

Publication

'They must be working hard' : an (auto-)ethnographic account of women's artistic gymnastics

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This article includes narrative excerpts compiled from fieldnotes the author collected observing six Australian women's elite artistic gymnasts and their two coaches. Using creative nonfiction and auto-ethnography, the stories' plots describe the gymnasts' daily training realities and include personal reflections on the author's gymnastics experiences and reactions to what she saw during the observations. The stories illustrate how, despite differing levels of authority, the coaches', gymnasts', and parts of her own identity and behaviors are shaped by a dominant gymnastics model. This ideal coerces the coaches and gymnasts to regulate their selves and behaviors according to its dominant characteristics. Although potentially beneficial and satisfactory, the training model's discourses and practices can have debilitating effects.

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