline-Gymnastics

Request to copy training diary

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET

Why you?

I am very interested in finding out about how you feel about being a trampolinist. You have written a diary in training which I want to copy and use.

What will happen?

Nothing. I will take your diary away when you are not using it and make a copy of it so you can carry on using it.

Do you have to?

No you don't. No one is forcing you. And if you change your mind later that's fine. There's no problem, just tell me.

What happens to my diary?

The words from your diary may be used in a university project or get printed in a magazine or book. If we do this, we won't say that it is your diary. No one will know it is yours.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions, just ask. You can ask yourself or get your mum or your dad to ask me.

UWIC PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that the participation of my child(ren) is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with UWIC, and the trampoline club, and or our legal rights, will not be affected.

☐

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my child(ren) will not be identified.

☐

5. I agree for my child(ren) to take part in the project.

☐

Name of Child(ren)

Name of Parent / Guardian

Signature of Parent / Guardian

Date

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent

Date


* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files


CHILD'S ASSENT FORM


Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline
Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott
Fleming

**Please fill this form by ticking the face by each question that you think is
best for you.**

If you agree, tick this face 

If you aren't sure, tick this face 

If you disagree, tick this face 

I understand the project and I know what will happen

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered

I know I can stop at any time and that it will be OK

I know that information about me might go into a book or magazine,
but nobody will ever know that it's me

I am happy to be recorded if we have a discussion

Your Name Date

Your Signature

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent Date

Dear Jessica,

Thank you for writing your thoughts about how it feels to bounce in a leotard. In order to use this written account, I need your permission to use it.

Before you decide if you want to consent to this, there is an information sheet attached to this letter outlining this part of the project. Please read this and feel free to ask questions.

Regards
Rhiannon

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Request for consent use written extract

Participant/Parent Information Sheet

Background

The aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of how young people participating in competitive trampoline-gymnasts form ideas about who they are and how this impacts in their daily lives.

The research findings will be submitted to Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University (formerly UWIC) for assesment with the possibility of further publication

Your participation in the research project

Why have you been asked to participate?

In a recent conversation with our research(s) you were asked if you could provide a written account on 'how it feels to wear a leotard'. You have knowledge of this topic which is valuable to this research.

What would happen if you agree?

Once you have given the researcher (Rhiannon) your written account it will be typed up and the original kept in a secure cabinet.

Are there any risks?

I do not believe there are any significant risks to you or your club's integrity if you agree. Any potentially sensitive issues will be dealt with care and tact and I will respect the privacy of all participants.

Your rights

You reserve the right to withdraw the written account from the research without giving a reason.

What happens to the results of the evaluation?

Written accounts will be word processed and systematically analysed. The words within your written piece may appear in the final thesis which will be submitted to the university and/or an academic journal, book or magazine.

What happens next?

With this letter you'll find an informed consent form. This should be completed and given back to the researcher. This does not affect your right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

How I protect your privacy:

The researcher working on the study will respect your privacy. We have taken very careful steps to make sure that you cannot be identified from any of the information that we have about you.

However there is a difference between confidentiality and anonymity. Whilst every step will be taken to protect your identity (anonymity) it might be possible that confidentiality may not be kept in the event that you disclose something that I might legally have to share with another authority. Also please remember that the information you give me will be shared with others, although they will not know who you are.

All the information about you will be stored securely. At the end of the evaluation study we will destroy the information we have gathered about you. We will only keep the consent for ten years because we are required to do so by Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or how we intend to conduct the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, using the email address below.

Yours Faithfully,

Rhiannon Lord
E-mail: cstewart@uwic.ac.uk

Title of the project: The Body, narrative And Identity Construction in Trampoline-Gymnastics

Request to use written extract

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET

Why you?

I am very interested in finding out about how you feel about being a trampolinist. You have written a piece of work on the topic...

What will happen?

Nothing. I will take your written work away and type it up on a computer.

Do you have to?

No you don't. No one is forcing you. And if you change your mind later that's fine. There's no problem, just tell me.

What happens to my diary?

The words from your work may be used in a university project or get printed in a magazine or book. If we do this, we won't say that it is your work. No one will know it is yours.

Have you got any questions?

If you have any questions, just ask. You can ask yourself or get your mum or your dad to ask me.

UWIC PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that the participation of my child(ren) is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with UWIC, and the trampoline club, and or our legal rights, will not be affected.

☐

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my child(ren) will not be identified.

☐

5. I agree for my child(ren) to take part in the project.

☐

Name of Child(ren)

Name of Parent / Guardian

Signature of Parent / Guardian

Date

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent

Date

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files

UWIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline Gymnastics

Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott Fleming

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that the participation of my child(ren) is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with UWIC, and the trampoline club, and or our legal rights, will not be affected.

☐

4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but that my child(ren) will not be identified.

☐

5. I agree for my child(ren) to take part in the project.

☐

Name of Child(ren)

Name of Parent / Guardian

Signature of Parent / Guardian

Date

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent

Date


* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files


CHILD'S ASSENT FORM


Title of Project: The Body, Narrative And Identity Construction In Trampoline
Gymnastics

Name of Researchers: Rhiannon Lord; Dr. Carly Stewart; Dr. David Brown; Prof. Scott
Fleming

**Please fill this form by ticking the face by each question that you think is
best for you.**

If you agree, tick this face 

If you aren't sure, tick this face 

If you disagree, tick this face 

I understand the project and I know what will happen

I have had a chance to ask questions and get them answered

I know I can stop at any time and that it will be OK

I know that information about me might go into a book or magazine,
but nobody will ever know that it's me

I am happy to be recorded if we have a discussion





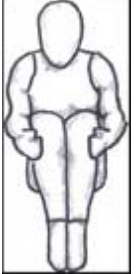







Your Name Date

Your Signature

Name of person taking consent

Signature of person taking consent Date

Appendix I: Extract from the FIG code of points (2009)

| DEDUCTIONS | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| TUCK POSITION | | | | | | |
| TUCK POSITION Angle upper body/thighs Elements without twist |  |  |  |  | | |
| Knees apart |  |  |  |  | | |
| Position of the arms/hands |  |  |  |  | | |