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Athletic body stereotypes in the academic training of students in the Physical Activity and Sport Sciences


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ABSTRACT

Rodríguez, C., Ospina, J., & Piedra, J. (2016). Athletic body stereotypes in the academic training of students in the Physical Activity and Sport Sciences. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc.*, 11(1), 74-88. In the past years, despite advances in recent decades in terms of rights and equal opportunities between women and men, the male and female body stereotypes have not disappeared; on the contrary, they have continued to exist at an even greater scale. However, there are no current studies analyzing this phenomenon in terms of the perceptions held by future professionals in the field of physical education and sport in Spain. In this paper, we have tried to examine the stereotypes of gender that exist in the substructures of beliefs of students of physical and sports activity science in regard to the body of women in athletics. The study took place in three Andalusian public universities currently offering studies in the field of athletics (2009-2010, N= 424). Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire completed online. The analysis of data was conducted by descriptive statistics. Results show the existence of a stereotyped conception, both overt and covert, against the stated objective. Gender stereotypes detected on the woman's body on training in track and field are mainly located in physical appearance and performance, manifestations of gender in terms of the woman's body and on different events that took place. Their need to maintain beauty standards, brought under established social control, emanates from these perceptions. **Key words:** STEREOTYPES, GENDER, ATHLETICS, ACADEMIC TRAINING.

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INTRODUCTION

The body has been a point of reference in the history of humanity, often opposed to the conception that has existed of the soul. *"This presence of the body in various discourses is a paradox, although the body is a social product, we note its absence in the discourses which, on the contrary, have distinguished from old times ideological values"* (Planella, 2006).

Despite advances in recent decades in terms of rights and equal opportunities between women and men, the male and female body stereotypes have not disappeared; on the contrary, they have continued to exist to an even greater extent. Thus, young individuals (and not so young), have increased pressure to conform to the social standards about the body not only through the media, but also in the school, family, clubs, etc. (Azzarito et al., 2014). The internalized body standards for women correspond to thinness and tonicity (Krane et al., 2004) and trying to avoid muscularity as an attractive feature (Azzarito, 2009). However, for men, the body stereotypes are corpulence and vigor (Claus-Bravo & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2013). The association between male muscle development and a powerful sexual ability go together when it comes to perpetuate the existing stereotypes. Even outside the world of gym culture, many people exercise in an attempt to make their bodies more physically attractive (Dutton & McLaren, 2014), seeking to improve what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) defined as *social capital* and allowing an upward movement in the social hierarchy.

It is precisely this hierarchical culture that perpetuates the existence of body stereotypes. So, at the top of the social structure, those who present a great success are normally those perfectly adapted to the social standards on the body. Because of this there is this assumption since childhood of a body-success relationship, seeking the ideal body, sometimes with extreme measures. This pressure has been clearer and more intense for women (Castañer & Camerino, 2012) than for men, because the beauty patterns have traditionally been more flexible and less demanding for the latter. However, the reality is that only a small part of the population fits the optimum patterns, leaving many women in disagreement with their own body identity.

Through various authors we know that the "I body" is a construct that we produce from a biological structure given at birth. The social construction of the body not only refers to the most visible aspects, such as the body morphology; it also involves much deeper aspects such as the identity of the body and the relationship that each person establishes with their body (Martin, 2006).

On the other hand, for Vazquez (2002), social, moral and aesthetic order unconsciously seep into the vital manifestations of infantile body and acquire force of law; Thus, we are men or women not only by the genetic sex but because we acquired gestures, forms of sensitivity and modes of relationship that a society assigns to each and other. In the case of sports, as the female population has been incorporating into its practice, this has been taking greater influence in the construction of the self-image of women. But that self-image, that body identity, is constructed through the combination and management of numerous stimuli coming from contexts of reference of subjects. In addition, this overlaps the concept of gender, resulting in references socially differentiated between men and women. Both, in turn, are used for the assessment of men and women.

Women who want to practice sports must therefore combine body gender identity with self-image in sports. This is, in some cases, contradictory (Colás & Rodríguez, 2013; Fontecha, 2012).

This leads to the fact that many of the female athletes resolve this dilemma by incorporating a functional conception of the body and sports identity. It means that for them the body is more than just aesthetics and an object of admiration for others, especially from men. The body serves to compete, win, enjoy, participate... Therefore, their body identity is associated with a functional body and performance.

Another problem is generated around the concept of body image. Participating in a sport or compete in sports requires a certain degree of functional muscles essential to achieve sport success (Ross & Shinew, 2008). In the case of men, a natural relationship is given between male body and sports demand. The musculature is a characteristic of male body image, currently manifested in the muscles in the upper part of the torso, arms, chest, and shoulders, combined with a waist, hip and thin buttocks (McCreary & Sasse, 2000; Morrison et al., 2003; Pope et al., 1999; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005). This muscular structure conforms to cultural ideals and social conceptions of masculinity. However, the same does not occur in the case of women where social standards of female body image, socially recognized, do not match sports demands (Boyle, 2005; Krane et al., 2001; Mosewich et al., 2009).

The practice of sports by women involves joining a model of functional and active body that breaks down the barriers of femininity. But then new requirements appear since it tends to equate motor competition with a standard of "ideal athlete" socially constructed as male (strong, competitive, and aggressive). As a result, a «poor» sports woman model arises, because this model is not valued intrinsically, by function of its individuality, but rather on the basis of its comparison with the hegemonic male model (Camacho-Miñano, 2013).

Although it is a fact that girls are positioned in relation to this gender order and negotiate their body sport identity, opposing, accepting or even adapting these dominant social discourses, the truth is that these messages have an impact in one way or another in the configuration of their identities, significantly media centering different relations that they establish with sport activities in different areas of practice. In this regard, the work of Steinfeldt (2011) indicates that women athletes want to be "sufficiently muscular" to succeed in the athletic events but at the same time, not to have excessive volume of musculature that breaks their image of femininity. It means that their body development has an eminently functional nature.

The muscular development for female athletes, therefore, creates a paradox in which a toned body is perceived as ideal; however, big muscles symbolize strength and masculinity (Bordo, 1993). That is why female athletes wish to be strong to succeed, but avoid the development of an excessive musculature.

These body stereotypes affecting women athletes throughout their sporting careers are present at all levels of sports. That means that we all are affected by them and we are doomed to perpetuate or resist them with our actions and opinions. For this reason, it is important to know the beliefs and attitudes of future sports professionals about the body stereotypes present in female athletics. Knowing this will allow to propose and plan actions to eliminate these stereotypes and build a more flexible and open sport practice.

Objective

Learn about gender stereotypes of students majoring in physical activity and sport sciences about the female body in the sport of track and field.

METHODS

This study is framed in the descriptive and transversal methodology with an ex-post facto design. From the point of view of the data collection technique, this research fits in the survey type studies, focused on the description of a given situation.

Participants

The sample studied was obtained using an incidental sampling. It is made up by 362 senior students of the Bachelor of Science in Physical Activity and Sports (BPE) from three universities in Andalusia (Spain). Out of the total number of participants, 71.6% are men, and 28.4% are women. As for the age of the participants, 90.4% are between 20 and 25 years of age, 6.6% between 26 and 30, 2.1%, between 31 and 36, and 0.9% above 36.

Instrument

For this research, we designed an *ad hoc* tool which allows for the collection of data within the scope of track and field. Such questionnaire was included 72 items divided in five constructs: Stereotypes of gender on woman's body in track and field; gender stereotypes in regard to the skills and abilities of men and women in track and field; stereotyped conceptions of gender in regard to the different events in track and field; gender stereotypes regarding the profile of conduct of men and women in athletics; gender stereotypes regarding the social consideration of women in athletics.

The scale used was Likert-type with a range of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). However, for this research, we used data from 13 items in the dimension referred to body stereotypes about women athletes. This dimension is configured in the two sub-dimensions that provided better analysis capability: physical appearance and physical fragility.

As for the psychometric properties of the instrument, different measures carried out yielded an adequate internal consistency (George and Mallery, 2003), with an Cronbach alpha of .891 for the specific dimension analyzed in this work. To determine the validity of the tool a validation was conducted by three experts and a construct validity. Therefore, there was a factor analysis with Varimax rotation, resulting in three factors (based on the Kaiser rule) that we mentioned previously (Rodríguez-Fernández, 2015).

Procedure

The research project was approved by institutional review board. Subsequently and during the sessions of the courses related to track and field, the project was introduced to students as well as its goals, encouraging participation. We emphasized the voluntary nature of participation in the study, as well as the confidential treatment of all data. Finally, the students accessed the questionnaire online to without the presence of the main researchers. Answering the questionnaire did not take more than 20 minutes. Data obtained online were transferred to a statistics software package.

From the responses, the mean for the total scale scores was calculated. Subsequently there were descriptive statistical analysis of the items and scale factor analysis using the statistical package SPSS 20.0.

RESULTS

This study focused on the gender stereotypes that future professionals of sports and physical activity have of women's body in track and field. Table 1 shows the percentages, mean and median of the results obtained in this dimension.

Table 1. *Percentages, averages and medians "Gender stereotypes on the body of women in athletics".*

Gender stereotypes about women's bodies in Athletics	Totally Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Totally Agree	Average/ media N
1. Women shows more physical fragility than men in different track and field disciplines.	30.30%	31.50%	16.60%	16.00%	5.60%	2.35/2
2. The ideal body of the woman athlete should have a harmonious development and no excessive muscles	32.80%	33.10%	17.50%	11.50%	5.1%	2.23/2
3. The training of women in athletics masculinizes her physical features.	11.10%	24.60%	26.40%	24.1%	13.80%	3.05/3
4. In track and field, only women who have lost feminine physical characteristics are successful.	60.8%	22.10%	8.10%	6.30%	2.70%	1.68/2
5. Do you think that this woman has lost the characteristics of identity which are characterized as female?	7.10%	21.50%	16%	24.60%	30.80%	3.5/4
6. The sexual representation of images of women in athletics is higher than the purely sports presentation.	31.80%	30.40%	26.20%	7.70%	3.90%	2.21/2
7. Physical development of the musculature of the female athlete makes her less attractive	15.30%	30.50%	17.20%	19.50%	17.50%	2.93/3
8. Female throwers' bodies are too "masculine"	12.20%	23.30%	26.90%	26.60%	11%	3.01/3
9. Sprinters have excess of musculature for women	30%	31.2%	18.9%	14.70%	5.20%	2.34/2
10. Middle-distance events result in women having too thin and not enough female bodies.	33.60%	34.20%	16.40%	12.50%	3.30%	2.18/2
11. Do you think that women who practice high jump are more feminine than those throwing discs?	29.20%	18.20%	17.50%	18.10%	17.%	2.76/3

12. In comparison to the size, the muscles of women athletes are just as strong as men athletes	37.70%	25.50%	22.80%	9.20%	4.8%	2.18/2
13. The composition of the muscle and fat of the female body mass makes her less suitable for track and field than man.	43.80%	27.70%	14.30%	9.80%	4.40%	2.04/2

With regard to this, as noted above, the instrument contemplates two factors: "Physical appearance of the female athlete" and "Physical fragility".

As for the first one, it seeks to deepen the beliefs and values of gender stereotypes that BPE students have around the physical body of the female component and its relation with the different aspects of track and field (competition, training and practice in general). As for the second factor, it collects aspects regarding the physical fragility of the female body, that is, characteristics that harmonize with stereotypes of the female body and weakness in relation to athletic practice.

Which values and importance do students give to the physical appearance of female athletes?

1. *Stereotypes about the physical form* (items 3, 4 and 5). The three items expressed in Figure 1 show three different levels of beliefs around the body of the woman athlete. This range moves from a perspective in which a body with female characteristics can achieve sport success, even though training masculinizes them, causing a strong stereotype. Finally, there is a third level of belief where women "lose their female identity by the athletic practice with high competitive level".

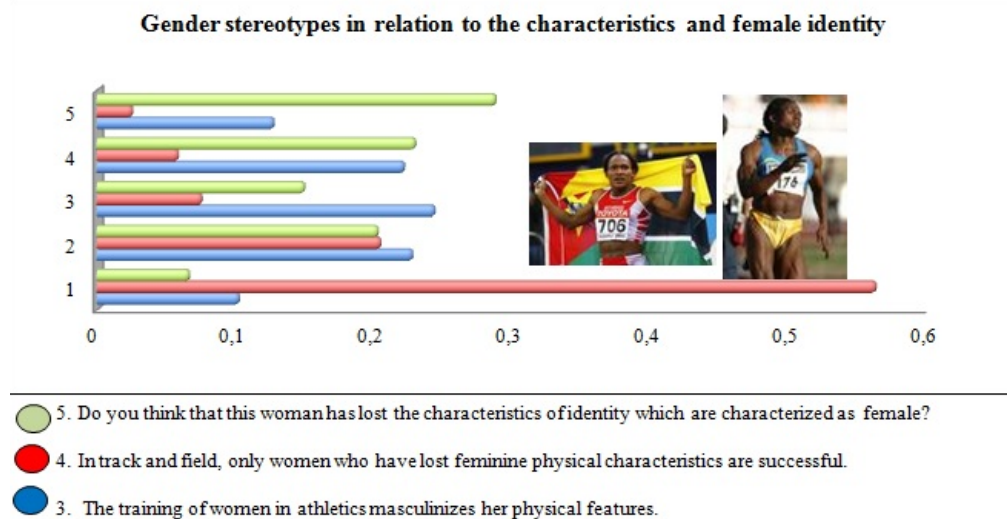


Figure 1. Percentages of response on items 3, 4 and 5 (Physical Fitness).

Students surveyed expressed gender stereotypes regarding the direct relationship between the effects of the athletic training in women's bodies and their "masculinizing effect". This result provides a strong stereotype because there is a boundary between what is considered male and female. In this sense, item 5 showed that for students, the body of Maria Mutola (800m world record holder) has already exceeded this

limit having lost what could characterize her as a feminine woman. On the other hand, it is not the same with answers to item 4, as students believe that it is possible to be successful in track and field without losing female physical characteristics.

2. Stereotypes about physical appearance, (items 2 and 7).

Figure 2 provides a summary of the responses related to physical appearance. In it, again, there are two groups of responses in the binomial weak/versus strong stereotype. On the one hand, students do not see fragile women nor set objectives in which the female body should have a harmonious development. This aspect is taken with subjectivity and relativization when we add the meaning of the results of item 7, where strong gender stereotypes appear when a decrease of the physical attractiveness of the female athlete due to her muscles is shown.

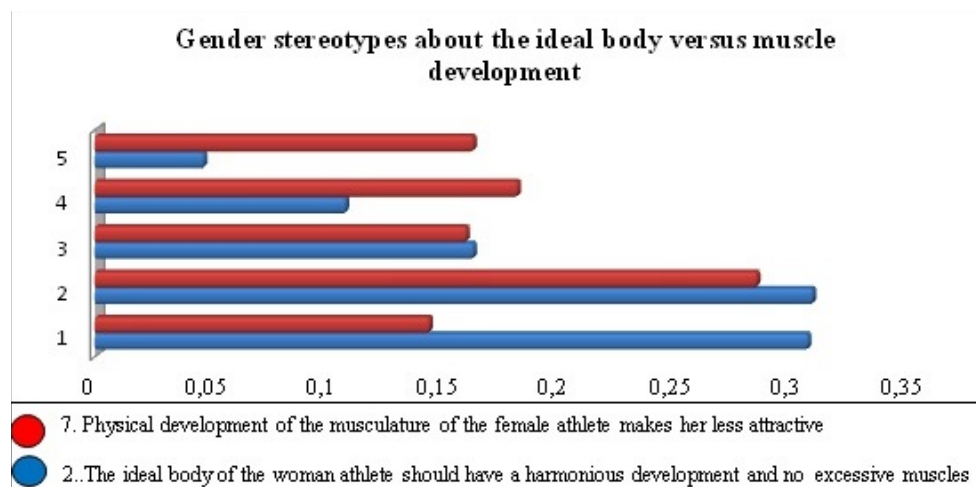


Figure 2. Percentages of response on items 2 and 7 (physical appearance).

Item 7 shows that the analyzed sample maintains a strong stereotype, declining its beliefs into aspects linked to the female beauty standard historically established for women, concluding with the premise that "excessive" muscles for women athletes makes them less physically attractive. Thus, the musculature becomes a border between male and female, a more "masculine" woman being less attractive.

3. Stereotype about the female body and track and field events: (items 8, 9, 10 and 11).

Establishing a comparative visual analysis of the different items which include estimations of the vision of the body of the female athlete and its participation in the various athletic events, we found in Figure 3 the differences in degrees of gender stereotypes. In this point, it should be noted that the maximum exponent of strong gender stereotype corresponds to the item related to throwers' women body and at its opposite end the body of the athlete women, high jumper and distance races, as well as body and women sprinters. In a degree of active stereotype, it would place the assessment of the comparative among different events, such as the high jump, and women throwers.

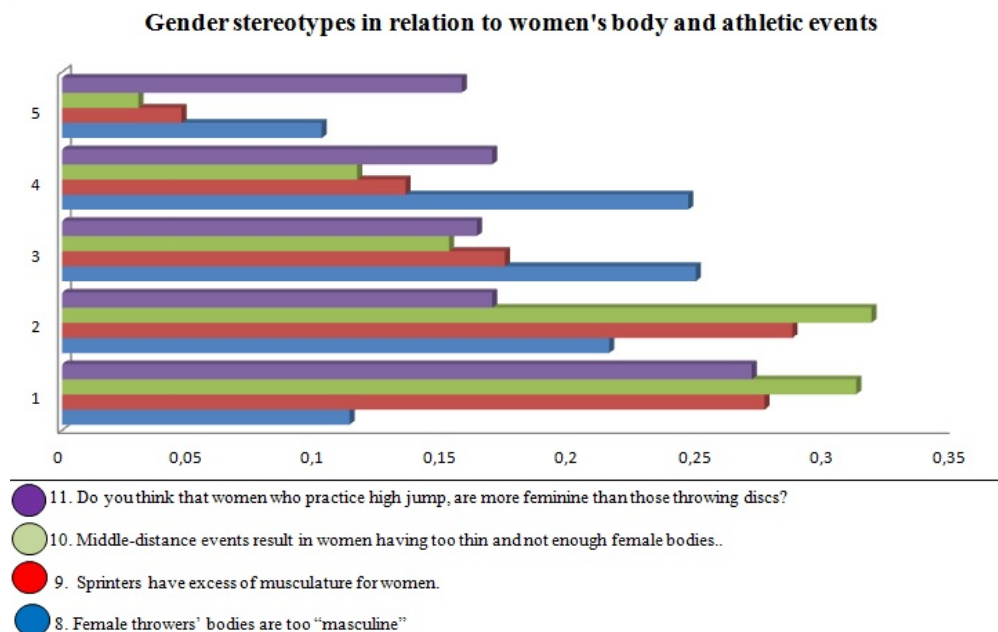


Figure 3. Percentages of responses on items 8, 9, 10 and 11 (female body and athletic events).

As mentioned previously, the claims referring to women throwers (item 8), and to discus throwers (item 11) present, based on the answers of the students, a clear presence of stereotypes, again linking masculinity/femininity to the presence of more or less mass muscle. The characteristics of these track and field events have lead many athletes to pass, according to students, the boundary between acceptable, or not, for a woman.

At the other end, we have references to the distance runners (item 10). The results show that excessive thinness of women can be a limit to their "femininity" according to answers from students. Item 10 shows the computation of analysis of athletic events, in which there has been an approach to the understanding of gender stereotypes in relation to the muscle of the body of the women distance runners their "masculinity".

Globally, it is possible to define that the population is not very stereotyped as for female characteristics of the body of the distance runners. Within the 50% of opinions above it medium, 34.23% of the population, is "somewhat in agreement", 16.37% of the population is "in agreement", 12.50% of the population is "quite in agreement" and 3.27% of the population is "completely in agreement".

In terms of the assessment of the body of the sprinter women and the excess of musculature (item 9), surveyed students manifested not to show stereotypes in this regard.

And, as a last item 11 (Figure 3) it obtains a median of 3, which tells us that there is a strong gender stereotype around the prototype of woman on the basis of the event carried out, making it evident, as previously discussed (item 8), that the body of women who practice throws are excluded from "female standards".

4. *Stereotype on the public representation of the female body:* (item 6). This issue will analyze the beliefs that BPE students have about the highest sexual representation versus sports images of women in

athletics. The results showed that 62.2% of students were Not at all or Somewhat in accordance with this statement, so these data indicate that there is no real appreciation in that woman athlete still has to become visible through aspects linked purely to the body or their anatomy to be presented in the media and not because of their sporting achievements.

5. *Stereotype about female body and athletic performance:* (item 12). This item asks students whether in "in proportion to the size, the muscles of women athletes is just as strong as men athletes". Again 63.2% of the students were Not at all or Somewhat in accordance with this statement. It can be determined that the population is very stereotyped in terms of body composition and muscle of women in athletics.

Which values and importance do students give to the physical fragility of the women athletes?

Finally, below are the results of the analysis of the results of items 1 and 13 that make up the second factor analysis of the body of the woman in athletics. Both items valued in its entirety aspects of the physical fragility of the athletes' body.

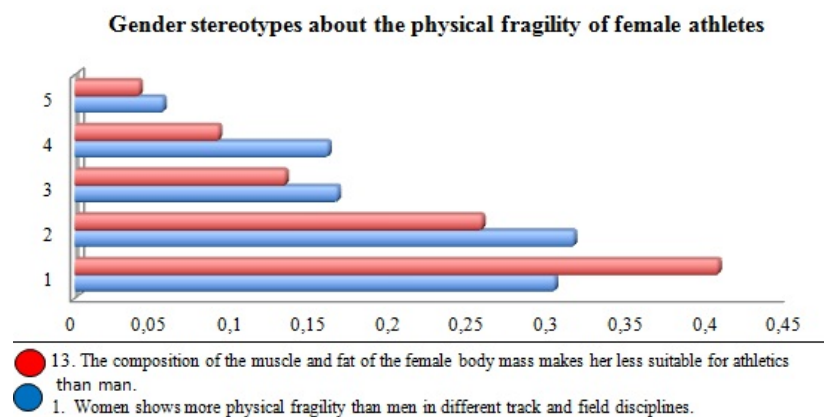


Figure 4. Percentages of response on items 1 and 13 (Physical Fragility).

As it can be seen in Figure 4, the results reveal a little stereotyped for students' image of the female athlete, because less than half of the participants (38%) answered; "Agreement", "Rather agree" and "In complete agreement" in relation to the idea that the female body is more fragile than that of the man when it comes to athletic activities. However, the assessments carried out under the answer "somewhat agree", encompasses 31.45%.

DISCUSSION

For this study, we were able to target five specific topics related to students enrolled in BPE in Andalusia – Spain, all of them focusing on the stereotypical conceptions of gender in relation to the body of women in track and field.

Female body and muscle development

The results of the study indicate that BPE students hold a vision in which a body with female characteristics can achieve success in sports. However, the strong gender stereotype comes when students express that training masculinizes, losing their female identity because of the athletic practice of high-level competition. These results present us with a clear paradox because participating in a sport or compete in track and field

requires a certain degree of essential functional muscles to achieve success. In the case of men, there is a given natural relationship between male body and sport requirement. Studies such as McCreary & Sasse (2000); Morrison et al., (2003); Pope et al. (1999); Ridgeway & Tylka (2005); Spitzer et al., (1999) stated how musculature is a characteristic of the male body image. This muscular structure conforms to cultural ideals and social masculinity conceptions, as we have learned from the results. These show consistency with the studies of Boyle (2005); Krane et al., (2001); and Mosewich et al. (2009), in which the social standards of female body image socially recognized do not coincide with the sport demands. On other hand, results show that the view about the body of women athletes does not correspond with feminine characteristics socially established and causes them an identification or belief in the loss of female identity. Investigations like the one of Jones & Greer (2011), when facing news about sports that include an image depicting masculine and female athletes look, and in male or female sports, responses conform favorably to those that are tightened to the stereotype of the sport. This means that the sport performed by women involves joining a model of functional and active body that breaks down the barriers of femininity. But then there are new requirements since there is a tendency in equating motor competition for them with a standard of ideal athlete socially constructed as male (strong, competitive, aggressive). A deficient athlete female model arises because they do not value themselves, by her individuality, but on the basis of their comparison with the hegemonic male model (Camacho-Miñano, 2013).

Thirdly, students do not see fragile women nor they set objectives in which the female body should be a harmonious development (item 2). Their appreciation changes when we add the meaning of the results of item 7, where strong gender stereotypes appear in the responses related to the existence of a decrease in the physical attractiveness of the female athlete due to their muscular development. This reaffirms studies such as the ones from Steinfeldt (2011), where the degree in which women athletes wanted to be muscular was empirically assessed as well as their reasons. They indicated that they wanted to be muscular enough to succeed in athletic events but at the same time they did not want to have a excessive volume of musculature that would break their image of femininity. On the other hand, male athletes did not hesitate to report their desires to be muscular. Previous studies (Young, 1997; Wright & Clarke, 1999) had shown that successful athletes should be powerful and strong; however, those signs are interpreted in a negative way, which is a contradiction to the idea of hegemonic femininity (Choi, 2000).

All that is is considered in relation to a reduction of physical attractiveness versus muscle development, which remains stigmatized; studies such as the one from Weaving & Teetzel (2014) about doping, gender and sports shows it. Women athletes were reluctant to taking supplements, both permitted and prohibited ergogenics by fear of being too muscular or male looking.

Female body and athletic performance

There is a strong stereotype about female body and athletic performance (item 12). The students framed were fully framed in beliefs identified as stereotypes of female "weaker" and less "able", athletically speaking, since they do not include the biological possibility that women may have the same resultant force that the man in proportion to size and under the parameters of athletic performance. In some cases the strength of men and women overlap, especially when it relates to men and women trained athletes. Analyzing the world records achieved by men and women, it can be observed that in speed sports such as running or swimming women are getting closer to men (Macías, 2005). In the same vein, Christensen (1993); Wilmore and Costill (2007) examine how men and women display differences within each sex in measures such as height and weight, width of shoulders and hips and muscular development. These authors also affirm that if physiological measures are taken we would find more differences in each sex than between the sexes. Thus, the skills of elite men and women appear to be similar.

Therefore, in relation to the biological possibility that women may have the same resultant strength than men, always in proportion to the size of their muscles, students are fully set in beliefs that we can identify as female stereotypes 'weaker', less 'able', athletically speaking, under the parameters of performance.

Female body and athletic events

As for the binomial body female-athletic events, there appears to be a strong gender stereotype corresponding to item 8, linked with body's female throwers and, at its opposite end, with the body of the woman athlete and events or distant races (item 10), as well as body, and women sprinters (item 9). The assessment of the comparison among different events, such as the high jump and female throwers (item 11), can be considered as a degree of intermediate gender stereotype. In this sense, students who come from other previous university studies are presenting more stereotypes in relation to this item. The more stereotypical responses of all the students of BPE is manifested clearly in regard to the female features of the body of the female thrower in track and field. In this sense, we highlight that they are the ones that present a lower stereotype facing them. All these results come to continue the line of investigations by Vannini & Fornssler (2011), which conclude that women athletes are constantly reminded that their body contradicts the contemporary cultural idea of femininity, especially in athletic specialties such as weight, discus, or hammer throwing. Therefore, the woman athlete constantly receives negative messages. It is necessary to have a large muscular development to be successful in the sports competition, but this same development can be an obstacle in social settings. In this sense, many women athletes who pursue the achievement of success and achievement of the competition, develop a body that allows them to be in equal conditions of acquiring sports glory, but at the same time trying to show social signs of femininity. This is the case with sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Jamaican, Olympic champion in the 100m in London 2012. Analyses made by sport feminists (Birrel, 2000; Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Théberge, 2000) proposed that gender identity detected in little accepted sports for women has a double influence on the situation of this sports practice.

Female body and physical fragility

The data reflect how students that enrolled in studies of BPE possess a certain stereotyped view toward the body of the woman athlete and her fitness in the performance of athletic events (items 1 and 13). This result is perhaps not as pointed as the previous ones, due to the existence of scientific knowledge acquired in their university studies. Anyway, statements show students still holding biologist positions, identifying, therefore with the contributions of Muñoz (2011), Vaamonde & Omar (2012), around the so-called benevolent sexism. Research such as the one from (Cuadrado, 2004; Garcia-Vega et al., 2010; Rocha-Sanchez & Diaz, 2005; Schmader et al., 2008) about gender stereotypes show the existence of a clear asymmetry in the assignment of positive traits to men and women.

Female body and public representation

The obtained results show a strong bias on the public representation of the athletic female body (item 6). The analyzed sample has no real appreciation in the fact that athlete women still have to be visible through aspects linked purely to their body or their anatomy to be presented in the media and not for their achievements in sports. This invisibility shows how the image of women in sports advertising is associated with the classical standards of beauty and physical attractiveness with sexual connotations, while men stand out in their sporting achievements regardless of their physical image (Colas & Rodríguez, 2013). This image is associated with sportswear, events, supplements, diet and ergogenic supplements. Large clothing sports brands have turned to women and their relationship with the world of the sport as a non-exploited market, creating lines of clothing especially for women athletes, taking for granted that these young, urban women are somewhat transgressive and will use the clothing for all purposes except for ones related to

sports (Montin, 2010). Advertising has put their attention on the image of women athlete as the claim of numerous products and sales strategies. This begins with the eroticization of the woman athlete's body back to the dictatorship of aesthetics, not only uses its sporty image, but they also stress the stereotype of female hyper feminine. Studies like the one from Suarez Villegas (2006) show the responsibility that sports have in the construction of the identity of women as if it was just another symbolic stage that illustrate the diagrams of male dominance. Sport becomes, therefore, a symbolic realm of power and of men's competition. When it highlights any woman in any sport, there is a persistent attempt by media of rating it from the male perspective of their physical attractiveness.

But this stereotype present in the answers to item 6 on the public representation of the athletic female body is not correlated with the numerous investigations and reports on the opinions that the common citizen possesses over the presence of women athletes in the media such as data of the Audiovisual scale of Andalusia, (2008), Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, (2008) , Platform CAA & Haca, (2014), the Committee on women and sport of the Spanish Olympic Committee, the Institute for women and the own Radio Televisión Española, come to the same conclusions: women who do sports seem invisible. They are not in the media. They do not appear, they do not sell. And if you don't sell, you do not exist.

Investigations such as the ones from Daniels (2012) demonstrate the need to show not objectified images of women in the media, including those representing women in instrumental activities as a sport. The results indicate that media coverage of women athletes performing in sports can positively impact the female audience evoking an instrumental approach in which female athletes' bodies can do and their own athletic capacity.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained from this study point to the following conclusions with respect to the objective of this research:

1. A body with female features can achieve sport success, however, a strong stereotype of gender appeared when students expressed that training masculinizes, losing their female identity by the athletic practice of high level competition.
2. The sample was very stereotyped as for the view of the body of the woman athlete when it does not respond to socially established feminine characteristics, causing the identification or belief of the loss of female identity in high performance athletes.
3. Students did not see fragile women nor set objectives in which the female body should have a harmonious development, but her appreciation changes when we add the meaning of the results of item 7, where strong gender stereotypes appear in the responses of the existence of decrease of the physical attractiveness of the female athlete due to their muscular development.
4. There appeared to be a strong stereotype of corresponding gender related with female throwers' bodies and at the opposite end the body of the female athlete and events or distance running, as well as the body of sprinter women. The assessment of the comparison between different events, such as high jump and female throwers is shown under a degree of intermediate gender stereotype. In this case, students of BPE clearly manifested themselves as a very stereotyped population in regard to feminine characteristics of the body of the female thrower in athletics.

5. There is a strong stereotype about the public representation of the women athletic body. The sexual portrayal of women in athletics is higher than its sports representation. The sample had no real appreciation in the fact that athlete women still have to make themselves visible through aspects linked purely to the body or their anatomy to be presented in the media and not for their sporting achievements.

6. There is a strong stereotype about female body and athletic performance. The students were fully framed in beliefs identified as stereotypes of "weaker", less "able" woman, athletically speaking, since they did not include the biological possibility that women may have the same resultant strength than men in proportion to size and under the parameters of athletic performance.

7. The data reflected how the female and male students enrolled in the studies of BPE possessed some not stereotyped beliefs and values towards body composition of women athletes and their fitness in the performance of athletic events, perhaps as a result of the acquisition of scientific knowledge acquired in their university studies.

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