

Thank God for Stretch Jeans!

-A study on "female throwers'" view on body and ideal

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Introduction -A Sport for Every BODY

As an athlete your body can be your best friend and your worst enemy. Whatever your relationship to your body might be, it is still your most important tool for succeeding in your sport. Different events demand different body types, both in form and size. In order to meet these ideals the athlete works hard, however this is not the only ideal the athlete is being exposed to. Society has its own criteria for the "perfect" body, which sometimes may contradict the ideal of the sport. Even though the beauty ideals of women in the western society have turned to a more muscular and fit body in the last few years, the low percent of body fat and just the right amount of lean, feminine muscle mass still prevail (Benton & Karazsia, 2014; George, 2005; Krane et al, 2004; Mosewich, 2009). Too many muscles are in fact almost as bad as being fat, and goes against the attributes women according to society should possess (George, 2005). For an athlete these standards do not always coincide with the standards for the sport. Previous research shows that body esteem, sex roles, muscles and sports participation have a complicated and sometimes contradictive relationship (George, 2005; Mosewich et al, 2009; Krane et al, 2004; de Bruin et al, 2006; Kosteli, 2014). Studies show that although the women in these studies appreciate their strength and the functions of their bodies in sports, they sometimes wish they had another body, more in line with society's ideal (George, 2005; Mosewich et al, 2009; Krane et al, 2004). For example Kosteli (2014) showed that college long distance runners were more pleased about their bodies outside the sport environment than college throwers, but the throwers appreciated their bodies more in the sport environment than the runners.

Most of the studies are about body esteem and sport focus on aesthetic sports and sports where a lean body is preferable. Not surprising these studies are about a possible correlation between this and disturbed eating patterns. Examples of these kinds of studies are Robinson & Ferraro (2004), Bolognesi et al (2006), de Bruin et al (2006, 2008, 2011), and Ferrand (2008). Some other studies however are about sports where a lean body mass is not a must and where the sport ideal and the ideal of society have a larger discrepancy (George, 2005; Mosewich et al, 2009; Krane et al, 2004; Kosteli, 2014). Except for Kosteli (2014) and some of the respondents in Krane et al (2004), most of the participants are not participating in very muscular sports. Tennis, soccer, swimming and athletics (apart from the throwing events) are seldom ranked as power sports. Therefore the author thought it would be of interest to investigate how women, in events that demand body types far from the ideals of society, think and feel about their bodies and the demands both the sport and society expose them to. Based on the author's experience of the javelin throw, the throwing events were close to hand. Talks among female throwers about their bodies and the difficulties of not matching the norm have been ongoing for a long time, so the subject is of importance, even though the focus of being an elite athlete is the priority. Just like some of the respondents in previous studies (Krane, 2004; George, 2005; Mosewich, 2009), these girls have chosen to put the ideals of society aside for the sport, but what kind of underlying thoughts and feelings about their bodies are there? How do the girls relate to the ideals of society versus the ideals of the sport? What are their views of their bodies? How do they experience the actions of their coaches on this subject? Both sport, and especially throwing, have by tradition been seen as masculine expressions, just like muscles and competing (Krane, 2004; George, 2005), therefore the question is how do the female throwers handle the situation of being a female in a male context? This study's aim was to investigate Swedish female throwers' view of their bodies and their thoughts about the different kinds of ideals they are exposed to.

The findings showed that if we want to keep and develop female throwers we have to create a more appreciating and open environment in clubs, federation and media. In society the female body is measured by its' appearance that should not be the case in athletics. The female throwers should feel at ease with themselves as women AND as top performers in their sport. Their bodies should be appreciated for their abilities rather than judged from a social ideal.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study was to investigate Swedish female throwers' view of their bodies and how they look at the paradox with the body ideal of society against the sport's. Through focus groups the subject was discussed from a semi-structured interview guide, with focus on the following issues:

- What thoughts do the participants have about ideal and body image?
- What views do the participants receive from their surroundings, both in society and in the sport environment, on them as throwers and their bodies?
- In what way are the questions about body and appearance discussed with the coaches? If at all?
- How do the participants experience the situation of being a female in a male context?

Theory

The results obtained were analyzed against two different theories: Higgins Self-discrepancy Theory (1987) and The Social Comparison Theory of Festinger (1954).

The Self-discrepancy Theory is based on the existence of three different representations of the self: the actual, ideal and ought-self and how the discrepancy between one's own and others' standpoints of them can lead to different types of feelings, depending on the type of discrepancy. The actual-self is the attribute that you actually possess, ideal-self are the qualities that you or someone else could wish that you have, and ought-self represents the traits that you or someone else thinks that you should possess (Higgins, 1987). If there are characteristics that another person thinks you should have, it is called ought /others. If it is you who think that you ought to possess certain attributes, Higgins (1987) calls this ought /own. Similarly, you can then combine the other "selves" with the different standpoints. If there are discrepancies between the different "I", negative emotions can arise (Higgins, 1987). If a person, for example, has discrepancies between their actual self and their own ideal-self it means that the person's actual attributes, from her position, do not match the ideal that she wants to be. According to the theory that person is predicted to be vulnerable to emotions related to depression, disappointment and dissatisfaction (Higgins, 1987).

The Social Comparison Theory deals with how people compare themselves with others to evaluate their own abilities and opinions and thus gain a picture of the self. The first who introduced the theory was the psychologist Leon Festinger (1954). Festinger (1954) had in his initial theory nine main hypotheses. In these Festinger (1954) presents the human basic drive to evaluate her opinions and abilities and in so doing evaluate the opinions and abilities in relation to other people. However, the greater the difference is between oneself and another person, the less you are likely to compare yourself with that person, as you would stop comparing yourself with someone you perceive as superior in a certain area. Regarding abilities, there are sometimes non-social restrictions that make it difficult or impossible to change the abilities. These restrictions, however, are absent in the case of opinions: you can change your opinion if you wish, but no matter how motivated you are, there may be factors that make it impossible to change your abilities. Generally, the more important something is to a person and the more it is related to social behavior, the greater is the cause for comparison (Festinger, 1954).

The theory has been developed and processed by several subsequent researchers. It has also been used in studies of the athlete's body image, such as by Kosteli (2014).

Methods

The study was conducted with a qualitative method (Gratton & Jones, 2004, p.27), with an inductive approach. Data were collected and then analyzed against suitable theories.

Focus Groups

The survey was conducted in focus groups, since the group call provides an opportunity for further discussions among participants that can generate more extensive information than if each participant was asked individually (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, s.903; Gratton & Jones, 2004 s.154- 155; Hassmén & Hassmén, 2008, s.263). It also provides more dialogue between participants and a broader perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, S904).

Two focus groups, each with four participants, were gathered for the project. Since the subject was of a sensitive nature and according to Hassmén and Hassmén (2008, s.263), a smaller group is appropriate. The girls were all acquainted, both with the interviewer and with each other, which Gratton & Jones (2004, p.155) see as negative, while Hassmén and Hassmén (2008, s.263) write that it may be an advantage for data collection, i.e. if the participants are already a group. The fact that the discussion leader also belongs to the group "female throwers" could be an advantage in this study. George (2005) writes about the benefits of researchers sharing the same experiences and emotions as the respondents.

Two of the participants, one in each group, were at training camp and were therefore joining the discussions via Skype. The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide so that the conversation would flow relatively freely with the possibility of follow-up questions, without the risk of losing the aim.

The questions in the interview guide were organized by subject and started with general discussions about ideals and the role of the coaches. Secondly, there were talks about how this was experienced in the world of athletics. In the second block, body image and ideals from a gender perspective were discussed, to finally culminate in talks about a sporting body in a social context.

Via a Dictaphone the calls were recorded, each nearly 1.5 hours long. Then the material was transcribed and from that the answers were categorized with the questions as basis.

Selection

The participants were asked to supply information on age, number of years as an athlete, age at specialization of throwing, family, merits and secondary education, and more.

Focus Group One (F1) consisted of throwers competing in the U23 class, and focus group 2 (F2) of two senior throwers and two former throwers on elite level. The ages ranged from 20-22 years in F1, with an average age of 21, and 26-41 in F2, with an average age of 33.25 years. In F1, participants had together 48 years in athletics, with an average of 12 years. In F2 the participants together had 84 years of experience in athletics, with an average of 21 years. Age at specialization ranged from 13 to 16 years, with an average age of approximately 14.5 years. The participants who finished their athletic careers had done this about 7 and 5 years ago.

All throwing events were represented: one shot-putter, two hammer throwers, three discus throwers and two javelin throwers, and the participants were, or had been aiming for elite level. Among the merits were national championship medals at both junior and senior level, Swedish junior records and participations in the European Championships, World Championships and Olympic Games for juniors as well as seniors with multiple places in finals.

Study participants were selected through a hand-picked, homogeneous sample. The homogeneous character of the sample means that the transferability can suffer: the question arises whether one can assume a similarity in other parts of the country or is the experience influenced by the environment?

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Still the throwers in this study represented various clubs and the majority of the participants had moved to the city.

Results

The results of the interviews are categorized under the objectives and these in turn in sub categories, but in this paper they will be summarized under the objectives only.

What thoughts do the participators have around ideal and body image?

The findings indicated that this is a paradox which sometimes can be difficult to handle. The participators discussed what they thought was the ideal body and also what they thought was the ideal body in society and in their events. None of the girls wanted a thin model body, but they still felt that this was what society saw as desirable although the girls thought that this ideal had changed the last few years to a more fit and muscular ideal. Still, as one said, it was not the function and the strength they wanted, it was the appearance they sought. "Bulky" or strong muscles were not the goal, but a toned body.

Especially the younger ones found this a bit conflicting. They wanted a body that would be able to throw far and still they talked about how they sometimes wanted a different body in other areas. They knew that these features were part of their throwing success, like long arms, being tall and muscular, but especially when it came to buying clothes or going out with friends they could wish they had a different body type. However, they eventually always came back to the will of throwing far and this being of the utmost importance, far more important than fitting in some slim jeans models. Therefore one of the participants coined the expression "Thank for stretch jeans". In focus group 2 the thoughts about injuries were close and for them the ideal body was also a body that was resistant to injuries. All attempts of changing the body were made with the goal of keeping away from injuries or getting stronger.

The participators felt that they looked at their bodies differently depending on the context. In the athletic environment, especially together with other throwers, it was easier to appreciate the muscles and size, while outside the athletics together with (as the younger girls said) "normal" people, they sometimes felt like they were different and it was also in these situations the thoughts of changing their bodies arose. An example of this was when one of the throwers described a situation when she and some thrower friends were taking a photo together. Both friends were larger than she was and since she was used to being the one standing out, this situation made her feel normal.

"They are both taller than me and a great deal bigger, so it was like: Wow! Is this how normal people feel?"(F1)

One of the participators had a different view of this. She felt more fit in a social environment than together with other athletes. But overall the athletes felt more secure in their bodies in the sporting area.

For the girls in this study, the view of their bodies had change over the years. When they were younger most of them felt that it was harder to deal with the fact that they built more muscle mass than their friends and looked different, but with age came the insight that these muscles were what helped them throw far and therefore the size of the jeans did not matter. On the question if they thought that they were going to change their body after the end of their career, the younger ones said that they would try to eat less than now and keep some kind of "normal" state. The ones that already had ended their careers on the other hand explained that it had been their plan too, but it turned out to be much harder than they thought. Their bodies simply were too exhausted, or like one of them said: a wreck, after their long careers so they did not have the energy. After a while they learned to eat less, but the

training was still a great challenge. Both of them wished that it was not so, but nevertheless the motivation had not returned.

What views do the participators receive from their surroundings, both in society and in the sport environment, on them as throwers and their bodies?

The participators in this project spoke about throwers as a group among other athletes. They usually ended up being apart from other people in the other events in the national team for example. They did not know if this was because they chose to be a group, or as the girls in F1 called it the "thrower bubble", or if others avoided them. One of the participators said that she usually tried to avoid being in the "bubble" and elected to be with other event groups instead. She pointed out though, that it might be easier for her as a javelin thrower than for someone in the heavy throws and it could be linked to the body shape.

Although the girls spoke about themselves as "throwers", some of them found it hard to always be identified as this by their surroundings. One of them said that in school she did not tell her class mates about her sporting, just because she did not want that mark. Another of the participants said that back home people always associated her with the sport. They never asked: How are you? Instead they asked: How are you doing in your sport? She felt that in their eyes she did not have any other identity than the sportswoman's.

The girls felt that other people had expectations on them being really big and strong since they were throwers. From people outside the athletics they felt the expectations on them, being elite sportswomen, that they should be fit, toned and stronger than others. On the other hand they felt that from other athletes they met stereotypes about throwers as being untrained and fat, which were not appreciated by the girls. They had also experienced words from coaches in other events like: "Throwers like to rest" or surprised shouts when they ran longer distances. A jargon among other athletes was that throwers did not have to care what they ate, because it did not matter what they looked like. "Throwers eat dessert" was an expression that circulated, said one of the girls. They felt that this was wrong because they often trained more and harder than they did in the other events, and were aware of their diet.

The participators sometimes felt a sort of exclusion in the athletic community. One of them felt as if she was treated differently with strange comments and weird gazes because she was a thrower. Some of the older throwers noted that in the past, female thrower normally ended up in a group on their own at national team meetings, they looked a bit different and some of them felt like outsiders because the national team clothes did not fit.

When the question about sponsoring came all the participants agreed that it was a much easier both to get sponsorships and media attention if you were thinner and more in the shape of an ideal "perfect" girl. Two of them had actually experienced a "no" from potential sponsors after they had done some great achievements just to see that some other girls in other events, who had not achieved as good competing results as they had, received a yes. One of the girls pointed out that she thought this had changed a bit and that more throwers received attention nowadays. But this concerned throwers on a very high level and the conclusion was that it was possible for throwers to get sponsorships; you just had to do a little bit better than the others.

The same thing occurred with media as well as the fact that the throwing events had difficulties getting a space in the big competitions. They usually ended up as pre-competitions or on other arenas. The exception was male javelin, which the participants had different theories about. In F2 they said it was perhaps because male javelin had a tradition in Sweden and in F1 because javelin in fact was a running event.

In what way are the questions about body and appearance discussed with the coaches? If at all?

When the coaches spoke about body shapes it was always in view of athletic achievement, either for results or keeping away from injuries. In F1 the focus was on achievements and in F2 on function. In F2 the participants regularly spoke about their bodies and the shaping of those with their coaches, just like they spoke about technique or training programs. It could be both about weight increase or weight loss, usually in conjunction with the planning or evaluation of the season. One of the girls pointed out the importance of the coaches being able to talk about the body and what was needed to keep away from injuries. In F1 it was unusual to speak about the body shape with the coaches. If they talked about weight it was more about something that was going to happen, not that it should.

None of the girls recognized that their coaches had ever spoken about the ideals of society in relation to the conditions in the sport. The girls in F1 thought that the fact that the coaches ignored this subject made the collision easier to handle. By not mentioning it, it did not seem to be a problem. All the participants had male coaches and one of the girls said that in the beginning she felt that her coach found it a bit hard to speak about her body shape with her since she was his first female adept. After a while it had become easier, because, like she said, she was not a very "girlie" girl. She thought though that it was probably easier for a female coach to talk about this kind of subject with girls than for males.

During puberty none of the girls could remember any talks about the changes occurring in the body, nor about the changes and demands on the body a specialization on throwing would mean. Sometimes they had mentioned that a rapid growth of height could make it more difficult to handle the body, or that other athletes had grown a great deal. The participants felt that this could be a sensitive subject and that there was a risk that it might scare some people away. The girls in F1 gave as advice to coaches that if it became a problem they should not be afraid to speak about it. If not, they should not turn it into a problem by bringing it up. It was better to create an environment built on trust from the beginning.

How do the participants experience the situation of being a female in a male context?

The participants felt that in the eyes of society, sports and in particular the throwing events, still are considered as male grounds. It was associated with male ideals like strength, size and physically hard work. All of the girls had male coaches. One did not think that a man could understand what it was like being a woman, and that her coach probably had given her the same kind of practice he had done himself, while the others experienced their coaches being aware of possible discrepancies between the sexes

Being feminine was, to the participants, linked to appearance. Dresses, make-up, jewelries and fancy hairstyles were mentioned. Being covered in dirt or do heavy lifting was the opposite. The girls in F1 felt like it had a negative sound, i.e. being feminine was equal to being weak. In F2 the participants did not think themselves feminine, more like tomboys. Despite this, the majority of the participants considered it possible being both feminine and a thrower; it was more about your own perception, one mentioned. Another said that it was possible, but in different contexts. At practice you had to take a tougher approach. All of the girls were, or had been, physically strong and therefore felt that they sometimes were treated differently, for example more "boyish" than a thinner girl.

"[...]if you compare me to a little girl of 50kilo then we are absolutely treated in two different ways (mm) uh little more boyish perhaps, a little more rough then against a little girl of 50kilo, well just at the first meeting, absolutely! (mm) (quietly) I would say " (F2)

Being elite sports women the food was important and due to the hard practice the participants usually ate more than other people around them. All of them felt eating a great deal was considered as male,

and some of them sometimes experienced it being embarrassing to eat that much, especially at parties with casual acquaintances. Before the invitation they could therefore dine by themselves, just to avoid the awkwardness of eating twice as much as the others and thereby not being feminine.

During the interviews there was one subject that was frequently returned to and that was the conversations about clothes. In both groups the changing room was considered the place where they mostly wished for another body. As a result of their athletic practice they had gathered a muscle mass that made it hard to find good looking clothing. As one of the girls expressed it: "It is not suited for a cubic formed thrower" (F2). They figured it could be because of the slender ideals and that the clothing was made for these slim models, not broad-shouldered athletes. Also the height could be a problem for some, but as one of them said; this did not feel as personal because in those cases the clothes were inadequate, not her body. Since it was hard to find fitting clothes for more dressed up occasions one of the girls said that she usually felt big and ugly at these occasions and therefore did not like dressing up.

The clothing problem felt hard because it showed that their bodies were not the way society considered as norm, they were different. Usually they could just shake it off, but still it remained somewhere that the ideal was something different than how they looked

Through their training they formed their bodies to suit their events and throw far. At the same time a body formed for throwing meant that the clothing did not even fit at the sporting arena. One of the girls told an anecdote about how her mother helped her by needle and thread to change the club competition top for men, since there was not a women top big enough for her. Eventually this led to a changing in the clubs clothing collection and she guessed that this was something her mother had worked for. A couple of the other girls recognized this problem and thought that it was bad from the athletic clubs' point of view not being able to bring out clothing that suited also more muscular and larger bodies.

The national team clothes were also brought up as a problem. In F2 they spoke about the lack of clothes in enough sizes in the past and that many girls had to compete in male clothes instead. This, the girls thought, had created a sense of alienation among some of the throwers. It turned out though that this was a problem that still remained. In F1 they shared some troubles they had had with one of the later collections for the national team. One of the girls had to wear tights for men in XXXL to fit, but then they were too large in the waist. After this they changed the model, but the women's tights were still too short for her. However, she still had to wear men's clothing in leisure clothes and overalls. Being forced to dress in men's clothes was not appreciated. The girls wanted something adapted for a girl's body. It was important to feel stylish and comfortable when they competed.

"It is ... Well I mean I cannot move in women's clothing, so men's clothes are more comfortable, but I would like to have something that was made for a girl's body still (yes) I mean some good-looking like this, a little neat you still want to look like anyway"(F1)

Apparently the ideal of the girls' appearance did not match reality. Both in society as well as the sport environment the clothing indicated an ideal. To think that the area which they formed their bodies for, also adhered to this ideal is remarkable. As an athlete you should look in a certain way, the way the clothes are designed.

Discussion

In the discussion the results of the study will be compared to the theories described above as well as the results of previous research also mentioned in the introduction. The discussion will be following the same structure as the results with each objective as a headline.

What thoughts do the participators have around ideal and body image?

When the participators in this study discussed society's body ideal, it was very much in line with previous research. The slim ideal still remained, but was turning to a more athletic ideal. However, like some of the girls pointed out, the new ideal was about toned and lean muscles, not strong. The appearance is of importance, not the strength. This is also what previous studies have shown (Benton & Karazsia, 2014; George, 2005; Krane et al, 2004; Mosewich et al, 2009). Some of the participants in this study actually said that they felt as if physically strong women were more acceptable, even appreciated nowadays. Maybe this is a hint that a strong body is a future ideal in society at least in the communities that already have embraced the athletic ideal?

For the participators in this study the body was associated with performance and thus it was hard for them not to see the ideal body in a sporting perspective. At the same time they were aware that they, by building strong and muscular bodies, deviated from the ideal of society. Despite this collision the girls always chose performance before appearance, but by the way they spoke about their own ideal body it was possible to tell that this was not very easy. Depending on the context, different body types were wished for. This paradox was mentioned also by Krane et al (2004), Kosteli (2014) and George (2005). The participators in these studies experienced contradictions between the sporting body and the one society asked for. Frestinger (1954) writes in his second hypothesis that people have a need to evaluate themselves against others to define their own selves. To the girls this was a bit confusing since the ideals and the characters of the people in the different contexts they were in differed that much. Among other, bigger throwers, they felt small and in social contexts they were the big ones. This was sometimes difficult to relate to and they had to redefine their "selves" depending on context (Higgins, 1987). There were two different ideals to relate to from two different worlds. Consequently the girls had to choose and in this study there were no doubts that they chose, as George (2005) refers to it, the Performance body before the Appearance body.

Any attempts to change the body were made with the motive of becoming better in their events. They also appreciated their bodies more in the athletic environment. They kept their heads high and felt prouder of how they looked, because in the athletics their bodies were an advantage, which also Krane et al (2004) and Mosewich et al (2009) found. The question asked was what will happen to the girls' body images the day the performing body does not work? One of the participators described how her view on her body had changed for the better after returning from a long time injury. She had then realized that her body was not so bad after all, it was working again. This is very important to consider in all kinds of sports. For athletes the body is mainly a tool for performing and is appreciated by its ability to do so. When the body does not work, for example because of an injury, what will then happen to the body image and self-esteem? If you appreciate your body in only a certain situation and by some performance related parameters, then you are quite vulnerable the day you lose this.

It is the same thing for an athlete who is ending her career. The image of the body as a mean to perform, has to change and adapt to a new environment and maybe that is why one of the participants thought it more important with make-up and the like after ending her career? Both had had difficulties with the change. They wanted to have a body according to social ideals, but above all, they wanted to be able to work out to feel good. After years of pressing their bodies to perform, they now did not have the energy to do this for look and health reasons. Here there was a discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self, they wished they had more motivation to train the ought-self, they felt that they should work out and think more about their diet because they knew they felt good if they did. Higgins (1987) argued that these discrepancies could lead to feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction, as well as guilt and anxiety. Perhaps this was something the women experienced, and therefore tried to work out even though the desire was not there?

What views do the participators receive from their surroundings, both in society and in the sport environment, on them as throwers and their bodies?

The participants experienced expectations and prejudice from their surroundings concerning their bodies and how they were supposed to be as throwers. What is noteworthy here is that the expectations and stereotypes differed depending on the context. In the social environment lingered a perception that they should be big and strong, but also very fit and athletic. People expected them to have more energy than others, because they were athletes and since they trained so much they should have well-defined abdomen and bodily muscles. Even those who had ended their careers experienced these expectations in the social context. These expectations correlate with the experiences of the ambient expectations and comparisons of the participants in Mosewich's et al (2009) study.

In the athletic environment however, the girls often experienced stereotypes about throwers being lazy, fat and unfit. This was perceived through comments like "I thought throwers liked to rest" or "throwers eat dessert". In the way they were talking about this, it appeared to be something that bothered them, although they were aware it was untrue. The fact that the experienced expectations and prejudices differed in the different contexts might explain why one of the girls felt more fit in a social environment than in the athletic context. One reason can be, as Frestinger (1954) predicts in the Social Comparison Theory, that people have a need to compare themselves to others in the same context, but at the same time the expectations of the surroundings affect the experience of themselves. If an individual is seen by the surroundings as fit, this will eventually affect the self-view in either the same way or the opposite. If you get the feeling that you are perceived as fat and unfit, you will soon start thinking this is true. It is like Frestinger (1954) says about the need for comparison, by evaluating yourself against others and their abilities and opinions you will define the self.

The girls could sometimes feel an exclusion from the athletic community. They felt as if they were in a "thrower bubble" and thus, by choice or not, became a group of their own. According to Frestinger (1954) a discrepancy of opinions in a group can lead to resistance and exclusion. However, he believes that this does not really apply to abilities in the same way. Yet it is precisely that which could be the case here. The physical characteristics of the throwers differ from others and thus a separate group is formed, outside the rest of the community.

One of the participants shared that she had chosen not to be a part of this separate group of other throwers. She had made this choice and said that she thought that the other throwers often saw themselves as a group. However she was aware that this might not be as easy for someone who did the more heavy throws (discuss, shot put and hammer). As a javelin thrower you usually have a body more similar to a sprinter or a multi-eventer and this could probably explain why she felt more accepted. Another participant also mentioned the appearance of the female throwers as a possible cause for exclusion. This theory might also fit with the fact that the girls felt as if the throwing events often were put to the side at some of the competitions, with the exception of male javelin, which according to F1 actually was a running event. Maybe the body composition and appearance play a part when it comes to form groups or exclusion? The javelin is the event with the lightest tool and therefore does not require an equally big body mass. Perhaps that is why the participants felt that javelin also received the most attention and more easily could take a place in the rest of the community? As the girls said, sport is by tradition viewed as male, with male ideals like strength and power, and this might explain why only the male javelin event seemed to be treated in favor, according to the girls. Being men, their muscles were more in line with social male ideals and were perhaps therefore more accepted. Linked to Frestinger (1954), this indicates that male javelin is closer to the position contained in the athletics team and the community in terms of physical characteristics and hence they will be more welcome in the group than the girls in heavy throws who deviate more from social ideals.

In what way are the questions about body and appearance discussed with the coaches?
If at all?

According to the study of Coppola et al (2014) about female athletes' experience of their coaches' communication about body image, individual training, dialogues and goal settings, were the most

appreciated methods among the participants. Comparisons and criticism had a negative effect. How the girls in this study experienced their coaches' ways to communicate body image was quite similar to what the participants in Coppola et al (2014) experienced. Especially in F2 the participants spoke about how they had individual talks with their coaches about training planning, evaluation and how to form their bodies. None of the girls seemed to have experienced their coaches using criticism in communicating body image. The talks were rather about how they by training probably would increase in weight or it could be about a mutual decision of weight loss to avoid injuries.

During the years of puberty however there was not much talk about the body at all, according to what the participants recalled. Some thought that the most important thing was to create a safe and supporting environment to avoid body issues. This might be fulfilled if the coaches were good role models - the participants in Coppola et al (2014) had the same view. If the coaches consider how they speak and act about body and health, they can create a healthy environment and show a sound body image, without risking the adepts to misjudge them and interpret it as a problem. Still it could be appropriate to give some hints about what kind of body is needed for throwing, as one of the girls also said. The girls in F1 thought that talking about the body would scare the adepts away, but at the same time it was found that some talented junior throwers left the throwing events because of the implied possible changes of their body. This is a great challenge for coaches: how to avoid the body related dropouts and it might be an area for later research. Linked to Frestinger's (1954) hypotheses about social comparison, one could draw a parallel with the girls' opinion about avoiding talk about body image in an attempt to reduce the comparison with others. According to Frestinger's (1954) seventh hypothesis the desire for evaluating and comparing will increase, depending on the importance of the opinion or ability. Not mentioning pubertal changes or changes as a result of throwing exercises are perceived as of no greater importance.

How do the participators experience the situation of being a female in a male context?

The single most striking thing in common between the girls, except for their performance focus, was the difficulties with the clothing. In previous studies this is also mentioned (George, 2005; Krane et al, 2009) as a problem and a constant reminder of being different from the norm. It became evident that they did not fit the classic female image. One of the girls explained that it was easier when the clothes were too short rather than too tiny, and as Frestinger (1954) predicted, there are some abilities or traits that are impossible to change and height is a good example of this. In contrast, the clothes could be changed so that they also fitted a taller girl. Consequently, the problem was not hers but the manufacturers'. Being too large was tougher since it was something that could be adjusted by herself to some degree even if it was difficult. Thus a feeling of shame. Jeans, shirts and formal wear were most difficult. One of the girls said she felt huge and ugly when she dressed up and therefore she did not enjoy it. Frestinger's (1954) eighth hypothesis can be used here. If you have the notion that someone else is better than you in a certain area, you stop comparing yourself with that person. If you never felt pretty, it is not worth trying.

For the participators in this study the knowledge of being different and not in line with the ideals became extra clear when they had to wear men's clothes representing their clubs or the national team, just because the women's clothing was not available in models or sizes suitable for them. An interesting point is that when femininity was discussed, skin-deep attributes were especially mentioned, such as dresses and make-up. This was also something they used in order to emphasize their femininity, which also correlates with other studies (George, 2005; Krane et al 2009). The fact that they were forced to wear men's clothing in a male context was something they felt was tough. It was not just the throwing events that stood for the male ideals, even their bodies were considered male since they apparently did not fit in the women's clothes.

Not being provided clothes that were made for the particular context in which their bodies were adapted to, gave a sense of exclusion. They evaluated themselves based on comparisons with others in the group (Frestinger, 1954), and the sport was the environment that was closest to the participants.

Here the comparisons are important since they were close to their own opinions and abilities, but then not to fit into the norm which the tale of the provided clothes obviously told, was very difficult to handle. Apparently even here there was an ideal that differed from the girls' actual /own (Higgins, 1987). As an athlete you should look a certain way, the way the clothes were made.

Conclusion

The outcome of this project shows that it is more complicated and perhaps more important than was envisaged at first. Although the athletes in this study all have made their choice of putting the **Performance body** before the **Appearance body**, they still felt sometimes as "anomalies" or outsiders, not just in society but also in the world of athletics. Even so these girls think it is worthwhile, but what about those who choose not to continue throwing? Could this be a reason for their drop out? According to the respondents in this study the body ideal has been a reason for some girls to cease throwing. The athletic association might not have the power to change the ideals out in society, but the power to change the way of acting inside our sport community is ours. The way we speak, how the coaches act, what kind of clothes are offered for competitions, and so on, can all be influenced from within the association. Even though this study showed that the women felt more secure and were appreciating their bodies more inside the sport environment, it also showed that it was inside the athletic community they met most of the negative prejudices and felt most overlooked, and this is something we can and have to amend. Although there might be a great deal we cannot change, this project shows that by creating a supporting, equal and open climate, athletics could instead be an area where various types of bodies are appreciated and valued, not just the ones in line with the beauty ideals of society.

Recommendations

Since this study opened up even more questions, it primarily suggests this to be an area for later research. Not only did it turn out to be a quite complicated and paradox subject, it also showed that there are areas which are important to consider more deeply in order to make the athletic environment even more supporting and open.

Suggestions for further research are: Body image in relation to performance, the issue of the aftermath of a career end, or how the athlete is affected by an injury. Possible objectives could be: How is the body image affected during an injury? How does the view of the body change at the completion of the sports career? And how can we best help athletes to make these situations as easy as possible? Also more research about the coaches' roles and communication with their athletes about body image should be considered, both through an athlete's perspective and a coach's. The findings from this could help coaches to deal with this kind of sensitive subject and should be implemented as a part of leadership training programmes, since body concerns, according to the girls in this study, sometimes are a reason for leaving the throwing event.

The situation that the girls experienced more negative stereotypes and expectations of them as throwers in the athletic environment rather than in the social context, is interesting and something that needs to be considered. It is important that coaches from the start consider how they speak about different events and athletes in front of their adepts. The image of throwers as fat, lazy and unfit might be hard to erase, but if we work both at an elite level with increasing positive attention from media and the associations, and on grass-root level with the coaches for the younger groups promoting throwing as equal to the other events, this stereotypic image might change.

The fact that the girls in this study felt that throwers often ended up in a small group by themselves and sometimes experienced exclusion and discrimination in the athletic context, is something that the Swedish (and perhaps International) Athletic Association should consider. Even though some parts may be self-imposed, some are definitely not of the female throwers' making, such as being referred to

pre-competitions or being completely deleted in the event programme. If the body size truly plays a part in this exclusion would also be an interesting subject for further research, not just in a sporting perspective.

Concerning the clothing problems, this must primarily be a task for both the Athletic Association and the clubs. During this project it appeared to be the clothing situation which made the girls feel most uncomfortable in their bodies and also alienated. To design clothes that fit everybody is of course impossible, but to offer some larger sizes and maybe two lines, one for shorter athletes and one for taller, would make the athletes feel more comfortable and neat in their competition outfits and maybe even perform better because of this, not having to think about whether the tights have pulled up showing too much, or if they look weird somehow. To use men's clothes is not a good solution according to the results of this study. It makes the girls feel abnormal and unfeminine compared to the norm. This is something that needs to be considered when it comes to ordering a new line of competition clothes. It is time for the federation to find their own kind of "stretch jeans". So that everyone, in every event and every size could feel appreciated, secure in themselves and beautiful.

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