

Artistic Gymnastics in Greece: Impact and Effects on Athletes Social Development and Later Professional-Occupational Establishment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the meaning and significance that this specific body morphology—a result of long-term, intensive and long hours of specialized training on apparatuses—has on the wider social life-relations, social development and professional biographies of the participants. Specifically, to what extent this somatotype or body characteristics and *particularities*, including the training and the level of performance, influence or have a dynamic impact on the social relations, social development and the later professional-occupational placement or establishment of the artistic gymnast. The results of the study—that includes an analysis of a closed questionnaire distributed to former male and female athletes of artistic gymnasts throughout Greece—reveal that this sport has not obstructed or restricted the formation and development of social relations within the sport system nor outside the sports system, namely in other social spheres. On the contrary, it has provided social recognition, and new opportunities, namely future professional-occupational opportunities to former artistic gymnasts of both genders. On the other hand, a small percentage of former female athletes claim that their sport, artistic gymnastics, has been a restraining factor or an obstacle in their forming and developing social and interpersonal relations outside the social space of sport.

Keywords: corporeality, gender, the body-sport relationship, gender embodiment, bodies designed for sport, re-making the gendered body, social development