



Thank God for Stretch Jeans

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As an athlete, your body can be your best friend and your worst enemy. Eight female throwers were interviewed about their view of their bodies and the paradox of the body ideal of society against that of the sport. Results show that although athletes had made their choice of putting the **Performance body** before the **Appearance body** they sometimes felt like "anomalies" or outsiders in society as well as in the world of athletics.

Introduction

As an athlete, your body can be your best friend and your worst enemy. Whatever your relationship to your body, it is still your most important tool for succeeding in your sport. The athlete works hard, but society has its own criteria for the "perfect" body, which sometimes may contradict the ideal of the sport.(1)

The aim of this study was to investigate Swedish female throwers' views of their bodies and how they look at the paradox of the body ideal of society against that of the sport.



Methods

Eight female throwers (age 20–41) were interviewed using two focus groups: F1 (age 20–22) and F2 (age 26–41). Results were analysed using Higgins Self-discrepancy Theory (1987)(2) and Social Comparison Theory by Festinger (1954) (3)

Results

Results show that although athletes had made their choice of putting the **Performance body** before the **Appearance body**, they sometimes felt like "anomalies" or outsiders in society as well as in the world of athletics.

Conclusion

This study should drive the discussion on body image and help to create a modern supportive, equal and open climate in athletics and other sports, where all body types are welcomed, understood, appreciated and valued, not just the those in line with the predominant beauty ideals of society.

References

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