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Discursive practices around the body of the female athlete: An analysis of sport psychology interactions in elite sport

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To examine the discursive practices surrounding athletes' bodies with a particular focus on a) how food, the body and agency around eating and exercising practices are constructed, as well as b) how dominant discourses and narratives are deployed.
Method: A case study design was used, examining interactions from three female athletes with a sport psychologist regarding their body composition. The psychology sessions took place within an elite sport setting. Recordings from three initial psychology sessions were recorded. Analysis drew on a synthesis of discursive psychology and conversation analysis.
Results: Competing depictions of food and the body were drawn on by the athletes and the psychologist in order to either reproduce or resist taken for granted notions about a need to reduce body composition to improve performance. Discursive tensions were evident in talk around female athletes' bodies, with a performance narrative functioning to regulate athletes' bodies, at the same time that athletes oriented to a dominant notion of the thin female body. Food was also variously constructed in moral terms and as a neutral energy source. Throughout the sessions, individual agency for the body and for resolving the 'problem' of body composition was reproduced, with broader discursive and institutional practices overlooked.
Conclusion: This study provides an in insight into *how* talk around the body and eating practices takes place within one institutional context occurring within an elite sport setting. In particular, this study highlights how potentially problematic discourses and practices are privileged and reproduced or resisted. Shifting the focus to technique rather than body modification and nutrition may be beneficial for athletes' wellbeing. Further implications for practice are discussed.

1. Introduction

The bodies of elite athletes are a central focus of much sport science. Athletes' bodies are integral to their identity, signifying their capacity to perform (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2006), and athletes' bodies are also highly scrutinized within elite sport. The notion of optimising athletes' body weight and composition to best suit their sport has long been dominant within elite sport settings (Miller, 2012; Sammarone Turocy et al., 2011). Practices of body regulation and monitoring are commonplace, such as weigh-ins, targets for body composition, regular testing of body composition (such as through skinfold testing and other assessment methods), and dietary recommendations/management. These practices typically have the aim of promoting athletes to have an optimal body weight and composition, thereby maximising performance (Dosil, 2008; Papathomas & Lavallee, 2006; Plateau, McDermott, Arcelus, & Meyer, 2014). Within this context of routine monitoring of athletes' bodies, pressures to diet and modify the body are customary (Martinsen, Bratland-Sanda, Eriksson, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2010; Sundgot-Borgen, 1994). Such regulatory practices, which function to control what athletes eat (Lang, 2015) and produce athletes as individuals who need to engage in bodily self-surveillance (Chapman, 1997; McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011), come to be normalised in elite sport settings (McMahon & Penney, 2013b). These routine practices of body regulation remain despite evidence linking body monitoring and the pressure to be thin for performance with disordered eating (Dosil, 2008; McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011; Papathomas & Lavallee, 2014) and the higher prevalence of disordered eating seen amongst elite athletes (Torstveit, Rosenvinge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2008).

Consideration of athletes' bodies have traditionally placed responsibility

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within the athletes themselves. However, it had been argued that the body and eating practices cannot be isolated from the discursive practices within which they are located (Busanich & McGannon, 2010; Markula, Burns, & Riley, 2008). That is, understandings of bodies and eating practices are constructed in and through language. Certain versions of bodies and eating come to be privileged over others. For example, certain types of bodies are understood as ideal or not; and certain eating practices are deemed more desirable or appropriate, while others are problematised (Hepworth, 1999). These shared understandings, or discursive practices, also come with constraints around behaviours; certain actions (e.g. certain diets and exercising behaviours) are privileged over others (Edley, 2001). Thus individuals' actions around diet, and managing and regulating their bodies cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader discursive practices (Busanich & McGannon, 2010).

Understandings around the body and food, as well as around sport also necessarily impinge upon the experiences of athletes in relation to their bodies (Busanich, McGannon, & Schinke, 2014).There are also a range of discursive practices that have been identified within sporting environments that surround athletic and sporting bodies and eating practices. For example discourses[1] of performance have been shown to become normalised in elite sport (Johns & Johns, 2000) and substantially impact the practices enacted within sport settings around athletes' bodies (McMahon & Penney, 2013a). Such performance discourses come with prescriptions for athletes' bodies to meet espoused ideals of thinness and have been linked to unhealthy body behaviours, psychological distress and experiences of disordered eating (Busanich et al., 2014; Busanich, McGannon, & Schinke, 2012; Papathomas & Lavallee, 2014) as well as feelings about the body well into the future (McMahon & Penney, 2013a). Thus athletic bodies and related exercise and eating behaviours need to be understood within the context of these sporting-specific discursive practices also.

In addition to the sporting context, athletes' bodies remain co-located within a range of broader cultural discursive practices and understandings around the body more broadly. For instance, cultural understanding around the body are often gendered: Female bodies are constructed as ideally being thin and petite – representing femininity – whereas male bodies are ideally constructed as representing masculine strength (Markula et al., 2008). Notably then, athletes' bodies are also located within these societal understanding around ideal bodies as well as within sporting related understandings and ideals of performative bodies. For female athletes, their bodies are thus located within contrasting versions of ideal bodies: both within the feminine ideal of slenderness and attractiveness, as well as within a muscular and strong understanding of the successful athletic body:, a contrast known as the female athlete paradox (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). Focus group research with female athletes has shown that the athletes perceived themselves as contrary to the cultural ideal of a women's body, due to being strong and more muscular (Krane et al., 2004). In the focus groups, athletes defined femininity and ideal feminine bodies based in hegemonic femininity, and depicted these ideal bodies to be opposite to their own. Moreover, the athletes depicted an arbitrary line between an attractive muscular body and a body that was 'too muscular' that enabled the athletes to somewhat negotiate the line between athletic and feminine bodies and resist the feminine ideal (Krane et al, 2004). Despite these findings, other research has highlighted that beliefs about optimum physiques impact body image (Porter, Morrow, & Reel, 2013) and female athletes have also been reported to express a desire to change their bodies aesthetically to increase compliance with the feminine ideal (Bennett, Scarlett, Clarke, & Crocker, 2017). Even into retirement, female athletes remain located in this tension, with retired athletes reporting experiencing a conflict between their changing bodies shifting towards feminine ideals, yet also away from their former muscular athletic bodies (Papathomas, Petrie, & Plateau, 2018). Moreover, the athletes described bodily changes and reduction in muscle mass as either positive, marking a shift towards femininity, or negative, marking a shift towards increased body fat and away from muscularity. Consequently, body image, eating and exercising behaviours cannot be understood without also acknowledging the paradox surrounding female athletes' bodies (Krane, 2001).

As these previous studies underscore, athletes' bodies and associated eating behaviours cannot be isolated from normalised regulatory practices and broader prevalent discursive practices. These practices produce certain ideal versions of bodies and eating habits, which come with understandings of what is/is not appropriate or desirable behaviours related to the body (Markula et al., 2008). Discursive practices around athletes' bodies further function to regulate and constrain athletes' bodies, as well as normalise specific practices of regulation within elite sport settings (McMahon & Penney, 2013a). While prevailing discursive practices, and how athletes draw on these during interviews, have been explored, little extant research has examined real world interactions, despite an ongoing need to better explore how social practices normalise eating, especially disordered eating, behaviour in sport (Papathomas, 2018). To date, the ways understandings around athletes' bodies, eating, sport and agency are (re)produced in practice within sport settings has received less research attention. Previous research employing a conversation analysis approach to examine interactions occurring during routine practices of body regulation, have shown how athletes and sport staff oriented to institutional ownership over athletes' bodies whilst reproducing and normalising body regulation (Cosh, Crabb, LeCouteur, & Kettler, 2012). Moreover, through delivering news of improved body composition, athletes were positioned as needing continually to improve their bodies (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, LeCouteur, & Tully, 2015) and, within such interactions, behaviours that may be pathological were privileged as evidence of good and appropriate athlete behaviours (Cosh & Crabb, 2012; Cosh et al., 2012). Analysis of naturally occurring interactions from sport settings, therefore, provide an additional lens through which to understand the complex practices which surround athletes' bodies, eating, and body regulation.

This paper aims to expand on these past studies by shedding further light on the discursive practices surrounding athletes' bodies by exploring how talk around food, the body and agency around eating and exercising practices take place in interactions occurring in an elite sport setting. Specifically, the present study examines interactions from sport psychology sessions with a focus on body composition that took place between a sport psychologist and female athletes within a sport institute/academy. The aims of this study are to examine how, within interactions taking place within this institutional context, a) the body is constructed by both athletes and the psychologist, b) food and eating practices are talked about, and c) responsibility around body composition is framed.

2. Method

2.1. Theoretical and methodological approach

This paper adopts a constructionist approach, which is focused on the action-oriented nature of language (Potter, 1996; Potter & Hepburn, 2005a; Wiggins & Potter, 2008). This approach posits that versions of objects and events are constructed in and through language and some constructed versions come to be dominant and taken for granted as common-sense knowledge (Edley, 2001). Our analysis focused on the ways in which food and the body were constructed. Additionally, analysis explored how the broader discursive practices and 'truths', which constitute the lived experience of individuals, were drawn on and resisted (for an overview of a constructionist approach to eating and the body in sport see Busanich & McGannon, 2010).

[1] Different theoretical and methodological approaches to research examining the socially constructive nature of language have varied conceptualisations of discursive practices. The term discursive practice is used here as an umbrella term to refer to constructed understandings and versions of the world, people, objects and so on.

Analysis drew on the principles of discursive psychology (DP) (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2008), informed by Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, 1992). The focus was on exploring repeated representations of how food, the body, and responsibility around body composition were mutually worked up, avowed, and resisted; with a specific focus on the local pragmatics of how such constructions were accomplished within the interactions. Inherent in such an approach is that the social context in and for which the talk is produced necessarily constrains what is said (Potter & Hepburn, 2005b, 2007), and that interactants orient to the specific institutional context in which talk is produced (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Thus DP and CA largely rely on the use of naturally occurring data (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2005); that is, talk and text that occur without the researchers' input. Naturalistic data provide a forum in which to understand the social world and how interactions occur as well as how these function to construct and create certain versions without being shaped by input from the researcher (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Thus the use of naturally occurring data allow for exploration of discursive practices as they occur in situ, thereby shedding light on real world practices (Potter & Hepburn, 2005b, 2007).

2.2. Data

In this paper, we analyse a subset of data from a corpus of sport psychology sessions that took place within the context of an Australian elite sports institute/academy (see also Cosh & Crabb, 2012; Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, et al., 2015; Cosh et al., 2012). This paper utilises a series case study approach; focusing on the specific detail of three individual athletes who attended psychology sessions in which talk of the body was a focus. Case study approaches have previously been used within sport and exercise psychology to enhance understanding around food and the body (Busanich et al., 2012; McGannon, Cunningham, & Schinke, 2013; McGannon & Schinke, 2013). The focus here is on using these three athletes' interactions as illustrative cases to provide an in-depth insight into the nuances of social constructions of food and the body within the sessions analysed.

This paper examined sessions taking place with three female athletes: Tara, Jen and Laura. Tara (aged 19) and Jen (aged 21) were rowers, and Laura (aged 18) was a swimmer. All three were scholarship holders within the sport institute/academy and competed at a national level. The psychologist was an experienced sport psychologist employed by and based on the site of the sport institute/academy. Within this role, he worked with individual athletes, squads, coaches and sport staff with a focus on supporting and improving athlete/squad performance. In addition, the role included supporting athletes to manage the demands of high competition and training schedules and athletes and coaches were able to request sessions for support around a range of issues.

Laura, Jen and Tara each attended sessions with the sport psychologist at the suggestion of their coaches in relation to their body composition. In this setting, athletes routinely undergo skinfold testing, and have targeted skinfold goals that they are required to achieve. Skinfold testing is routinely implemented within this institutional context as a proxy measure for body fat percentage in order to monitor and assess athletes' body composition, with an institutional goal to reduce skinfolds, which is considered as a means of maximising sporting performance in this context (Miller, 2012; Sammarone Turocy et al., 2011). For each athlete, their coach considered them to be showing insufficient progress towards their goal skinfold scores. In this context, athletes are frequently requested to attend sessions with various professionals including psychologists and nutritionists. Thus, these psychology sessions had a specific focus on body composition, with the psychologist's role to support athletes in their own progression towards achieving their skinfold goals. Each session took place on site at the sport institute in the psychology consulting rooms, with the same psychologist, and each session lasted between 1 and 1.5 h.

For this study, analysis focused on the initial psychology sessions with each individual athlete (one for each athlete), during which athletes produced accounts around the reason for their attendance at the session, thereby invoking and contesting constructions around food and the body. Although these were initial sessions in relation to the topic of body composition, the athletes and psychologist all had pre-existing relationships through prior individual and squad psychology sessions.

2.3. Procedure

Data were collected as part of a broader study examining naturally occurring interactions taking place within an elite sport institute. Ethical approval was attained from the relevant University's human research ethics committee. Psychologists informed athletes of the study prior to commencing sessions. A researcher was available to provide additional information and answer athletes' questions as needed. After written inform consent was obtained, sessions were audio-recorded by the psychologists. The recordings were then transcribed according to the Jeffersonian Lite system (Parker, 2005), which is a way of transcribing conversations that uses punctuation markers to denote features of the talk (rather than to indicate grammar) with the aim of retaining the natural detail of the talk (See Appendix A).

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis drew on a synthetic approach of Conversation Analysis and Discursive Psychology (LeCouteur & Cosh, 2016). Thus how broader patterns of understanding were drawn on and resisted (Edley, 2001; Seymour-Smith & Wetherell, 2016) as well as the specific interactional turns and the local pragmatics used to co-construct or resist certain versions were examined (Wiggins & Potter, 2008).

In the initial phase of analysis, comparison of the session structures for each case was undertaken. Each session followed a similar structure, thus for further analyses each case was broken down into sections: a) 'the problem', during which athletes accounted for why they were attending the session and framed the 'problem'; b) 'triggers', during which the psychologist explored reasons for the skinfold 'problem' and examined 'triggers' for what was deemed to be inappropriate eating and/or exercising behaviours; and c) the 'solution' during which the psychologist and athlete developed strategies to overcome and manage triggers and athletes' problematic skinfold scores. Although evident throughout, constructions of food and the body were most evident in the initial two phases of sessions, whereas notions of responsibility were most evident in the 'solution' sections.

We explored each section of each case in turn to examine patterns of how the body, food, and responsibility were depicted and co-constructed. Following the identification of themes in each case, themes were compared across cases. Comparison of cases highlighted the similarity of themes across all three sessions, thus data were coded and representative extracts were selected from all cases based on these representative themes. In the next step, the focus was on examining each line of talk within these extracts to explore *how* these sequences of interactions unfolded and specifically which discursive, rhetorical and interactional tools were used in constructing versions. The broader

patterns of understanding made relevant by interactants were also examined by exploring the specific conversational turns of both athletes and psychologists, as well as exploring what these turns served to accomplish.

3. Results

In the data examined, each session began with the athlete providing an account of why they were attending the session. In each case this was reported as being at their coach's request, rather than an individual desire that they seek support for modifying their bodies. An illustrative example from the session with Tara is provided below.

```
1   Tara: but the reason I'm here is because um (.) o::n hh mm (.) on one of
2         the days I know we had skinfolds [and] (.) .hh I didn't want them at
3   P:                                     [mmm]
4   T:    all cos like I I d didn't come back to me after a week
5   P:    mm yep
6   T:    and I'd put on weight and stuff and I just didn't want 'em .hh
7         [but then (COACH)]
8   P:    [you were] expecting bad news
9   T:    yeah and then (COACH) (.) um said that (.) that like how I but I I do
10        it normally like I alwa::ys like I lose weight too quickly and then I
11        put it back on again and I'm always yoyo up and down and then
12  P:    ri:[ght
13  T:       [I got upset about it and so (.) h and so and he said he
14        recommended that I should come here (.) to talk about it [huh so
15  P:                                                             [ok
16  P:    yeah (.) um (.) if if (COACH) (.) hadn't (.) er said y'know why don't
17        you go and see (Psychologist) (.) would yo[u've]
18  T:                                              [mmm hh]
19  P:    done something about it
20  T:    nah
```

The reason for attending the psychology session is attributed to Tara's coach (lines 13–14), and she also denies any personal desire to address her weight or eating concerns (line 20). Such an account of accessing support around her body management at the suggestion of her coach rather than being initiated herself arguably makes evident the institutional ownership over athletes' bodies (Cosh et al., 2012). In the other sessions, both Laura and Jen similarly attributed their reasons for attending to a request from their coaches.

The three sessions then followed similar formats. After reasons for attending, the sessions then moved into talk around identifying triggers or causes for eating practices, before progressing to an intervention phase that looked at ways to modify and address diet and weight. Notably, patterns of accounting and constructing the body and food were similar across the three cases. Thus, the following analysis will detail constructions of the body, food, and the framing of the 'solution' that was observed across the cases through consideration of themes that were identified: the thin or the performative body; food as moral and an energy source; and the locus of the solution.

3.1. The thin or the performative body

Throughout the sessions, contrasting framings of the body were evident. In producing accounts of why they were attending the session, the athletes depicted their bodies and related goals in terms of weight loss and appearance, regardless of the institutional focus on skinfolds and improving body composition. By contrast, the psychologist invoked performance narratives by reframing body talk in terms of body composition for performance. In doing so the competing depictions of the body produced by the psychologist and the athletes echoed the tension between the body as a powerful tool for sport versus the slim and appealing feminine body (Krane et al., 2004). The following extract illustrates the competing frames used

around the body. This section of talk comes in response to the psychologist asking Laura what had triggered changes to her weight.

1 Laura: that's usually when I see how heavy I am and go oh shit
2 P: mm heh he
3 L: and then I have to do something about it
4 P: alri::ght (.) so:: I guess (.) we always use (.) let's make sure that
5 we're using exactly the the the right language when we're talking
6 about (.) weight cos it's (.) or this issue of body composition,
7 (.)
8 L: °yep°
9 P: because (.) you can be (.) heavier you can get heavier but if it's
10 all y'know if it'[s lean muscle mass
11 L: [hmm
12 P: that's contributing to your power speed off the blocks (.) your
13 ability to y'know sustain what you're doing for longer during races
14 (.)
15 L: yeah
16 P: so: there's always this (.) kind of balance that we want. this nice
17 balance where (.) where you're powerful and and lean
18 (.)
19 L: yeah I dunno

As this extract demonstrates, Laura frames her problem in terms of weight and how 'heavy' she is (line 1). The psychologist issues a correction (lines 4–6), reframing weight to body composition and orienting towards a construction of the powerful and performative body rather than a weight-based framing ("you can be heavier … if it's lean muscle mass", lines 9–10). This reframe marks a focus away from weight to the body as functional, yet continues to reframe the body in terms of performance with a focus on strength and power for sporting prowess ("your power speed off the blocks", line 12). This reframe towards optimal body composition and lean muscle mass rather than weight is presented as the 'right' construction of the body, thus the psychologist also positions himself as the expert and holder of the correct knowledge. Although athletes are produced as compliant to institutional experts in sport settings (Johns & Johns, 2000), the athlete here does not immediately take up the 'correct' construction of the body. Rather, at line 7 the lengthy pause can be heard as the athlete beginning to issue a disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984), which is then followed only by a minimal receipt token. Laura's response is oriented to as problematic by the psychologist, with the psychologist continuing (line 9 onwards) to reframe the body in terms of composition through invoking notions of the muscular and powerful athletic body. Throughout this depiction, Laura fails to take up this position, instead issuing silence and minimal receipt tokens. The psychologist completes his turn at line 17 with the upshot of a balance of weight and strength. Again Laura's response is hearable as a disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984) with a lengthy pause, before she responds with 'yeah I dunno' (line 19); 'I don't know' is a way in which speakers resist taking up the other's position (Hutchby, 2002). It is evident, then, that Laura resists the framing of the body in terms of body composition and the muscular athletic body.

Throughout the sessions, athletes continually resisted framing the body in terms of composition and continued to invoke ideals around thin and lightweight bodies, typically associated with femininity. The next extract provides a further example. It comes from the opening sequence of the session with Jen and forms part of her account for why she is attending the session.

Jen: so I've dropped two kilos so far but (.) hopefully like tonight I'm getting my skin folds done by (exercise physiologist) so

P: ok

J: so

P: [look and yeah

J: [I I've started feeling better anyway so I don't really care if my skin folds don't go down I just have to drop like weight

Evident even in talk specifically about skinfold testing, Jen presents weight loss rather than skinfold reduction as the desirable outcome, with the use of '*just* have to drop … weight' functioning to emphasise the relative importance of weight loss over a change in skinfold scores. Similarly, the next extract also highlights how athletes presented goals in terms of appearance rather than composition.

L: yeah cos I always put myself down, like but not about my swimming just like about my appe::arance, more then

P: yeah

L: li- anything else,

Thus, not only was sporting performance not reported as the goal of the session, even after prompting by the psychologist prior to the extract, the athlete's focus remained on appearance. In framing goals in terms of weight loss and appearance rather than body composition and performance, athletes were able to resist an imperative to modify skinfolds.

By contrast, throughout the sessions the psychologist continued to reframe weight loss goals in terms of maximising performance by presenting the body as a tool for sporting success, as is highlighted in the following extract, which occurred midway through the session with Jen and followed a section of talk during which the psychologist was recapping triggers for Jen's eating behaviours.

P: so looking ahead to (.) what can you do (.) options for the future

J: yep

P: one is to (.) ha have really clear (.) goals in your mind (.) what's achievable (.) what's what's good what's gonna work for me

J: yep

P: based on performance.

(.)

J: °yep°

(.)

P: not on (.) looks an:d not on (.) compared to ah (.) >y'know< (.) anybody else in the squad wanna know

(.)

P: what is a (.) and I like that word boxers use fighting weight what's your fighting weight what hhh

(.)

J: yep

P: what is (.) effective in terms of performance for you

(.)

As is evident in lines 3–6, the psychologist frames weight goals not in terms of weight loss per se, but in terms of performance. The upshot - that weight goals should be related to optimising performance (line 6) - is not immediately taken up by Jen. Rather, following an initial silence, Jen quietly issues a minimal receipt token followed by another silence. Jen's lack of uptake is potentially oriented to as problematic by the psychologist, who then continues to build the construction of weight in terms of performance whilst disavowing a focus on appearance. The psychologist builds this framing of the body and weight in terms of performance via the emphasised analogy of 'fighting weight', which is again followed by an initial silence and a minimal receipt token, further displaying the athlete's lack of alignment with the psychologist. Despite good athlete identity and compliance with institutional goals has been evidenced (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, et al., 2015). Thus, for athletes here to have not made sufficient progress towards their targeted skinfold scores is potentially hearable as problematic within this context. Thus failing to take up the performance narrative, enabled athletes to manage their self-presentation by resisting that they are acting inappropriately for not reducing skinfold scores sufficiently. Moreover, in one instance, the formulation of improving body composition to enhance performance was *actively* resisted. This extract comes from early in the session, and forms part of Laura's account of the 'problem'. Prior to this extract Laura had described her embarrassment about her physical appearance at the swimming pool.

1	L:	and like even like (COACH) has said something to me about another
2		swimmer who is like (.) way skinnier than me and like he said
3		something about her
4	P:	yeah
5	L:	and then it just was like ooh hhh
6	P:	are there thoughts that you're aware of to do with this co connection
7		between (.) skinniness (.) a:nd performance
8		(.)
9	L:	oh I dunno cos when I swam (.) when I was (.) .hh at my (.) when I
10		was sk kind of when I was lighter than (.) like I was hea like I was
11		kind of heavy for our opens
12	P:	mm hmm
13	L:	but I still swam (.) like pretty good (.) all th (.) most of the big
14		meets that I've been at and I've been heavy I've swam (.) pretty good
15	P:	°mm hmm°
16	L:	but the one (.) uh when I got when I was skinnier and like (.)I like
17		I still swam (.) like I was I but then I did (.) like I swam some PBs
18		but then sometimes I didn't (.) but
19	P:	°yep°
20	L:	I don't think it really matters

the hearable lack of uptake, the psychologist continues to frame weight in terms of performance at line 10 onwards, directly asking Jen about her optimum performance weight (line 17), which again is receipted with silence. Thus, while the psychologist reformulated weight loss goals in terms of performance goals, athletes across all cases did not align with this position.

In failing to align with the psychologist, the athletes resisted the prevalent discourses and institutional practices of optimal body composition for improved performance. Resisting this also allowed them to avoid presenting themselves in an unfavourable light as athletes who are not working to maximise their sporting performance. Thus, resisting the performance-based narrative enabled them to attend to identity and self-presentation. Within such institutional settings, a need to orient to ongoing attempt to improve body composition in order to display a

In describing her teammate as 'way skinnier' (line 2), Laura reinforced her need to lose weight or become skinny: If the coach has said 'something' about the teammate, then the implication must be her greater need to lose weight. Again, Laura formulates the goal in terms of appearance rather than performance. At line 7, the psychologist then reissues the performance narrative, which the athlete fails to align with. Rather, the athlete produces an account of swimming well at both heavier and lighter weights, before ending with the upshot that weight does not matter for performance. Hence not only is weight for enhancing performance not taken up by athletes throughout the sessions, but here Laura builds an account to actively resist it. Evident throughout these sessions was the orientation to competing versions of the female athletes' body - as athletic and powerful or the thin feminine ideal – and in drawing on these competing versions different ends were achieved;

with the psychologist promulgating, and athletes resisting, prevailing notions of improved body composition and reduced weight for improving performance.

3.2. Food as moral and an energy source

When accounting for their reasons of failing to reduce skinfolds, athletes framed the 'problem' in individualised terms referencing their own eating behaviour. As was seen in the opening extract, Tara depicted herself as a yoyo dieter ('I'm [sic] always yoyo up and down'; line 12), whereas Jen and Laura framed themselves as 'over eating' and thereby responsible for their excess weight/skinfolds. This individualisation of the 'problem' was taken up and reproduced by the psychologist, with each session moving into a section identifying 'triggers' within the individual for over eating and yoyo dieting. Locating the agency for the high skinfold scores within the athletes potentially puts them in a difficult position in that they need to attend to their identity as good athletes who engage in appropriate athlete behaviours such self-monitoring and striving to improve body composition (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, et al., 2015), yet they also need to account for their skinfold scores.

In discussing triggers for eating practices, varied constructions of food and diet were invoked. In such sequences, food was depicted either in terms of morality, or food was located within a biomedical discourse of food as energy to match expenditure; both of which were used to allow athletes to manage accountability for their skinfold scores. Throughout accounts, athletes typically invoked notions of morality around food, presenting food as good or bad, or right or wrong (Mycroft, 2008). In drawing on morality around food and eating, athletes were able to manage their self-presentation by depicting themselves as good athletes who were doing the 'right' thing by eating the 'right' food. The psychologist, however, did not take up or invoke moral terms around food and eating. In the following extract, which comes in response to the question of what triggers overeating, the athlete produced a lengthy account of over eating due to 'emotions' before invoking moral terms around food.

1	L:	so (.) like I eat until I stopped hungry *(sic)* and then I was like,
2		>nah I wanna< [eat
3	P:	[yep=
4	L:	=some more, (.) so I ate more >but I didn't eat more< ba:d stuff
5		like we have no: bad food in the house anymo:re,

In the above extract, Laura produced an account of overeating, or eating beyond the point of hunger. However, in presenting the overeating she inoculated herself through the emphasised depiction of the food she ate as not being 'bad'. This depiction is bolstered through the use of the extreme case formulation (Edwards, 2000) of having *no* bad food in the house. Thus, the use of moral terms here was to depict herself in a more positive light. Moral terms around food were also invoked to present others, typically squad members and teammates, as eating the wrong or bad food. In drawing this contrast, the athletes were further able to attend to their identity and present themselves as acting appropriately. The below extract follows an account of an instance in which Tara describes herself as having overeaten, but inoculates herself by formulating that she overate the 'right' foods. Prior to this extract, she has already produced a lengthy account of being tempted to eat poorly by other squad members eating 'crap' food, before moving into a blaming sequence of her teammate.

1	T:	but I was really angry about (.) >and I've told (coach) this< like
2		(.) cos I'm suppo- I'm losing all this I'm trying to lose all these
3		skinfolds, (.) basically I'm trying to lose these skin folds
4	P:	yep
5	T:	.hhh and (.) I'm in a pair, (.) and there's two people,
6	P:	yeah
7	T:	and if one person is not supporting the other person and one
8		person's eating like crap (.) like tiny teddies biscuits and they
9		know they shouldn't be
10	P:	°mm°
11	T:	and then they eat them in front of the person who's trying to lose
12		weight (.) bu- (.) but I'm at least I don't- I feel like at least I
13		don't eat the wrong foods:: (.) like as (.) y'know

In this extract, Tara presents herself as a good athlete, as one who is 'trying to lose the skinfolds' (the repairs at line 2 demonstrate some of the subtle discursive work involved in making such a claim). Tara further depicts food in moral terms of wrong, thereby invoking morality around such food. Her orientation to her teammate eating "crap" food (line 8), bolsters the immoral nature of the food and her teammate's behaviour. The use of moral terms around food thus enabled her to minimise agency for her skinfolds. Presenting herself as not eating the 'wrong' foods functions to present herself as engaging in appropriate behaviour, with her skinfolds remaining a problem despite her appropriate actions. In doing so, Tara locates the skinfold scores as outside her own control (Wiggins, 2009). Additionally, her orientation to being in a rowing pair (line 5) allows her to move into a blaming sequence. She draws a contrast between her teammate and herself, which further functions to depict her as an appropriate and good athlete amongst peers who eat the 'wrong' food and thus are not engaging in appropriate athlete behaviours. The emphasis placed on moral terms throughout her account further bolsters this contrast structure and allows Tara to present herself as appropriate and even superior to her teammate, even though her teammate does not have body composition concerns. In addition, athletes further externalised agency for high skinfolds by depicting squad members' eating of 'bad' food as an unfair temptation. In this account, it is the teammate's eating of 'crap' food in front of her that is held to account (lines 7–12), rather than Tara herself. Her moral status is arguably strengthened in her positioning as eating appropriate foods, even with the additional challenge of observing a teammate 'eating crap". Throughout each case, athletes invoked morality and oriented to external factors in order to minimise their own accountability for their skinfolds (Mycroft, 2008; Webb, 2009).

The psychologist, on the other hand, did not take up nor invoke moral terms around food at any point in the sessions. Rather the psychologist drew on a biomedical framework around food and weight management (Wiggins, 2009). Food was depicted as a source of energy and was located within the energy balance model, with eating framed in terms of energy input matching energy expenditure and training requirements. The following extract follows a segment of talk focusing on triggers for overeating. The psychologist has summarised the athlete's 'overeating' as emotional management, before reframing food in terms of energy.

1	P:	y'know for you (.) and it can take you from (.) eating (.) the right
2		amount to replenish your energy stores to make sure that you've got
3		enough for .hh to recover and training the next day
4		(.)
5	J:	mm

As can be seen, food is referenced in terms of energy intake and expenditure with an absence of moral language; for example, the psychologist did not refer to 'good' or 'bad' food. Rather, his framing is solely invoking a biomedical discourse, as evidenced by his orientation to "energy stores" and the invocation of food as providing energy for training. However, also evident is how this reframing of food receives minimal uptake, with athletes throughout the data typically not aligning with the psychologist's framing of food.

There was, however, one rare instance when an athlete – Tara - oriented to the biomedical energy expenditure discourse. Notably, when Tara did invoke the construction of food as fuel, it was used to depict her eating practices as necessary, and thereby minimise her accountability for high skinfold scores. This is illustrated in the following extract, which comes from early in the session, where Tara has described her mother as not understanding her problems with weight and skinfolds. Tara presented her mother as thinking that weight loss is "easy" before moving into the following sequence.

1	T:	she [mother] thinks you can just lose weight just like that, oh like
2		when I was your age I lost ten kilos in a week, and I'm like well
3		yeah mum what do you do: (.) what did you do did you do any sport
4		no:: and it's like she only did like art classes and stuff like that
5	P:	ok
6	T:	and um (.) y'know she ah (.) like used to eat nothing, so
7	P:	yep
8	T:	and that's cos you only used to wave a brush you don't have to (.)
9	P:	°mm hmm°
10	T:	like perform and stuff like that huh huh like mum I actually have to
11		eat

As is evidenced here, in drawing on notions of food for performance and energy expenditure, Tara's account invokes the discourse of food as fuel. The use of extreme case formulation (line 6) further bolsters her account, depicting her mother has having eaten "nothing" (Edwards, 2000); something that she herself cannot do due to her sport. Moreover, she draws a contrast structure between her mother's lack of energy requirements ('only used to wave a brush') compared with her own energy requirements to further emphasise her increased need for energy intake. The use of "actually" further signals the contrast (Clifft, 2001) between the depictions of her mother and herself, emphasising that unlike her mother who ate "nothing", this is not reasonable for her. Thus the notion of food as fuel was, in one instance, oriented to by athletes, but only to justify current eating behaviour and reject the need to change or modify eating practices. In doing so, Tara further managed agency for her skinfolds.

3.3. The locus of the solution

Having formulated the 'problem' and attempted to locate and identify triggers in the individual, all three sessions moved on to an intervention stage, focusing on management of athletes' eating behaviours; specifically, identifying coping strategies to avoid over eating, goal setting, meal planning and self-regulation. The solutions thus remained located within the individual; this is highlighted in the following extract, which comes from the closing stages of a session, where the psychologist has suggested that Laura set weight-related goals.

Thus the solution is framed in terms of Laura having goals in her mind; thereby overlooking the roles or responsibilities of others or the institution. Whilst psychology might be expected to have a focus more specifically on the individual, some awareness or incorporation of broader factors in formulating and understanding the case (as well as a focus on intervention in certain therapeutic approaches) would be relevant within psychology (Gardner & Moore, 2005). Within the session analysed here, pronouns such as "you" and "your" are used throughout to place the onus solely on the individual athlete to manage weight, and this is emphasised by the paraphrasing of the athlete's 'internal monologue' by the psychologist. Moreover, as is evident at lines 4 and 6, the psychologist continues to reproduce a discourse of performance and reissues the framing of weight related goals in terms of maximising performance, with no acknowledgement of broader cultural norms around body weight. In lines 11–12, the psychologist recaps the three strategies outlined during the session to assist Laura to reduce her skinfolds. As is evident, these strategies of meal planning as well as goal setting further reinforce individual responsibility for managing skinfolds/weight, with the psychologist also invoking the monitoring of the self as a solution. Indeed across the sessions, in addition to locating the solution within the individuals alone, self-surveillance and self-monitoring of the body, already normative within sport contexts (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, et al., 2015; McMahon & Penney, 2013b) were further reinforced. The following extract provides a further example of how solutions were located solely within the individuals and how surveillance of the body is reinforced. This extract constitutes the closing sequence of the session with Jen. Prior to this sequence, the psychologist had asked Jen if she wanted him to forward the session notes to her coach, stating that coaches often asks for notes.

1	P:	one is to (.) ha have really clear (.) goals in your mind (.) what's
2		achievable (.) what's what's good what's gonna work for me
3	L:	yep
4	P:	based on perfo:rmance
5	L:	°yep°
6	P:	what is (.) effective, in terms of perfo:rmance for you and we think
7		that's maybe around sixty sixty one kilos
8	L:	°yep°
9	P:	so you need that time frame but most importantly (.) .hh strategies
10		that could work for me (.) I think the things that we've thrown up as
11		(.) potentials are (.) well a th- the goal-setting but b monitoring
12		and planning (.) your meals
13	L:	yep

P: cos some of the oth the other athletes ask me to forward stuff to to (coach) just so he's in on the

J: yeah you can do that (.) cos he's (.) hh he'll probly ask me anyway

P: coaches (.) all coaches want to know (.) how do I get my how do I get my athlete to perform better

J: yep

(.)

P: so:: and sometimes it's just an accountability thing that .hhh knowing that (coach) is gonna ask me every week about this will help me:: [stay on top] of it

J: [ye::ah]

P: or knowing that (coach)'s going to ask me at the end of every week to see my (.) .h um my meal plan for the next week

J: yeah

P: y'know that's why oh hmm ye sometimes the the little (.) m y'know (.) prick of fe::ar about oh god I've got skinfolds coming up

J: yep

P: can help you

As can be seen, again the performance narrative is drawn on in reinforcing the need to modify weight/body composition (line 5) by depicting the coach's focus on improving her performance. The potentially delicate request to forward case notes to her coach is not treated as problematic, also evidencing the institutional ownership of athletes and their bodies. The 'solution' here is further formulated in terms of the athletes' ongoing accountability to her coach and fear of skinfolds as a motivator for preparing her meal plan. Thus again the solution is located solely within the individual in terms of preparation and self-regulation. Furthermore, the need for surveillance of the body (both self- and institutional) is reproduced and is not questioned nor problematised by the athlete or psychologist.

4. Discussion

Despite calls to locate and understand bodies and eating within social and discursive practices (Busanich et al., 2012; Busanich & McGannon, 2010), examinations around constructions of food and the body within elite sport settings remain limited to date. Thus, the present analysis builds on past research by examining how talk around food, the body and body regulation takes place *in interactions* within an elite sport setting. We showed that athletes in the examined interactions typically resisted narratives of performance, instead reissuing a focus on appearance. Thus athletes oriented to the tension between the feminine ideal and the performative body (Krane et al., 2004) and, in doing so, were also able to disavow a performance-based need to improve body composition. Moreover, resisting the performance narrative also allowed athletes to avoid the depiction of themselves as being 'bad' athletes who are not engaging in appropriate behaviour to maximise performance. In addition, athletes resisted blame for their poor skinfold scores through framing food in moral terms, by depicting their skinfolds as outside of their control and by accomplishing blamings of others, especially teammates. When an athlete did locate food within a biomedical discourse, this functioned to justify her current eating practices. The psychologist on the other hand, constructed the body in terms of the performance narrative, and located food only within the biomedical discourse. The cause of and solution to skinfold scores was located solely within the individual athletes (by both athletes and the psychologist), thereby overlooking the discursive and institutional practices within which the athletes' bodies are located.

It has previously been argued that coaches draw on discourses surrounding optimal nutrition to control athletes' eating (Lang, 2015). However, in the present study, it was the discourse of performance that was repeatedly drawn on to regulate athletes' bodies and diet. Although the psychologist shifted the construction of the body in terms of weight to an orientation to body compositions and strength, this framing of the body remained rooted in a performance narrative. Repeatedly invoking the performance narrative also evidenced how the psychologist both took for granted and reinforced notions of reduced body composition to maximise performance. Notably, in contrast to the psychologist in our current study and to previous interview-based research with athletes (Busanich et al., 2012, 2014), we found that the athletes in these sessions actively disavowed this performance narrative. In resisting taking up narratives of performance, the athletes problematised these taken for granted notions of reduced skinfolds to improve performance and thus resisted the need to modify their body composition.

Despite the dominance of notions around changing body composition to enhance performance (Busanich & McGannon, 2010), the reliability and accuracy of skinfold testing has been questioned (Muller et al., 2013) and the influence of changing body composition on performance has limited empirical support (Plateau et al., 2014). Moreover, previous findings suggest that the performance narrative, reproduced here, may be related to the development of disordered eating and excessive eating and exercise habits (Busanich et al., 2014, 2012; Papathomas & Lavallee, 2014). Although varying body shapes and compositions may impact speed, strength and potentially performance;

the impact of body composition is nuanced and varies by sport and athlete. Given the possible detrimental consequences of the performance narrative and the equivocal findings regarding the use of skinfolds and the actual benefits of reduced weight in terms of performance, locating food and exercise practices within health and nutrition-based discourses (Arthur-Cameselle & Baltzell, 2012; Bonci et al., 2008) might better promote physical and psychological wellbeing amongst athletes. Moreover, given the ubiquity and dominance of the performance narrative, promulgating a focus on improvements in skill and technique (Arthur-Cameselle & Baltzell, 2012), rather than the reinforced focus on the body, to enhance performance may also be of benefit within elite sport settings. A broadening of performance to better encapsulate skills, tactical knowledge, mental toughness and other aspects that benefit performance beyond the body may help to limit possible detrimental outcomes associated with the strong body focus of the performance narrative. Further explorations around shifting the focus of the performance narrative would be valuable.

In contrast with the psychologist's framing of the body, the athletes in this study typically drew on notions of thinness, low weight and appearance in their talk. Drawing on feminine ideals further allowed the athletes to resist performance goals. The contrasting framings around the body between the athletes and the psychologist also echoed the tension around female athletes' bodies between the performative and the feminine body (Krane et al., 2004). Previous interview-based studies have highlighted female athletes' dissatisfaction with their muscular bodies and the weight associated with large muscle mass (Bennett et al., 2017; Krane et al., 2004). Our interactions highlighted how female athletes disavowed the notion of the muscular and performative body, without invoking a line between attractive and muscular rather than too muscular to manage this tension in their talk, as has been seen previously (Krane et al., 2004). Instead, they depicted the body in terms of a weight discourse, which constructs weight management as a tool to obtain the optimal female body (Markula et al., 2008). Thus our study provides an example of how these incompatible institutional and discursive practices within which athletes' bodies are located play out in interaction in one real world sport setting. While it has been argued that female athletes develop dual identities of women and athletes to manage this tension (Krane et al., 2004), within the examined interactions, such duality was not invoked and the athletes largely did not orient to or negotiate this tension within their talk. Moreover, in framing and reframing the body only in terms of powerful and performative bodies, the psychologist did not allow space for broader societal discourses around feminine ideals of the body or to explore or negotiate this duality in the institutional talk. Both athletes and the psychologist drew on limited discursive resources to manage this tension between broader discursive and institutional practices around the body. Institutionally and interactionally making space for a more nuanced depiction of the body might better enable female athletes to negotiate in their talk these conflicting discourses and identities (Krane, 2001). While media influences (Nerini, 2015) and the paradox of female athletes' bodies have been shown to influence body dissatisfaction (Krane et al., 2004), our study highlights that varied versions of the body are also reproduced within elite sport settings that may further leave athletes vulnerable to dissatisfaction and low self-confidence. Consistent with prior calls that sport psychologists consider the social construction of masculinity and femininity and how these might be linked to athletes' health and well-being (Busanich et al., 2012), body talk within sport settings might be improved by allowing space for the acknowledgement and management of broader discursive practices and tensions in which athletes' bodies are found.

Evident in the present study was that athletes predominantly constructed food in terms morality, thus reproducing broader societal and discursive practices in which morality is ascribed to food and eating (Hepworth, 1999). Athletes invoked morality around food to mitigate accountability for their skinfolds by denying engaging in a blame worthy activity (i.e. not eating 'bad' foods), and locating responsibility outside of their control, primarily through blaming teammates. Patterns of accounting for high skinfolds were similar to those observed in obesity group counselling sessions (Wiggins, 2009) and primary care-based obesity clinics (Webb, 2009), despite these athletes being within healthy weight ranges. However, in contrast to commercial weight loss groups, where group leaders also promulgated morality around food (Mycroft, 2008), the psychologist did not align or take up athletes' moral framings. Rather, the psychologist repeatedly constructed food within a biomedical energy expenditure discourse. Whilst the reconstruction of food as a source of fuel has previously been shown to have allowed a runner to renegotiate sporting participation post-illness (Busanich et al., 2014), the energy balance model has also been argued to reify the individualistic construction of weight and the body (Wiggins, 2009). Throughout the sessions, in drawing on this biomedical discourse, the psychologist demonstrably reinforced individual agency around eating and body composition. Moreover, the invoking of a biomedical discourse of food provides a further illustration of how body regulation and management of body composition are legitimated in sport through scientific discourse in sport settings (McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011).

Throughout these psychology sessions, agency around eating behaviours and body composition was located solely within the individual athletes, with the athletes depicted as the cause of and solution to the 'problem'. Consistent with prior research showing that coaches locate responsibility for eating practices in athletes rather than consider their own coaching practices (Plateau et al., 2014), the present study further demonstrated how other sport staff also failed to acknowledge institutional and broader factors regarding athletes' bodies and eating practices. Indeed, institutional ownership of athletes' bodies (Cosh et al., 2012), practices such as routine weigh-ins (Plateau et al., 2014) and body regulation (McMahon & Barker-Ruchti, 2017; McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011), have been argued to lead to disordered eating behaviours. Yet, such institutional ownership and practices of routine surveillance were not problematised in the data. Rather, these were taken for granted and thus further normalised within this setting.

Further, comments from coaches around the body have also been argued to be potentially problematic, with long-lasting effects (Jones, Glintmeyer, & McKenzie, 2005; McMahon & Penney, 2013b). Current guidelines recommend that coaches are not to apply explicit pressure to athletes to modify or change their body and weight (Bonci et al., 2008). However, throughout the sessions examined, the taken for granted notion of a need to change skinfolds and weight was subtly reinforced and reified, thus even in the absence of overt 'pressure' to change the body, this study further highlights how athletes may be left vulnerable to reproduced notions of a need to modify their body. Additionally, although guidelines recommend privacy around body regulation testing, including withholding information from coaches (Bonci et al., 2008), evident from the examined context was that coaches were both privy to athletes' skinfold testing scores and actively engaged in the policing of the athletes' bodies. Notably, the involvement of the coach in the policing (and ultimately encouraging athletes to attend psychology sessions in order to improve body composition), was not problematised by athletes or the psychologist; further evidenced by the sharing of session notes with a coach. Evidently, a range of current coaching practices, at least within this setting, that are potentially not aligned with the best interest of athletes' mental wellbeing are potentially carried out and even normalised. The nuances and detail of coaching practices around athletes' body regulation would be beneficially examined in more depth and detail, including analysis of specific coach-athlete interactions. Such future research would serve to inform guidelines regarding possibly improve coaching practices around athletes' bodies.

These findings also highlight the role of the psychologist as potentially reinforcing some institutional notions around performance and a need for policing of bodies (although he also resisted certain potentially problematic versions e.g., food as moral). Evident is an instance of the

potentially conflicting dual roles of a sport psychologist within such institutional settings with regards to a) their responsibility to the institute, to support and enhance performance, as well as b) to the athlete, to enhance wellbeing. Broadening institutional performance narratives to better encapsulate athletes' wellbeing as crucial for performance enhancement (amongst other aspects of performance) might better assist sport psychologists in managing these dual roles. Further evident in the data, was the discursive tensions in which athletes' bodies were located. As has previously been suggested (e.g., Cosh, Crabb, & Tully, 2015; Cosh, LeCouteur, Crabb, & Kettler, 2013) Narrative Therapy approaches may be beneficially used in sport psychology, enabling athletes to gain better awareness of and better manage such discursive tensions.

Moreover, self-surveillance was normalised and even produced as a 'solution' within our data. Building on previous work suggesting that practices around athletes' bodies reproduce and normalise self-surveillance in sport settings (Cosh et al., 2012; McMahon & Barker-Ruchti, 2017; McMahon & Penney, 2013b), our study highlights a further context in which such self-surveillance is reproduced by interactants in this sport setting, and is constructed as desirable and even necessary. Such repeated depictions in athletes' everyday sporting environments may leave athletes further vulnerable to unhealthy eating and exercising behaviour. Additionally, solutions to the 'problem' in our data remained very limited and focused within the individual. Providing a more holistic and broad approach to body management will likely better support and assist athletes to attain optimal performance and wellbeing.

Although it has been argued that skinfold testing is unrelated to mental health and self-esteem (Whitehead, Eklund, & Williams, 2003), this study builds on previous work (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler, et al., 2015; Cosh et al., 2012; McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011) that suggests that the routine policing of athletes bodies can be problematic. Although skinfold testing might not immediately impact mental health, practices of body regulation (including skinfolds, weigh ins, ongoing need to improve body composition, psychology sessions) and related socio-discursive practices may have long term implications in terms of eating and exercising practices and understandings around the body (McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2011; McMahon & Penney, 2013a). In the examined setting, testing practices were largely compliant with recommendations (Bonci et al., 2008), yet potentially detrimental notions were subtly reproduced and reinforced. Thus qualitative studies, such as ours, provide crucial insight into the discursive practices surrounding athletes' bodies and body regulation. The discursive and socio-cultural contexts around athletes' bodies thus need to be better acknowledged and managed within sporting guidelines, given that how sport staff communicate with athletes around their bodies can function to reproduce potentially detrimental practices.

4.1. Future directions

This study provides an in-depth exploration of how talk around the body is done *in practice* within one elite sport setting and offers some further insights than that which can be gained through interview or survey-based studies. The athletes included here were from weight-focused or aesthetic sports; how accounting and representations of the body might differ in other sports, as well as across other sport settings and cultural contexts would be of interest to explore further. The extent to which body talk in elite sport is inherently gendered and the specific discursive practices surrounding male athletes bodies would also be a valuable avenue for future research, especially given suggestions of differential stigma around the body and body monitoring between males and females (Gerbensky-Kerber, 2011).

5. Conclusion

The present study illustrates how talk around athletes' bodies occurs in interaction within one institutional context. This examination highlights the normalisation and reproduction of potentially problematic discursive practices, such as the privileging of self-surveillance, within this sport setting. Thus our findings further underscore that athletes' bodies and eating practices cannot be isolated from socio-cultural and discursive practices (Busanich & McGannon, 2010; Markula et al., 2008). Furthermore, this study highlights how individualised notions of eating and the body were reproduced while coaching and institutional practices were overlooked. A focus on health and a broader emphasis on managing athletes' wellbeing, rather than the individual being responsible for modification of the body for performance, may be beneficial. This study provides a valuable insight into how broader discourses and narratives are taken up, resisted and reproduced at a micro level around athletes' bodies and eating practices within the examined interactions.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Appendix A. Transcription notation

Derived from the system developed for conversation analysis (Jefferson, 2004), as adapted by Parker (2005).

[ ]	Square parenthesis is used to indicate the beginning and end of overlapping talk
=	Signals utterances between which there is no interval (but also no overlap)
(.)	Indicates pauses in talk of less than 0.3 s
a::h	Denotes an elongation of a sound (the more colons used indicates the longer the sound)
°that°	Speech within degrees signs is quieter than surrounding talk
hhh	Indicates audible exhalations (the more h's, the longer the exhalation)
.hhh	Indicates audible inhalations (the more h's, the longer the inhalation)
an-	Dash denotes an abrupt cessation in speech
eventually	Underline indicates emphasis in talk
> kind of <	'Greater than' and 'lesser than' signs denote that enclosed speech is noticeably faster than surrounding speech
< I enjoy >	'Lesser than' and 'greater than' signs denotes that enclosed speech is noticeably slower
ye(heh)ah	Laughter embedded in words

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