

DISCOVERING THE EMBODIEMENT OF THE GROUP
FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Case study of group fitness instructors of Fysioline Fressi

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Master's Thesis
Autumn 2017

ABSTRACT

Jahkola, E. 2017. Discovering the Embodiment of the Group Fitness Instructor. Case Study of Group Fitness Instructors of Fysioline Fressi. University of Jyväskylä. Social Sciences of Sport. Master's thesis, 101 pp. 2 appendices

Group fitness instructors are often portrayed as physically toned and fit with healthy lifestyles overall. The aim of a group fitness class is to help participants exercise in a desired manner with motivational coaching. Instructing a class requires a combination of coordination, anticipation and moving in-line with the music. The instructor is often situated in front of the class, making the body as visible as possible. The body is also the instructor's single most important tool at work, which is used to show movements and non-verbal messages. The complexity of the task creates an interesting platform to research the experience of embodiment and hopefully offer insight in to what the body represents for a group fitness instructor. The aim of this study is to find out what the body means for an instructor, how they experience their body, and to determine what the most significant factors are about embodiment and being a group fitness instructor.

The study was conducted with a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, aiming to take a closer look at a specific phenomenon. The research took part in a Finnish fitness center in the Tampere region. Altogether six female instructors took part in the study. The participants' experience in instructing ranged from three years to almost 20 years. The data was gathered with the help of nine open-ended questions, which were then answered in written essays and sent via e-mail.

The data was analyzed manually using conventional content analysis and four main themes arose from the results. All four themes had several sub-themes, which discussed the body of the group fitness instructor. The results showed that the instructors had a deep sense of body awareness since they view their body as a tool. The body was also seen as an instrument for communication, which also offers strong emotional experiences. Most of the participants felt that they worked in a body positive environment, even though all of them admitted to having felt body-related expectations when being in the role of the group fitness instructor.

According to the results, embodiment is a prevailing concept when being a group fitness instructor, and the role of the instructor offers a unique platform to connect and understand the body. It is yet unclear where the expectations set for the body come from, and it is suggested that future research be conducted on this topic.

Key words: The body, embodiment, group fitness, instructor

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1. DISCOVERING THE EMBODIMENT OF GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS – A PERSONAL MATTER

Embodiment as a topic is very broad, since it includes many sub-terms as well as other psychological and sociological aspects. The reason I chose this topic was mainly because of personal reasons and I felt that my own experiences with this issue would help me relate, or at least understand, the many stories group fitness instructors face with embodiment. I first had the idea of researching this topic in 2014, when a certain feedback from a customer caught my attention. A little after this incident, I overheard a group of instructors discussing about whether or not instructors should lose weight in order to look like a ‘proper’ instructor, and thus be convincing in front of the customers. The more I thought about this subject the more convinced I became, that this was a topic that needed to be studied more and that there were surely many stories and opinions on the matter.

I have an extensive background in sports, as I have practiced different sports since I was a child. My parents have taken my brother and I to many different sporting activities, from swimming to track and field and from skiing to mountain trekking, just so we could try out different sports and find the one we would like to stick with. After a period of trial and error with dance and tennis, I have mostly practiced endurance sports such as swimming, triathlon and running. Apart from these, I have always kept a liking for trying new sports as much as possible. I have always been one of the tallest girls in class and rather skinny, which is why I found endurance sports to be easy for myself. Being the skinny girl had its advantages in sports such as running, since I didn’t tire easily and could go on for long periods of time. Growing up as a teenager I didn’t have too many thoughts about my body, since my focus was on competing and making sure my body was ready for the next race. In this sense, my body was only a tool to achieve something else. This type of thinking stuck with me for a long time, and after retiring from competitive sports, I searched for other ways to use my body.

I remember one of the first moments I started comparing my body with others, and even feeling quite overwhelmed with the thoughts that it brought up. During my first year of high school, the school nurse called my mother and said that I was too thin and almost

anorexic. This specific call came while we were at the dinner table eating dinner. This was the first recollection of an outsider commenting my body in a negative manner, in a way that hadn't even occurred to me. I knew that I was petite in size, but not in a sense that family members should be worried. I was stunned, and this incident left a mark on my perception of the body. For a while, my legs and arms were not normal to me, but felt too boney and angular. I felt all of my clothes hang on me like curtains and nothing seemed to fit. My feet were too big in relation with the rest of my body, as were my hands and fingers. All of these observations catapulted from one comment. It wasn't until the teenage hormones, which started affecting my body positively, that I could be more at ease with myself, little by little.

Even during the obscure events going on in high school with my body image being tumbled upside down, I still managed to maintain a passion for sports. Quitting competitive sports was in a way very exhilarating, since I could now choose from a range of sports and just go with the flow. After bouncing from different practices, not really committing to any individual sport, I found myself going to a local gym with a friend. It was at this time that I discovered the world of group fitness and got whisked away by a completely different form of exercising. There were so many classes to choose from, that I could indulge in three to four classes per night, just for the fun of it. I had never experienced anything like it, with the music and movement together, making a thrilling combination to follow. I also enjoyed the freedom of choosing classes by myself, and not having to follow a regulated workout schedule. I went to classes because I could, and no one was there to judge how I look or perform. I could go just because I wanted to.

It was clear to me from the first classes I participated in that I would someday aspire to become an instructor and a sport professional, for which I studied sports management and then enrolled in the master's program in Jyväskylä. I have instructed a variety of group fitness classes since 2008 ranging from muscle toning classes, to spinning classes, to dance classes to body and mind sessions. I have noticed how my body changes depending on which kind of classes I am mostly instructing, and how quickly it can lose certain qualities if I'm not teaching those specific classes. I have experienced a whole range of emotions through my body while teaching. The positive experiences include noticing how my body shapes into suiting a particular class I did not feel comfortable teaching,

or learning to move my body in a more precise and technical way. The negative feelings have been brought by my body failing to accomplish a given task: either a specific move, choreography or weight limit. Sometimes I have even experienced feelings of inferiority when I have noticed a customer succeeding in something where I could not. This has felt very contradictory, since on the other hand, I enjoy watching customers achieve their goals and experience the so-called ‘fitness magic’, but then on the other hand, I wish to be the example they would like to follow.

Throughout the years of instructing in various fitness clubs and gyms I have received feedback about my body, mostly positive comments, but also some negative remarks such as how can I instruct a certain type of muscle toning class without looking ‘the part’. The comments have not affected me personally, but it has made me question what the ideal body type of instructor is, and do I fit the part? If there is an ideal body image for each specific class, then the question is where does this ideal come from? Can an instructor be professional without fitting into a frame set by others? Personally, I have never regarded an instructor to be more professional by his or her body shape, as the initial task of an instructor is to teach a class and make sure everyone has a chance to exercise. In my opinion, when the group exits the class with a smile on their face and feeling content about themselves, then the instructor has reached his or her goal.

I have heard comments about the body of the group fitness instructor in locker rooms, from colleagues and customers alike, and the remarks vary greatly from awe to astonishment. For the past few years, I have been working in a Finnish fitness center chain, where we conduct a customer service questionnaire twice a year. During spring 2015, we received the results from that year’s questionnaire and one response caught my attention.

“The personnel should always show an example in all areas, and thus look athletic.” (Customer service questionnaire spring 2015)

“Henkilökunnan pitää olla esimerkillisiä kaikin tavoin, myös ulkoisesti, ja näyttää urheilullisilta aina.” (Asiakastytyväisyyskysely kevät 2015)

This type of feedback clearly states that there is a certain body ideal existing for the staff members of fitness centers. This feedback arrived just before I set off to study in Jyväskylä, and it was then that I decided this would be my research question. I wanted to focus on group fitness instructors, because I have been in that role for many years, and thus I could somewhat relate to the problem at hand. I wanted to know if there were more stories like these and how deep do they go. What is it like stepping into the shoes of an instructor? Is it a passion or more of a coincidence to start instructing classes? What experiences does the body offer? These types of questions, along with the earlier ones have deepened my interest towards the topic of embodiment and I wish to find out more about these issues.

In today's world of sports and exercise, fitness centers are growing at a fast rate and new gyms open up frequently. The newest fitness centers especially tend to provide full services, such as the gym, group fitness classes, personal training sessions, sauna area and much more. Out of all of the employees, the group fitness instructors are one of the most noticeable and visible people working at the centers, moving groups of people from as small as five to as big as 100 people per class. Their actions are followed during the class as well as when they are on off-duty. Not only are their actions being observed, but also the way they dress, talk and their overall habitus are being scrutinized.

Group fitness made its way into everyone's knowledge through commercialism and from much help of aerobic-pioneer Jane Fonda with up-beat music and leg-warmers (Rossen 2015). Since then group fitness has evolved in many ways, and today fitness is as trendy as ever, even though signs of slowing down has started to show up (Kauppalehti 2015). Commercialism has affected many aspects of today's world, including our body image and how we see our bodies in society.

The role of the instructor appears to have a great impact on group fitness classes, as showed in several studies. Szumilewicz (2011) studied the influences affecting women's choice of a fitness club and they noticed that more often than not women appreciated highly qualified instructors with high standard classes. Even other instructors valued high quality classes when choosing a fitness club (Szumilewicz 2011). Studies have shown that group fitness instructors influence the initial experience for participants in classes, especially for females with body concerns (Raedeke et al. 2006). These studies show, that

the role of the instructor is significant, and it contributes greatly towards the overall experience of the class and towards an individual's perception of their body. However there haven't been many studies made on the body image of group fitness instructors or how their body image has changed through their line of work.

It is clear that the role of the group fitness instructors in a fitness center is significant, yet this is an area of research which hasn't been studied thoroughly. The industry itself is still in a beginner stage, in which many evolving phenomena have not been distinguished. The aim of this research is to understand the complex concept of the experience of embodiment from the perspective of group fitness instructors. This research tries to comprehend the meanings and purposes the body stands for the instructors. By researching these issues, we can have a better understanding about what an instructor feels when performing, and thus hopefully provide answers to body issues, which are so heavily related to the fitness industry, and specifically the instructors. This subject has not been researched thoroughly enough, which caused some difficulties when searching for theories and existing studies. This fact also increases the value of this study, by introducing a new area of research.

2. RESEARCH TASK AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following chapter will describe the research task, which was set for this study as well as the methodology used in this study and why this type of approach was used. By explaining the different steps of the research, I will try to increase the reliability and credibility of the procedures. Getting to know the research problem from the beginning will help the reader grasp the subject more clearly and understand the literature behind the topic. I will also try to walk the reader through the different phases and explain why I got interested in this subject.

2.1 Research task

The aim of this research is to find out how group fitness instructors experience embodiment through their line of work. Embodiment is a very broad term and for that reason I will not try to make generalizations from the results, but try to find an understanding of what group fitness instructors in this particular case study feel about their bodies and what does their body represent for them. My aim is to increase an understanding to this subject, which has not been researched very well. By understanding the embodiment experience of the group fitness instructors, we can help instructors succeed in their work, by promoting positive body image in work places. The research questions that I will try to answer in this study are:

- What does the body mean to group fitness instructors?
- How do group fitness instructors experience their body?
- What are the most significant factors about embodiment being a group fitness instructor?

2.2 Methodology

The qualitative approach to research is one of the most used approaches when talking about social sciences. Rather than choosing the research methods and trying to understand the different phases of qualitative research, it is more important to try and comprehend the research question and what the actual target of the research is. There are many ways to reach a certain answer, so understanding what you are looking for is very important. Based on this knowledge it is easier to start building the questions needed to find the right answer. Even though the research question is accurate and valid, there must be some thought put into the methods as well. That is why it is useful to consider three main areas when pondering on this topic: question, method and place. All three areas are important and should be taken into consideration when planning data collection. (Stake 2010, 72-75).

My research approach is qualitative, which focuses on a smaller data collection, but tries to find in-depth answers from them. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 84) qualitative research is empirical, which means the data is gathered by interacting with people, either by interviews, observations or dwelling in materials, such as autobiographies. Qualitative research can be divided into many branches, one being the phenomenological- hermeneutic approach, which is based on studying the individual by other persons. The core concepts of this approach are experience, significance and sense of community. The hermeneutic part of the approach deals with understanding the meanings of certain phenomena. The phenomenological- hermeneutic approach tries to conceptualize the researched phenomena thus understanding the meaning. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009, 85-88). Rauhala (2005) describes the phenomenological approach as being a comprehensive analysis of an individual's perceptions of the world he or she is living in. A person is in contact with the surrounding world in a comprehensive way, meaning that we construct our worldview by experiencing the world around us. All the subjects and objects we experience everyday shape the way we see the world. The basis of this research will be using the phenomenological- hermeneutic approach in understanding the experiences of embodiment of the group fitness instructors.

Compared to a quantitative study, a phenomenological qualitative study focuses on an individual phenomenon and tries to avoid making generalizations and converting the subject into quantifiable data. Often the sole purpose of a qualitative study is to describe and understand a phenomenon that hasn't been researched in the past. (Varto 1992, 23-25). A qualitative study is a two-way process where the researcher tries to understand the participant (phenomenon) and vice versa the recipient tries to comprehend what the researcher is trying to find out (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009, 87-88).

Varto (1992, 24-28) states that in a qualitative study, the research is based on a person and the person's world, which can be described as living world (Finnish: *elämismaailma*). The term living world in this sense is used to describe the totality of the meanings an individual gathers from the surrounding world, and all of the social interactions and values it has with other individuals, groups and society. All qualitative studies occur in the living world, which makes the researcher a part of it. This is an essential part of qualitative studies, since the researcher's own way of understanding the living world affects the entire process of the study, from the way he or she delivers the questions to how the data is analyzed. In this sense, there is no possibility of working as an outsider in research about people.

Since the phenomenological approach studies humans and their experiences, it is important that the researcher expresses in which way he or she will focus on the overall idea of man. The researcher should enlighten the way he or she sees the subject and in which way is it possible to gather data from humane experiences. (Laine 2010, 28-30). Varto (1992, 27-29) also explains that the validity of the qualitative research is resolved by defining the researcher's pre-assumptions about the topic and how these pre-assumptions can be utilized in the study. These pre-assumptions can be written down using a research diary, and used later on when analyzing the collected data. My personal assumptions and preliminary knowledge about the subject is expressed in Chapter 1.

Measuring the reliability of a qualitative study can be difficult, since they might not always be easy to replicate. Certain aspects increase the reliability of the research such as the significance of the data, the sufficiency of the data, and the extent and criticism of the analysis. (Mäkelä 1990). Even though these factors increase the reliability of the study, they too are not always easy to implement. For example, the sufficiency of the data is

defined when no new codes or factors come up in the data gathering process (Mäkelä 1990). In many cases, phenomenological studies can be very unique, making the replication process difficult.

2.4 Research Approach

All researchers have an interest either towards the study, the participants or the topic at hand. In this context the ‘research interest’ is meant to describe the way the researcher approaches the study by defining how he or she will tackle the topic, methodology and data analysis. (Varto 1992, 33-36). This research is a qualitative study, since I used essay answers to collect my data. The subject itself is very personal, thus writing the answers on a paper can be easier than talking to someone face to face. The data collected was gathered through essay questions sent via email to the respondents. The essays provided answers about the embodiment of group fitness instructors and gave an insight to what group fitness instructors face when they are encountering customers, colleagues and other personnel from the same organization.

When building the structure of the interview or other data collection method, and deciding which questions to use, it is important to break down the main research question into smaller parts. Asking the research question will not work in an interview, since it might be hard to understand and thus it will not generate decent answers. Instead, researchers use a couple of approaches to define their interview questions, which are based on their previous knowledge of the subject. In the first approach the researcher has a clear view of the topic and needs a few more specific answers to be able to answer the main research question. In the second approach, there is a problem to be solved but there isn’t enough information in the beginning, meaning that the interview questions have to answer some or all of the background information as well. Based on these answers as well as previous literature, the researcher can eventually answer the main research question. (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 15-20). These types of approaches can also be used in other data collection methods, such as observations and essays.

Interviews are the most frequently used method in qualitative studies, but other methods can be used in some circumstances. Private documents, including public speeches, letters, diaries and essays can be used in qualitative studies either for gathering a different perspective or getting a personal view about an individual. This data collection method isn't always suitable, since it requires the respondent to have decent writing skills when expressing him- or herself. This should be taken into consideration when choosing the participants for the research, or at least offer them a chance for an interview as well. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009).

The initial idea was to launch interviews for the data collection, but I changed it to essays due to difficult experiences with my rehearsal interviews. Before gathering the final data, I had conducted three separate interviews to test out the questions and find out more about what kind of data I might be receiving. My first rehearsal interview was held 19.10.2016, with the first draft of my interview questions. I noticed that talking about the body was quite difficult and it made me alter the questions for my second interview. The second rehearsal interview (28.10.2016) was also a struggle, and the interviewee wasn't comfortable answering questions about the body.

“It feels like talking about the body is difficult even for someone with good self esteem and who is comfortable with oneself. The topic is so broad that thoughts about it and examples seem to come to mind only after the interview was over. This was the case for both of the interviews.”

(Research diary 29.10.2016)

“Tuntuu siltä, että kehosta puhuminen on vaikeaa jopa sellaiselle henkilölle, jolla on hyvä itsetunto ja on sinut itsensä kanssa. Aihe on sen verran laaja, että esimerkkejä sekä ajatuksia tuntui pulpahtavan mieleen vasta haastattelun päätyttyä. Näin kävi molemmilla kerroilla.”

(Tutkimuspäiväkirja 29.10.2016)

The third interview didn't make any progress, even though there were significant changes in the questions as well as the research task overall. It wasn't until after all of the rehearsal

interviews were over that I started pondering about changing the data collection method to essays.

“After every interview I have received feedback from the participants that they had more to say about the subject after they were able to ponder about it on their own. There might not be sufficient time during the interview to think about the topic let alone recall examples from real life. Maybe if the participants had enough time at home to think about the topic, the given answers could be different as well.” (Research diary 15.2.2017)

“Jokaisen haastattelun jälkeen on tullut ilmi, että ajatuksia aiheesta heräsi rutkasti lisää vasta jälkeenpäin ja että heillä olisi vielä paljonkin sanottavaa siitä. Haastattelun aikana ei välttämättä ole riittävästi aikaa pohtia asiaa saati sitten musitella joitain konkreettisia esimerkkejä. Jos aihetta pystyisi pohtia rauhassa yksin kotona, niin ehkä vastauksetkin olisivat erilaisia” (Tutkimuspäiväkirja 15.2.2017)

I asked the participants of the rehearsal interviews if they had wished to answer the questions by writing in the privacy of their home, and all of them agreed that it would have been more comfortable and given them more time to reflect. Latour (2004) states that talking about an individual's body is difficult due to the fact that it is very subjective and personal. It is the only thing we truly own in this world and can say that belongs to us, which makes it hard to give it up for outer examination. For this reason, I changed my data collection method from interviews to essays, but with the same target group. The questions would be open-ended and with a request to use as many examples as possible to illustrate the thoughts about the topic.

Other data collection methods used in this study was a personal research diary, which was used throughout the research process. The research diary was used to keep track of the writing process, as well a place to reflect on the observations made during the interactions at the gym. The diary also helped to analyze some of the data collected, by the reflections made due to the preapprehensions. Nadin and Cassell (2006) described the research diary

to be a useful tool for reflecting about the process and other related issues. It also helped make decisions that were related to analyzing or concluding results. The benefit of observations is that it usually happens at the research site, or at least where most of the research is based at. Using observation as a method tool is useful especially for understanding and describing the behavior of individuals or groups, which is why it is often used in qualitative studies. During the observation process the subject is in its natural environment, making it more reliable to observe. (Uusitalo 1999, 89-91).

In this research I use a conventional content analysis to code and analyze the gathered data. This type of analysis is used when wanting to explain, and more importantly understand, a phenomenon. This is usually the case when there is scarce literature about the topic or there isn't an existing theory to use. When analyzing the data with this design, researchers label the codes along the analysis process and avoid using existing ones. This way, the researcher has a chance of building new theories of an existing phenomenon. (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

2.5 Research Participants

Choosing the participants for the research is an important part of the process, since the aim is to understand the meanings behind a specific phenomenon. For this reason, it is also important that the participants have sufficient information or experience about the specific phenomena (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). This leads to a precise process of who to consider as participants for the study. Tuomi and Sarajärvi also stated that the researcher should describe the selection process, so to increase the validity of the study. Mäkelä (1990) agrees with this as he specifies that the researcher should define who the target group is: are they a group or individuals, a social object such as a specific subculture group, social institution or any other group of individuals.

The research was based at my work place, where I could conduct the data collection. Since there were no interviews, the interaction between the participants was mainly through e-mails. I wanted the participants to be from the same organization so as to keep the starting points as equal as possible. Being from the same organization can also help analyze the possible factors of how the organization affects the embodiment of the group

fitness instructors. I interviewed the group fitness manager and the general manager of the club to see how they felt about the research and if it was possible to conduct it there. They both saw it as a positive way to enhance the well-being of group fitness instructors and to gather more data about the complex job description of the instructors. An e-mail (Appendix 1) was sent to all of the instructors at the two clubs with a description of the research. The first e-mail stated that if you were interested in the study I would send a more detailed e-mail with the research questions and instructions of how to complete it (Appendix 2). From this e-mail nine participants volunteered to join the study and they were given a month to return the essays.

Choosing the participants can seem like an easy process, but it has some issues one should take into consideration before going on with the study. As Mäkelä (1990) describes in his article, when pondering on a research subject, there is inevitably going to be some comparison, but comparison doesn't always mean finding differences in one another, as it is to finding similarities as well. Finding out what the differences are can help the reader to figure out what factors that should not be included in this particular study. Qualitative studies can be difficult because of the way the data is collected. Interacting with the respondents/interviewees will inevitably build a relationship between them and the researcher, which can make it difficult to extract the content from. (Mäkelä 1990).

From the nine volunteers who wished to be part of the study, three participants quit for various reasons. For one, the topic itself felt too personal and for that reason did not wish to be part of the research. Two others quit before submitting their essay answers. The final research was conducted with the help of essays written by six female instructors. The length of the essays ranged from two pages to seven pages, with 24 pages in total. From the six essays submitted it was obvious that sport and fitness was a strong passion for all of the participants, since all of the participants had instructed group fitness for at least a few years, most them over ten years. Sports and an active lifestyle in general was also a common factor for all of the participants.

“ The sport field has always interested me. I used to compete in track and field and skiing until I was 16-years-old, and from then on exercising has remained in my life ”

“Liikunta-ala on aina kiinnostanut. Kilpailin hiihdossa ja yleisurheilussa aktiivisesti 16-vuotiaaseen asti, ja siitä lähtien liikkuminen on jäänyt aktiivisesti elämäni.”

“Back at home in the countryside there wasn't really anything like the group fitness classes offered in fitness centers. But already in high school (beginning of 2000s) I instructed different groups in my sport: martial arts and boxing. My sport has always been connected with martial arts and those sort of exercises I have used in practices.”

“Kotiseudulla maaseudulla ei juurikaan sellaista ryhmäliikuntaa ollut olemassakaan kuin mitä liikuntakeskuksissa on tarjolla. Mutta jo lukioaikoina (2000-luvun alkupuolella) ohjasin erilaisia ryhmiä omien harrastusten puitteissa: kamppailulajitreenejä ja kuntonyrkkeilyä. Oma urheiluharrastus on ollut alkujaan yhteydessä juurikin erilaisiin taistelulajeihin ja sen kaltaisiin harjoituksiin on tullut pidettyä ja treenejä vedettyä.”

The above citations from the research essays show that the participants have a strong connection with sport and exercise, and have been physically active from a young age. The backgrounds of the participants offer an interesting chance to explore the perceptions of embodiment through the viewpoint of physically active sport enthusiasts. The perceptions, thoughts and feelings about the body can differ greatly from an individual without the same history. Even though the participants have differences in age, working history and instructing practices, sport as a common similarity rose as a strong value throughout the essays. Sharing that value can give us more insight to what the body means to individuals working with the physical self on a daily basis.

2.6 Research Process

The Master's Thesis process started in the fall term of 2015, as shown in Figure 1, when we first started to define our topics. We had already submitted a draft version of our topics, which we extended after gathering more information on the topic. I had a personal

interest in this subject, but it was evident from the beginning that it was hard to find existing theories, since it had hardly been researched before. Formulating a brief literature was difficult also due to the fact that the private sector of the Finnish sport system had only been developing for a few decades and also lacked reliable references.

During the spring term of 2016 I completed the research plan, with a schedule of how I was going to proceed with the study. The initial idea was to study the body image of group fitness instructors and how they feel about their bodies. During the summer I didn't have a chance to work on my thesis due to my internship program, so I had to postpone it until the fall of the same year.

During the fall period I worked on reading articles and formulating questions for the rehearsal interviews. During this period, I conducted two of the rehearsal interviews, which lead me to modify the questions as well as the research problem to a more comprehensive approach about the embodiment of group fitness instructors. At the end of the year 2016 I was busy with other courses, which lead me to take a brake from focusing on the Master's Thesis.

Taking a break from the writing process turned out to be a positive matter, since I was able to change the course of the process by switching the interviews to essays. I took time to write my assumptions and preliminary knowledge about the topic in my research diary, which for one's part also cleared my thoughts about how the process should proceed from here on. Broadening the viewpoint from studying the body image of the group fitness instructors to the experiences of embodiment also allowed for a more in-depth approach to the study. This viewpoint also enabled me to find more theories and concepts to link with the study.

During the spring period (2017) I was able to find more research about the topic and also gather data. The data was gathered during the months of March and April 2017, with a couple of essays returned later. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the essays were first retrieved from the e-mails and then saved in a different data collection file, before being opened. The initial e-mail was then deleted, allowing the essays to be anonymous. The main focus of the spring term was to build a solid base for the literature review, as to aid the analyzing process later on.

During the summer of 2017 I focused on familiarizing myself with the data, as I read the essays several times and at the end of summer I was able to start the coding process. Having familiarized myself with the given data thoroughly I was able to code and analyze the data promptly. The months of August and September included describing the analyzed results along with linked theories. The weeks before the deadline submission on October 13, 2017 were filled with coming up with a conclusion and wrapping up the thesis into a final product.

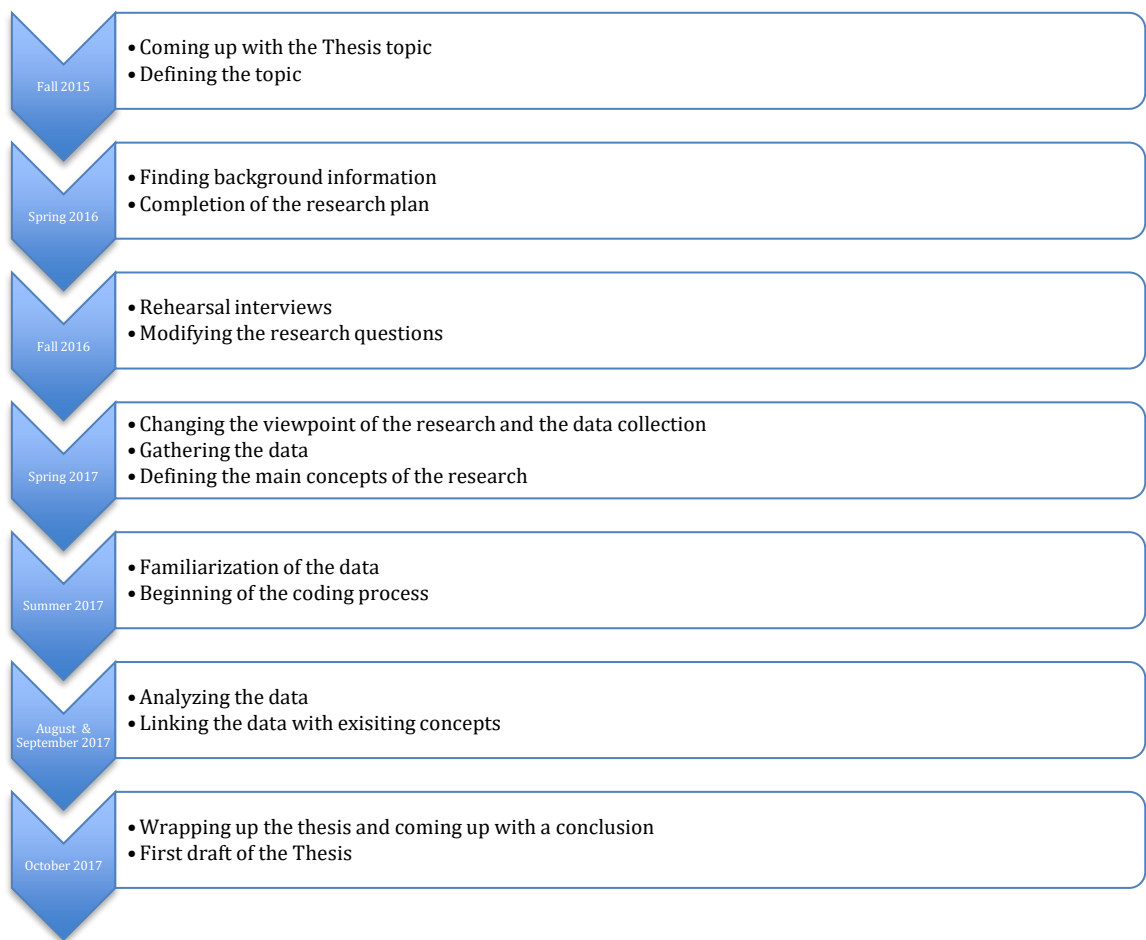


Figure 1: The research process starting from fall 2015 and ending in fall 2017.

2.7 Analysis

Since this is a phenomenological study, where the core of the research is the lived life and experiences of a human being, it is important to keep this in mind within the analysis

part as well. This means keeping in mind that the lived experiences of a certain person or a group always have their own meanings regarding who is doing the analyzing. This shows the importance of describing the methodology steps as clearly as possible. (Usher and Jackson 2014, 189-191). In a qualitative study the researcher does not expect all the participants to say the same things, but rather looks for what similarities or differences can be found in their stories. Sometimes the similarities can be hard to find, which will make it challenging for the coding process, unless another point of view is harnessed. The real challenge for the researcher during the analysis is to bring forward the participant's story and make the reader intrigued by it. (Alasuutari 1999, 47-50).

After the data collection has been made, the researcher is faced with the vast task of mapping and categorizing the received information. In qualitative research, the data can consist of interview transcriptions, research diaries, field notes and other written documents. (Ritchie & Spencer 1994, 176). In this case, I had the six essays with a total of 24 pages from the research participants and my personal research diary. The first step of starting to analyze the data is getting familiarized with it. This means simply to read and re-read the data to get an overview of what it consists of. (Ritchie and Spencer 1994, 178). I had been reading the essays one by one as I received them, but reading them all at once gave me a better understanding of what I was dealing with. The research diary was a useful tool to keep track of thoughts about the entire process as well as double-checking for forgotten ideas or viewpoints.

After the familiarization process, the researcher begins indexing (coding) the individual transcriptions, or in this case the essays. This can be made either manually, or by using different programs, such as the Atlas coding program. I chose to do this step by hand, since I wanted to make notes on the essays by hand. Indexing highlights certain parts of the data, which are then coded with appropriate code names. The codes help to find similarities, as well as differences, in the data when comparing the answers (interviews) of the participants. The codes are then mapped together to make charts, with themes and sub-themes. (Ritchie and Spencer 1994, 181-183). My data analysis chart (Figure 2) consisted of four themes under the title of *'The Body of the Group Fitness Instructor'*. These four themes are *'History of the Body'*, *'Body as a Tool'*, *'Communicating Body'* and *'Group Fitness Instructor as a Role'*. Each theme had several sub-categories dwelling with the theme in question. For example, the theme called *'History of the Body'* has two

cub-categories; *Past Sport Life*, describing the instructor’s history within sports in general, and ‘*Becoming a Group Fitness Instructor*’, explaining what choices or transactions were made in order to be in the current position. Figure 2 shows the final coding product based on the results:

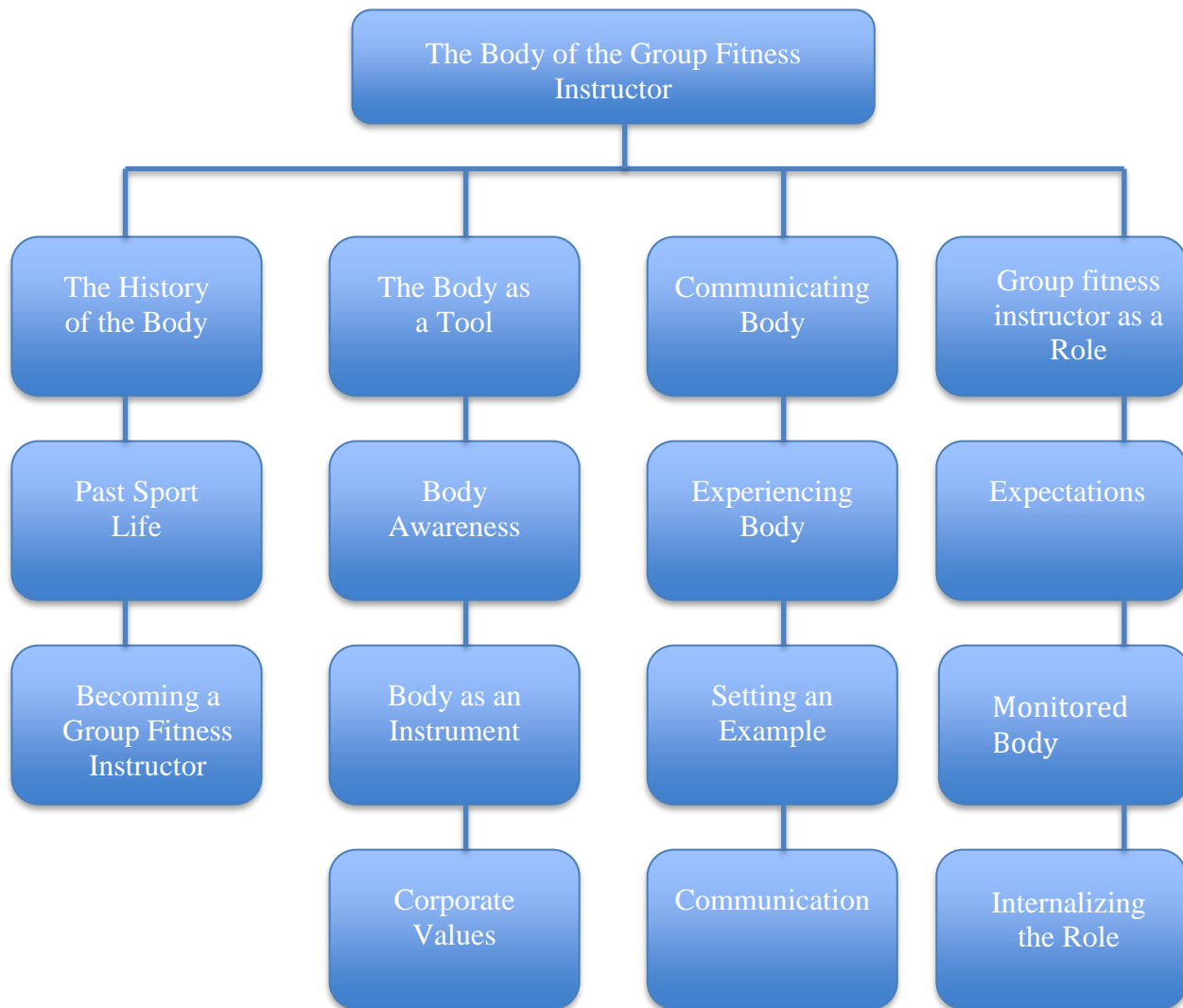


Figure 2: The hierarchy of the results within the subject of the body of the group fitness instructor

3. EMBODIMENT

In this next chapter I will explain and describe the concepts linked with embodiment and try to walk the reader through the different factors associated with it. In this chapter we will go through the different concepts starting with broader perceptions about the individual's identity and then continuing towards the embodiment and body image issues. In order to fully understand all of the concepts related to this subject, I use Figure 3, to show how they are entwined together and how it is important to understand the big picture. There is a certain hierarchy within the concepts, but no one abstract is less important than the other. Figure 3 shows how it is not possible to talk about one concept unless the related issues are described as well. In order to fully understand the research at hand, it is important to know the differences between the concepts. Self-esteem is not the same as self-concept, even though they have interrelated meanings. Embodiment and body image are also very closely connected, yet with an existing difference. The different concepts described below make up the totality of an individual's identity. Since this is a qualitative study about a specific phenomenon, it is also important for the reader to understand that the concepts stated below have different meanings for everyone. These concepts can be viewed by the psychologist, sociologist or by the philosophical point of view (See Bishop 1994; Bendelow and Williams 1998; Butler 1989), giving them their own significance and emphasis. Thus, the descriptions below cannot be absolute, only as situational for this particular study.

In this study I use theories from different schools of thought, trying to find the ones that suit it best. By describing the concepts, I offer a framework to understand the research and the results even further. Concepts such as embodiment and self-concept can be very abstract, which was evident during my rehearsal interviews.

“I don't really know what to say about this embodiment thing. Maybe it has something to do with how you experience things and if you are at peace with yourself. A little tricky, but I think I could think that over for a bit.” (Rehearsal interview, 28.10.2016)

“En oikeen osaa nyt äkkiseltään sanoo tähän kehollisuusjuttuun mitään sen kummempaa. Ehkä se liittyy just siihen, miten kokee asioita ja on sinut itsensä kanssa. Vähän ehkä hankala, mutta mä voisin mieltii tota vielä.”
(Harjoitushaastattelu 28.10.2016)

The citation from the rehearsal interview shows the level of how abstract the concepts are. If an individual isn't familiar without concepts such as these, they might be hard to understand and especially relate to. That was one of the reasons I chose to switch from interviews to essay answers, so that the participants would have more time to ponder on the subject. Hopefully this chapter can help the reader to form a totality of the concepts to help understand the later chapters.

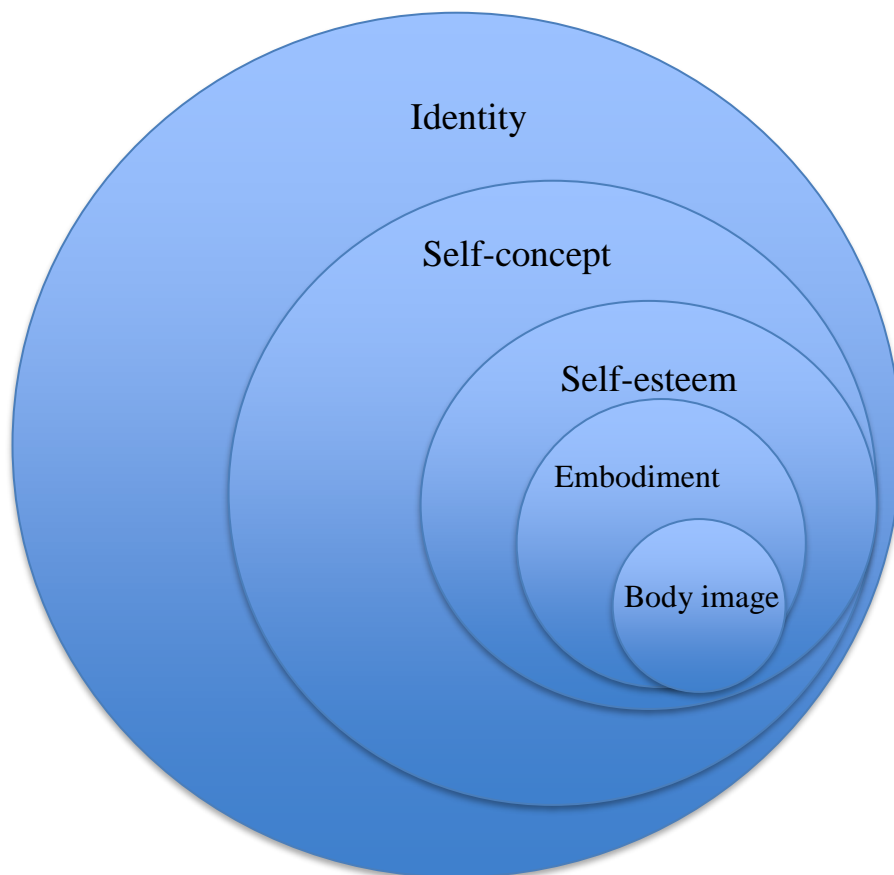


Figure 3. The hierarchy of concepts associated with embodiment. Adapted from Pönni, Erkka (2015), University of Jyväskylä

3.1. The Self

Before talking about embodiment or body image issues, it is important to look at the totality of a person from the perspective of the individual's identity. The self and identity are hyponyms, which include concepts such as self-concept and self-esteem. Since these concepts are interrelated, it is sometimes hard to make a clear distinction between them. Identity and the self are commonly seen as having the same meaning. Aho (2005, 21) describes the person's personality to be the general view you receive of an individual, including everything that is characteristic for him or her and is relatively stable. In the core of it all is the self. A person's entire life circles around the self, and it is present in every situation. The difference between personalities and self, is that what everyone else sees in the individual, i.e. actions, observations and conversations are part of the personality, whereas the self is everything that the individual sees, experiences and thinks of the outside world.

Hall (1999, 22) uses sociological theories to describe identity, and he describes it to be the balancing act between the inner and outer world (our personal life versus society) and trying to diminish the line between the two. At the same time, we are trying to project ourselves to the cultural identities around us, but also trying to internalize their meanings into our own lives, and thus making them a part of ourselves. Aho (2005, 22-23) sees the difficulty in separating these two terms from each other, since they have somewhat overlapping meanings. She clarifies that the identity highlights the individual's uniqueness as well as his or her placement in society (what is his status at work, home and within friends). The identity focuses more on social factors, such as roles, race, nationality, marital status etc. than any other concepts dealing with personality. The identity can be seen as a type of framework in which the individual tries to find oneself and fit in with the outer world. To sum up, the self focuses on individual, personal and inner factors, whereas the identity can include outer factors as well. The self has to do with actual personal qualities, such as values, that do not vary greatly depending on different situations.

The self can be divided into smaller terms and thus described even further. We can talk about a global self, consisting of all of the sub-terms related with it. The global self has two aspects; the subjective self and the objective self. The subjective self is something

within the individual, the self as the doer. It is present in all of the actions the individual takes part in and controls the self, but is hard to evaluate. The objective self is where the individual is the center of doing, which can be analyzed and evaluated as an outsider. When recalling a past action or conversation, the self is then objective, since it can be seen as an outsider. The self becomes objective, when the individual relates and internalizes thoughts and attitudes coming from the outside, for example family members, co-workers or team mates. (Aho 2005, 21-23). Hall (1999, 22-24) sees the subjective self as a relationship with the outer world. Our subjective self and the social world around us are said to be constantly moving. The subjective self, what used to be a quite stable and solid identity, has started to become more shattered. It doesn't consist of only one identity, but of several which might sometimes be conflicting with each other, or even to be incompatible between each other. The identification process, where we try to project ourselves to the outer world, has become more complex, open and problematic.

The postmodern subjective self doesn't have a solid or permanent identity. It changes and alters depending on the environment it is in. The subjective self takes on another identity in different situations, and these identities don't make up a totality around a solid "self". According to Hall (1999, 22-24), a completely solid and consistent identity is a fantasy, which cannot be attained.

Finally, Hall (1999, 39) states that identity is something that takes shape from unconscious processes, rather than from deliberate behavior. It will always stay as imperfect, as a continuous process, which changes through time. Identity is the lack of totality, which builds up from the manners and norms we see from the outer society.

3.2. Self- Concept

Self-concept is a collection of perceptions of an individual, which are within conscious awareness. It isn't a straightforward concept to be described, since it includes several subcomponents such as the scholar self, the social self, the spiritual self and the bodily self. (Buckworth and Dishman 2002, 3-6). According to Burns (1982, 13-15) self-concept is made up of two elements, which are beliefs and evaluations. Beliefs can be described

as the self-picture of self-image, whereas self-evaluation is considered to be the same as self-esteem, self-worth or self-acceptance. These can further describe self-image as being what individual sees when he or she looks at him or herself, and self-evaluation as to how strongly the subject feels about these facts. Aho (2005, 22) states that a person's self-concept can include thoughts and beliefs of the self that are not real. For example, an individual might regard himself to be a person with a great sense of humor, but in reality might be quite serious. The self-concept describes the experiences of the self, and thus does not always reflect the self.

The belief (self-image) part of the self-concept is quite simply the limitless number of ways every individual identifies himself. When describing oneself, we often use abstract words describing the way we have come to perceiving ourselves, such as polite, outgoing and kind. These attributes are quite general, and don't describe the individual in a very unique way. Only when describing ourselves to ourselves can we find more depth in the descriptions, and using more specific terms such as bulky, tall, ambitious, proud, long arms etc. (Burns 1982, 15-35). Aho (2005, 23) describes this further, saying that the self-concept is the big picture an individual has created of himself. Thus, the self-concept includes the objective self, since the qualities and attributes can be described and evaluated. According to this description, the self-concept is an organized, structured schema of oneself, which includes the past, present and future experiences combined with values, attitudes, ideals and emotions. A realistic and well-integrated self-concept is almost like a map, guiding the individual in different activities.

Aho (2005, 23) describes the self-concept to be made up of three dimensions, which are:

1. Real self-concept, which is recognized by the individual and is made up from encounters with other people, actions and experiences.
2. Ideal self-concept is what the individual would like to be and strives to become. The ideal might be achievable but also very unrealistic, which can cause stress or nervousness.
3. Normative self-concept is what the individual believes that others think of him or what the society thinks he should be like. Therefore there is an

outside pressure for the individual to change in a direction he hasn't internalized yet.

As said before, the self-concept is made up of many subcomponents, which form a hierarchical pyramid. The global self-concept is at the top of the pyramid, with general abstracts at the next level. The lower you go down the pyramid the more specific and situational self-perceptions you can find. All the abstracts are dependent on each other, with the higher-level concepts depending on the lower ones. (Buckworth and Dishman 2002, 7-10).

These descriptions and attributes we use about ourselves cannot be called objective, since they are for the most part agreed on by others. This means that the self-concept is based on subjectively valued qualities and characteristics. Even a person's height can be regarded as having a subjective aspect to it, since the same height can be regarded as tall for others and short for others. The constant feedback and evaluation an individual receives from the environment has an effect on their self-concept, especially if it is negative. Constant negative evaluation can lead to a negative self-concept. (Burns 1982, 15-25). A negative self-concept can thus have an effect on the individual's identity, as it is linked with it. Aho (2005, 20) states that the individual's self and especially his or her self-concept defines how he or she acts in different social situations, since the individual interprets experiences through the self. If the individual has a positive self-concept, he or she is more likely to accept a positive comment of their body. On the other hand, if the self-concept is negative, positive comments might go unnoticed.

Self-concept includes many sub-terms, which are often misinterpreted to mean the same thing. Terms like these are self-image and self-picture, which in common language have often been used as a synonym with self-concept, even though they are only a part of it. These, along with the self-evaluation (self-esteem), make up the self-concept. There are three main principles in self-evaluation, the first being the obvious comparison an individual makes with his self-image and the ideal self-image the individual would like to be or to become. The second point assumes that self-evaluation is defined by the person's own views about how others evaluate him or her. The final point describes the self-evaluation to include the person's own evaluation of himself as a relative success or failure in doing what his or her identity demands. (Burns 1982, 19-25).

3.2 Self- Esteem

Self-esteem can be described in different ways, and a common usage of the term is to describe it as how much an individual likes or values oneself, and it is said that a positive self-esteem attributes to an overall good mental health. Self-esteem can also be explained as the total sum of different aspects of one's self. Besides self-esteem, other related terms are self-worth, self-regard, self-respect and self-acceptance. (Buckworth and Dishman 2002, 155-157). An individual with healthy self-esteem can see many positive qualities in his- or herself, and the more positive qualities one can name the better it is for overall mental health. Nonetheless, healthy self-esteem is made up of actual qualities and based on the truth. Besides the positive qualities, the individual can recognize and acknowledge his or her weaknesses. Naming the weaknesses doesn't lower the self-esteem of an individual with a high self-image, but rather are in balance with each other, which makes recognizing them easier. An individual with a healthy self-esteem is honest to oneself and can accept his or her weaknesses without losing self-respect. (Keltikangas 1994, 50-54). According to Aho (2005), the most important process of self-esteem is self-respect; how the individual experiences his or her worth and significance. Furthermore, self-esteem also includes self-awareness. A person with good self-esteem is aware of himself, but accepts his strengths and weaknesses, equaling to a positive self-concept.

Self-esteem can also be called self-respect or even described as self-confidence. An example of self-respect is where an individual fights for the values he or she believes in, but it is also the ability to believe in your own achievements and accomplishments. Self-confidence on the other hand, can be seen as the ability to believe in one's resources and how to impact your own life quality. (Keltikangas 1994, 50-54). This is an important part of maintaining a balanced, positive life, including both personal and work related.

Self-esteem is a concept within self-concept, thus a positive and balanced self-concept projects a positive self-esteem. According to Aho (2005, 24-25), the ideal self-concept is usually more positive than the real self-concept, making the individual strive to become something like the ideal self-concept; constantly trying to improve. If the ideal self-concept is too farfetched, a distant dream, it will diminish the real self-concept and in turn

have a negative effect on self-esteem. If the ideal and real self-concept are too close to each other, the individual doesn't see a need to change, as he is 'perfect'. This mindset will eventually turn into narcissistic features or other psychological problems.

A positive self-esteem is a strong predictor for overall mental health, but also how comfortable individual feels in different situations and positions, such as at work. There have been much research done on how self-esteem affects work and job performance (See Pierce et al. 2004; Bergami et al. 2000; Ellis et al. 1983.) and how satisfied an individual is in a job position. Judge et al. (2001) showed that there are four factors indicating job satisfaction. These factors include sense of control, low neuroticism and a general self-efficacy. Along with these elements, a positive self-esteem rose to be one of the most important predictors of job satisfaction. A positive self-esteem turned out to also be a predictor for overall job performance, highlighting the fact that persons with a positive attitude, thus a positive self-esteem, are better workers on many levels.

4.3. The Body

Nothing in this world is as personal as our own body. We feel, sense, explore and discover the world around us with the help of our body. Even our first achievements as human beings are related to the body: when an infant learns to roll over, crawl, stand up and walk. The first thing we see when confronting another person is their body, and how they walk, talk and present themselves. The body works simultaneously as a tool and as a shield, protecting us from harmful rays and pollution. Apart from being a physical form, the body itself represents many meanings for the individual. According to Laine (1996, 157) the body has different meanings when examined from a certain viewpoint. Embodiment issues include concepts such as the physical body, experiences within the body, body control, social body and the body image. According to Laine, when examining the different meanings of the body it is important to ask the following questions; how do we experience the body, and more precisely how do we experience the body in the world surrounding us?

Burns (1982, 163-166; 197-200) describes the concept of body image, which is directly linked with the self- concept. The physical body in terms of self-concept can be narrowed down to two terms: body image and body schema. The two terms are linked closely together but have a distinctive difference: where body schema is the simple identity of the body built from sense perception, and the body image is the valued picture of the body. Everyone has their own mental picture about themselves, which is a mixture of facts and beliefs, which might not always add up to the actual image of the body. The body image is a complicated set of beliefs, facts and attributes and it consists of four main principles, which are:

1. the actual subjective perception of the body (outer appearances and how it functions)
2. the adopted mental factors which come from the individual's personal experiences
3. the sociological factors (how society and the surrounding environment react to the person)
4. the ideal body image, which is a combination of past experiences, comparisons between others and the overall attitude towards the individual's body

The four principles describe how the body image is a multidimensional concept, with several aspects to it. According to Cash (2004), body image most often than not, refers to outer appearances and how an individual accepts the body, but also how it is linked with embodiment. The outer appearances are often used to make first impressions about people and the body shapes can be interpreted symbolically. The different body types can be seen as representations of social merits, such as being muscular and slim represent portrayals of health, discipline and sexual attraction. The body is seen as a canvas, which represents the values and beliefs behind a person. (Kirk 1993, 6-7).

Receiving any type of feedback about our bodies can have a lasting effect on our self-esteem, both negative and positive. Burns (1982, 163-200) stated that receiving positive remarks and evaluations about an individual's body from the surrounding environment enhances an overall positive self-concept, and vice versa negative comments and feelings are likely to generate a negative self-concept. Aho (2005, 20) also describes that the individual's self and especially his or her self-concept defines how he or she acts in different social situations, since the individual interprets experiences through the self. If

the individual has a positive self-concept, he or she is more likely to accept a positive comment of their body. On the other hand, if the self-concept is negative, positive comments might go unnoticed. Our body is the most visible aspect of ourselves, which is why it is always under the magnifying glass of others. If a person is not able to meet the physical criteria set by others or even by society, it can have a drastic negative effect on the overall self- concept.

4. FITNESS INDUSTRY

In this chapter I will introduce the fitness industry in where the group fitness instructors operate. The chapter will give an overview of the development of the sport system of Finland, and how the private sector is still today in its expansion stage.

4.1 From Public to Private Sector

Finland has a long history in sports and the roots are deep in the public sector. Already from the end of the 19th century there was a visible sport movement when the first sport clubs were being established. The first sport club to be established in Finland was a yacht club in Pori, which was founded in 1856 (Ennekari 2016). The first sport clubs were very much male-dominant, but in 1876 the first female gymnastics club was formed in Helsinki, marking a historical path for women's sports. From these days on, sport has remained a strong part of Finnish culture and has evolved into different sectors, each with an individual perspective towards sport. The three areas are public, private and third sectors, where the public sector consists of government, municipalities and even the state church. The third sector includes non-profit organizations such as sport clubs, associations and federations whereas the private sector involves different companies working in the field. (Ilmanen 2015, 19-20).

All three sectors work together to form the solid base of the Finnish sport system, although in the past the public and third sectors have had a stronger influence on the sport culture. The third sector can be said to be the most influential party, and still today the Finnish recreational structure leans on volunteerism. During the 1970s and -80s when the Finnish welfare society was being built, there was a large increase in building sport facilities in the municipalities. This for one aided the spread sport and exercise, when more people had the opportunity to join in. It wasn't until the start of the millennium, when the private sector became more important in the sport system. The great recession in the beginning of the 1990s forced the municipalities to cut down on costs, including funding for sports. This pushed the private sector to enhance their services and thus provide a different route for individuals to participate in sport. From then on, the private sector has kept on growing and widening the service industry. (Ilmanen 2015, 24-34).

As said before, Finland has had a strong public sector, and the changes within the system have happened relatively slowly. At the moment the public sector is shifting, and is somewhat losing its grounds as the sports provider for the entire population. This shifting between the sectors offers a prosperous opportunity for the private sector to expand. (Koivisto 2010, 2).

4.2 Private Sector in Finland

The private sector in Finland is very diverse and includes different industries, such as sport equipment retail, sport facilities and ski resorts all around the country. All in all, there are 12 different branches from which fitness centers are regarded as one of the major ones. (Koivisto 2010, 43- 44). The fitness industry has been expanding dramatically and new centers seem to start up frequently. Over the past few years, the revenue of this field has increased up to 62 per cent. (Kosonen 2014, 12). The biggest winners are the large fitness chains, who dominate the field. In 2014 there was a significant change in the market, when two of the largest fitness chains Elixia and Sats fused to form a single, almost dominant, chain around Finland. Even though the larger corporations make the biggest profits, smaller clubs receive their share of the market, since the amount of unprofitable companies decreased by 30 per cent in 2013, when in 2012 the number was as high as one in ten companies. The industry is growing due to many reasons, one of them being the investments in personal trainer services. For example, in 2014, ten per cent of Sats Elixia's revenue came from these types of services. (Ojanen 2014).

The fitness centers referred to in this study are commercial gyms and clubs, which offer a variety of services. These services can include personal training, group fitness, spa areas or other similar selections. The importance of gyms and fitness clubs as a recreational place has increased over the past years in Finland. 9 % of those who report practicing sports go to the gym as their primary sport place, according to the national sport survey conducted in 2009-2010. Exercising at the gym is the third most popular sport overall in Finland, with over 713 000 people reporting it as one of their hobbies. The increase in popularity has been steady over the past years, with around 50 000 new members each

year. This makes exercising at the gym and clubs the fastest growing form of sport in Finland. (Suomen Kuntoliikuntaliitto 2010).

According to the national sport participation survey, women use private services more than men. This could be explained by the fact that women tend to prefer group fitness and dance classes to other sports, and these services are easily assessable in commercial fitness clubs and gyms. Compared to the earlier survey from 2005-2006, there has been an increase of 138 000 women in private commercial companies. Apart from the female majority, there seems to be another specific target group using the services of private companies. When compared to the other age groups, 26-35-year-olds tend to use private services relatively more than others. Quantitatively the 36-50-year-olds are the biggest target group using these services. (Suomen Kuntoliikuntaliitto 2010).

The growing attention towards fitness centers has caused the field to become more professionalized, in a sense that people are more aware of what services different gyms and clubs offer and which ones serve their needs the best. Also, the number of professional trainers and coaches has increased dramatically over the last few years. The fitness boom has enabled the fitness centers to be portrayed as a trendy environment, where interesting people meet and gather to workout. (Sassatelli 2010, 1-3).

Kettunen (2004) studied the reasons and motives women choose to exercise at fitness clubs, and found out that the initial services are one of the main criteria when choosing where to go to practice sports. The client or member of a fitness center wishes to use versatile and high- standard services, which fulfill their personal needs. A member of the fitness club usually has a balanced financial situation, which can refer to his or her social status. The financial balance can also be seen as a requisite for joining a fitness center due to the costly monthly membership fees. With this in mind, the customers feel that they are paying for the full-service package, including the group fitness classes, gym equipment and the possibility of training whenever suits the individual best. Apart from appreciating high quality services, the members of fitness clubs also require the services to be of decent standards, so to meet their personal needs. On the other hand, Lampinen and Lappalainen (2013) also researched the different motives behind exercising at fitness clubs, and they stated that there were two distinctive differences when comparing the motives to train of women and men. Men valued the competitive side of exercising far

more than women. Women on the other hand, appreciated the health benefits of exercising, along with weight-loss, outer appearances and stress relief. Especially when comparing the motives of the group fitness class participants, women mentioned appearances and stress control, which they valued more than the male participants.

4.3 Group Fitness

Group fitness as a form of exercise is a rather new phenomenon, which hasn't been researched enough. Group fitness can be seen to have started in 1968 in the US, by Kenneth H. Cooper, when he launched the idea of aerobic exercise as he wanted to encourage people to work out, highlighting the importance of disease prevention. The following year Judi Sheppard Missett established Jazzercise, which was an hour-long dance-based fitness routine consisting of cardio, strength and stretch movements. Group fitness got taken to the next level with the help of Jackie Sorensen, developing Cooper's program further and coming up with aerobic dance, which is still running today. (Wing 2014). The evolution of the different classes started in the 1970s, with the first classes being high-impact aerobic programs. The 1980s introduced low-impact aerobics to broaden the variety of classes available. The selection of classes kept on increasing in the 1990s, with new classes such as step, slide, water exercises, indoor cycling and yoga. The millennium has been a decade of functional training, which has kept on growing. (Kennedy & Yoke 2005, 14). These new fitness regimes brought a completely new way of exercising, and it was considered anything but dull. This new form of exercising combined health, dance and fitness education into one. Aerobic sparked up the attention of women in particular, and it soon took a permanent spot in the fitness world. (Polley 1981, 38-40).

The definition of group fitness according to Wing (2014) is a group of people or a class led by a professional instructor, and the structures vary from aerobics and dance choreographies to strength and endurance training. Nowadays international companies such as Less Mills and Zumba have taken fitness to the next level, and provide group fitness classes all over the world (Less Mills 2015; Zumba Fitness). Today group fitness classes are more versatile and use technology to keep clients motivated. Group exercise

classes today are accompanied by workout tracking devices, to measure and follow everyone's development and results during classes. Also, functionality and 'back to basics'-workouts are getting more and more popular, and instructors are seen more as 'movement coaches' than just exercise leaders. (Keller 2015).

Nowadays group fitness classes can be seen as a platform to enhance individual health aspects, which is why the selection of classes have become more and more diverse. This has also lead to vast commercialism, making group fitness, and especially the group fitness instructors, a sellable product. Fitness centers worldwide have gone through an extensive process of commercialism, from the spread of fitness centers to how group fitness classes should be marketed. Group fitness classes have become more and more popular, making it a significant part of fitness marketing. Many issues have had an impact on how group fitness classes should be marketed, such as preferred target group, world trends and economical fluctuations. Also, cultural factors have influenced the marketing of group fitness classes over the years. Kennedy and Yoke (2005, 15) noticed how the different body trends prevailing at the time have had an impact on how group classes are described in fitness centers. The first group fitness classes where simply named 'aerobics' or 'dance exercise', but as trends changed the market brought up classes such as 'Ultimate Abs' and 'Absolute Arms' distinguishing the perceived target for the class. Rasinkangas (2016) also noticed the body trends in the fitness industry, as he described the evolution of the body from the voluminous curves in the renaissance era, to the idolization of a tone body in the present day. Taking part in group fitness classes is not only a past time for upper class ladies, but an option available for men and women alike.

According to Sassatelli (2010, 1-3) the body appears to be at the same time a tool for work, labor and other efforts but also as an individual statement of the self. In the Western societies the body is marked as a symbol for self-possession, almost as a trophy award to show off. Especially the trained and toned bodies become a sign of status – one has the time and capacity to put enough effort to harness a fit body. As this image of toned bodies become more visible due to commercialism, also the fitness centers where these bodies are formed become more evident to the larger crowds. Hutson (2013) also noticed in a study on personal trainers, that possessing a toned, muscular body was seen as positive business card when obtaining clients. On the contrary, personal trainers who did not meet such bodily standards struggled to acquire enough clients. Media plays a major role in

displaying health-related issues, such as body types and nutritional facts. Eskola (2001) describes the observations made on how the concepts of healthy nutritional diets have changed over the years. Just a few decades ago we were urged to eat plenty of fats, on the contrary to what is said today. Magazines are full of recipes, diets and other trivia information on how to lose weight and be in the best shape possible, even though the information keeps changing on a daily basis. Alongside these ‘truths’ are all of the other collateral facts, for example about losing weight, medicine, super diets, bodybuilding etc. During this research I also noticed how these issues were dealt with in different media platforms such as blogs, social media etc.:

“...somehow I feel that being healthy and having a healthy body is a conversation topic that keeps coming up everywhere. I took part in a group fitness class today and after the class I went to take a shower in the locker room. There were a few women conversing about how a blogger had announced that (s)he was giving up a certain nutritional item, because it was proclaimed to be unhealthy. I can’t help but question, who has said it to be unhealthy and why? And why are these women listening to a blogger rather than national nutrition dietary guidelines?”
(Research diary 17.12.2015)

“...jotenkin on sellainen olo, että terveellisyydestä sekä erityisesti terveestä kehosta puhutaan joka paikassa. Tänään osallistuin ryhmäliikuntatunnille, jonka jälkeen menin suihkuun pukuhuoneisiin. Siellä naiset puhuivat saunan lauteilla keskenään, kuinka joku bloggari oli ilmoittanut luopuvansa jostain ruoka-aineesta kokonaan, koska sen on todettu olevan epäterveellinen. Herää kysymys, että kuka sen on todennut olevan epäterveellinen ja miksi? Ja miksi kyseiset naiset kuuntelevat mieluummin bloggaria kuin kansallisia ravitsemussuosituksia?”
(Tutkimuspäiväkirja 17.12.2015)

5. FYSIOLINE FRESSI

Fysioline Fressi Ltd is one of the leading fitness chains in Finland, with 18 fitness centers around the country. The first fitness club was established in Tampere in 1979, and from then on, the momentum has kept on growing to the point where they are today. At the moment Fysioline Fressi Ltd is the largest Finnish fitness chain, and their intention is to keep on expanding. (Fysioline Fressi 2016a).

Fysioline Fressi Ltd belongs to a larger organization, Fysioline, which is one of the leading health and fitness related corporations in Finland. Fysioline Ltd offers a wide range of services and products, ranging from fitness and pharmacy products, to health and training services, as shown in Figure 4. The diagram shows the different sectors and businesses under Fysioline Ltd.

Their expertise also includes consulting, planning, marketing and providing training for different businesses. (Fysioline Oy 2016). Fysioline Ltd also owns one of the principal training organizations in Finland, Fitness Academy of Finland, which was established in 1997. The Fitness Academy of Finland trains and teaches different instructors. From Personal Trainers to group fitness instructors, they offer a wide range of different courses for all professionals in the fitness industry (FAF). Apart from the all-inclusive fitness centers like Fressi, Fysioline also offers a few budget- priced gyms called the EVO- gyms, available in a few places around Finland. Fysioline has already started to branch outside of Finland, and has some activity in Estonia and Latvia. (Fysioline Oy 2016). Fysioline Group is one of the most successful businesses in the field, with a revenue of 18,2 million euros in 2014 and growing steadily to 19,3 million euros in 2015 (Kauppalehti 2015; Tehiranta 2016).

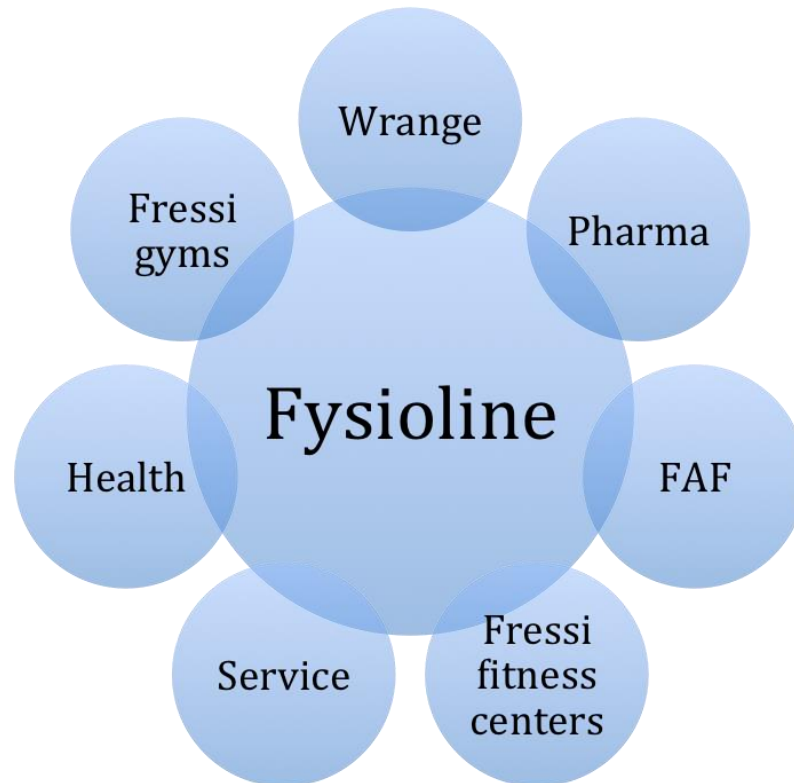


Figure 4: The organization of Fysioline Group, divided into seven different businesses. Adapted from Fysioline Fressi Ltd 2015.

At the moment there are 18 Fressi fitness centers around Finland, with three of them in the Tampere region, which are Fressi Tampere, Syke and Ylöjärvi. Fressi Tampere was the first center and it was founded by Tarja Lajunen, who still instructs group fitness classes today. The first Fressi (Tampere) was established for female clients only, until later when it was turned into an all-inclusive fitness center for men and women alike. Fressi Tampere and Ylöjärvi have the same club manager and group fitness coordinator, so their services are linked closely to each other, even though the centers have many differences (Tehiranta 2016). Today, all of the Fressi fitness centers offer a wide variety of services, from group fitness classes to personal trainer sessions. The services also include free child care for the members, saunas, massages, massage chairs, cafeteria selection and a chance to take part in different activities and events going on year-round. The different activities include events such as smoothie tasting, dance marathons and client evenings with food, activities and raffles. (Kiiski 2016).

Fressi boasts one of the largest varieties of group fitness classes, with classes differing from mindfulness to vigorous strength training. All of the fitness centers in Fressi have Les Mills classes, which are popular all around the world (Les Mills International 2015), but they also offer a number of their own Fressi- products, such as Warrior X, Mindfulness, ABS30 and JOOGAflow. Fressi's goal is to launch a new product every starting season to keep the customers motivated and to offer the newest trends of the fitness world (Tehiranta 2016). Apart from these, there are also some basic classes such as spinning, stretching and aerobics to meet everyone's needs and wants. (Fysioline Fressi Oy 2016b).

Fressi Tampere has over 1600 square meters of space and is situated right in the center of Tampere. Compared to Fressi Tampere, Fressi Ylöjärvi is one of the smallest centers of the Fressi- chain, adding to a total of 1000 square meters. Fressi Ylöjärvi is located next to the sports hall of Ylöjärvi, enabling clients to use their facilities as well. (Tehiranta 2016). There are 14 group fitness instructors working in Fressi Ylöjärvi, whereas Fressi Tampere has 22. Some of the instructors work in both centers, either substituting or on a permanent basis. The weekly group fitness calendar in Ylöjärvi offered 31 different classes and 44 in Tampere in the month of March 2016. Fressi Ylöjärvi also provides virtual classes at non- primetime hours up to 26 hours per week, adding the total amount of classes to 57 classes per week. The virtual classes can also be used when there are sudden changes, such as sick leaves or injuries. The average usage rate for all the classes is 55% in Tampere and 44% in Ylöjärvi, tallying to 891 customers per week in Tampere and 438 in Ylöjärvi (February 2016). Fressi Fysioline Ltd has set a goal of reaching at least 50 % of the maximum number of participants in the evening classes, and at least 30 % in the morning classes. (Kiiski 2016).

Fysioline Fressi Ltd was started by the Välikoski family and it is still run by the same family. Being a family organization has effects on the company's values and way of working, since they have a close relationship with all of the Fressi units around Finland. Fressi has stated that their values include understanding their client's needs and desires, appreciating their personnel's expertise and striving to be innovative. Their values also include performing in similar manners across the organization, controlled growth and offering a chance to become an expert in the fitness field, as shown in Figure 5.

Values:

- We understand our customer's needs
- We work and function in the same manner all throughout the organization
- We are innovative and inventive
- We appreciate our personnels' know- how
- We offer a chance to develop into an expert in this field
- Our company has a stable and controlled growth.

Figure 5: The values of Fysioline Fressi Ltd.

Fysioline Fressi's vision (Figure 6) is to be one of the leading experts in this field of expertise, including well- being and fitness industry. Their vision also includes providing the best possible services for all customers, regardless of the client's goal or motivation. In doing so, Fressi hopes to offer the services with a profitable growth rate. (Tehiranta, 2016).

Vision 2017

We are the leading experts in the field of health and well-being promotion.

The services we provide help our customers to find the best solution for them, with a profitable growth rate.

Figure 6: The vision of 2017 for Fysioline Fressi Ltd.

Together with the strong values and a challenging vision, Fysioline Fressi Ltd strives to become the leading fitness chain in Finland. The work put in must happen on all levels, descending down to group fitness classes as well. The values and vision are both very visible, since they are shown in yearly meetings and can be found on the websites as well. Embracing values such as 'appreciating personnel's know-how' and 'offering a chance

to develop in the field' can have a strong impact on the staff's wellbeing and motivation. Thus, investing in the personnel will help achieve the vision set for the year, since a highly motivated staff will offer better customer service in a very demanding area of business, where the fitness centers offering full services are challenged by low-priced foreign gyms (Mustonen 2017; Talouselämä, 2016).

6. THE BODY OF THE GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

In this chapter I explain in more detail the thoughts and attributions linked with the body of the group fitness instructor (case study of group fitness instructors of Fysioline Fressi Tampere and Ylöjärvi). I use the essay answers from the six instructors who took part in the study, along with theories to back up the revealed answers. During the text, I use ‘Instructor A’, ‘Instructor B’ etc. to refer to specific citations from the essays. The essays ranged from two to seven pages, with a wide variety of thoughts and feelings about the body. The essays showed that some of the participants had dwelled on this subject beforehand others hadn’t really stopped to think about it all that much. Even having different starting points in their career as instructors, the participants had many similar factors in their way of thought, as well as in life in general.

The given results are categorized into four chapters, each with a different theme, discussing the body of the group fitness instructor. Eskola et. al (1998, 174-175) describes the process of thematic analysis as sometimes being a tricky process if there isn’t a conjunctive factor binding the themes. Once the researcher has selected a larger theme, it becomes clearer to start finding sub-themes that are sometimes overlapping with each other. In this case, the main header is ‘the body of the group fitness instructor’, and the sub-themes are history, the body as a tool, the interacting body and the group fitness instructor as a role.

6.1 History of the Body

This chapter digs into the backgrounds of the instructors taking part in this study. The essays showed that one of the major factors which the instructors had in common, was the love for sports and being active, which has somewhat been a trigger to start instructing group fitness classes.

6.1.1. Past Sport Life

All six instructors of this study have a very active background in both instructing and sports in general. They reveal that they have all been instructing group fitness for several years, some for almost two decades. According to their answers, they have also been a

part of Fysioline Fressi for quite some time, so they are very familiar with the company and the classes being taught there. The instructors didn't specify what classes they instruct at the moment, but it was interesting to read how their favorite classes, or the classes that they connect strongly with, came through the answers. All of the instructors had a versatile background when talking about instructing different classes, and they regarded that as a sign of professionalism.

The instructors of this study all seemed to have a background in sports. All six stories started off with detailed narrations of their childhood hobbies, and how sports have been a major impact in their lives.

“I used to be a competitive athlete and sports have always been a part of my life.” (Instructor B)

“Olen entinen kilpaurheilija ja liikunta on kuulunut elämään lapsesta asti.”
(Ohjaaja B)

“I have always been interested in the sport industry. I used to compete in skiing and track and field until I was 16-years-old, and after that exercising has stayed permanently in my life” (Instructor D)

“Liikunta-ala on aina kiinnostanut. Kilpailin hiihdossa ja yleisurheilussa aktiivisesti 16-vuotiaaseen asti, ja siitä lähtien liikkuminen on jäänyt aktiivisesti elämäni.” (Ohjaaja D)

Not all of the instructors of this study have begun an active lifestyle from an early age. One of the respondents explained how sports hadn't always been the obvious choice for her, and how she found the joy of exercising a bit later on;

“My personal hobby was related to combat sports and I have coached those sorts of training sessions before... I went through the traditional teenage angst the hardest way possible. I didn't really like being a girl or a woman, and everything body-related annoyed and grossed me. I tried to relieve the teen anger issues with cycling and forest runs, rather than on other people,

and then I found combat sports. Through that I found exercising and it became a joy and way of life.” (Instructor F)

“Oma urheiluharrastus on ollut alkujaan yhteydessä juurikin erilaisiin taistelulajeihin ja sen kaltaisia harjoituksia on tullut pidettyä ja treenejä vedettyä... Perinteiset teini-ään angstit kävin kovimman kautta läpi. En oikein tykännyt olla tyttö tai nainen, vaan kaikki mitä siihen kehollisesti liittyy, ällötti ja ärsytti. Purin teinikiukkuutta muitten ihmisten sijaan pyörälenkeille ja metsäjuoksuun ja löysin kamppailulajit. Sitä kautta liikkumisesta tuli nautinto ja elämäntapa” (Ohjaaja F)

The above answers show a strong bond with sports and exercising overall, which all six of the respondents had in common. Sharing a passion this strong can easily be projected on to the participants of the group fitness classes and then again onto their lives. Westerlund (2015) studied the working body of dance teachers and how they see and take care of their bodies. In the study she found out that the participants regarded being a dance teacher as more than a profession and more than just a job. Most of the dance teachers had grown up inside the dance culture, and it had later become part of their identity. Working with something so close to heart offers a fruitful starting point for a career. Having a strong passion in life can have a strong correlation on motivation as well. Vallerand's (2012) extensive 30-year-old research studied different motivational processes in a person's life. Vallerand describes passion as a strong preference towards an activity or an object, which is in somehow an important part of the individual's life. This connection with the activity or object is so strong that the individual is willing to invest a great amount of time and energy towards it. The study showed that a strong passion towards something can sustain the motivation towards a desired goal, and thus improve the quality of the outcome.

6.1.2. Becoming a Group Fitness Instructor

The passion for sports is an interesting topic when talking about how the participants of this study became group fitness instructors, since they all strongly shared this specific passion. From the answers given, it was evident that even though there was a natural

interest towards exercising, becoming a group fitness instructor seemed to be a sum of unintentional mishaps.

“The first time I ended up instructing was after high school, when I substituted for my dance teacher when she was sick... I have never intentionally made the decision to become a group fitness instructor, I have just drifted to the fitness centers through my hobbies... the instructing at fitness centers is something I regard to be between a hobby and a profession.” (Instructor A)

“Ensimmäisen kerran päädyin ohjaamaan ryhmiä lukion jälkeen, kun tuurasin tanssiopettajaani tämän sairasloman ajan... En ole varsinaisesti valinnut ryhmäliikunnanohjaajan työtä ensisijaiseksi työkseni vaan olen ajautunut liikuntakeskusmaailmaan ohjaamaan ryhmiä enemmänkin harrastusten kautta... liikuntakeskuksissa tehtävä ryhmäliikunnanohjaus, jonka miellän omalla kohdallani asettuvan jonnekin harrastusten ja työn välimaastoon.” (Ohjaaja A)

“... I used to work at a gym where they also offered group fitness classes. I took part in the classes and then I ended up instructing them myself.”
(Instructor B)

“...työskentelin kuntosalilla jossa oli tarjolla myös rl-tunteja (ryhmäliikuntatunteja). Kävin tunneilla ja sitä kautta ajauduin myös itse ohjaamaan.” (Ohjaaja B)

“The year 2009 was a chapter in my life, where it was an appropriate time to apply for school to study sports. I applied to the Sport Institute of Finland, to get ‘experience’ in the application process... Against all odds I got in... During the school years I didn’t have a clue what the future would hold. I instructed infant swimming classes and gave swimming lessons, until my home gym asked me to work for them. And here I still am...” (Instructor D)

“Vuonna 2009 työssä ja elämässä oli sellainen vaihe, että oli sopiva aika hakea kouluun opiskelemaan liikunta-alaa. Hain Suomen urheiluopistolle, jotta saisin ”kokemusta” hakemisprosessista. -- Kävikin niin hullusti, että pääsin suoraan sisään --Koulun aikana ei oikein ollut vielä mitään hajua, mitä tulevaisuus tuo tullessaan. Tein vauva-uinteja ja uimakouluja, kunnes kotisaliltani pyydettiin minua töihin. Sillä tiellä edelleen...” (Ohjaaja D)

All of the answers included words such as ‘‘drifted to’’ (Finnish: ajautua) and ‘‘ended up’’ (Finnish: päätyä), which give the impression that becoming a group fitness instructor is not a profession towards which one strives to aim. The responses show a deep interest towards exercising and how through different coincidences, the instructors of this study found themselves working at fitness centers. As instructor F explains;

“...being an active person, I had to search for new ways to exercise since sports had been an important part of my life and overall well-being. Through my line of work I ended up studying..., where a part of it was instructing different groups. I got more and more excited about instructing and here I still am.” (Instructor F)

“...aktiivisen ihmisen piti löytää uusia tapoja liikkua kun urheilu kuitenkin on ollut tärkeä osa elämää ja hyvinvointia. Työn kautta ajauduin samaan aikaan opiskelemaan..., missä yhtenä osana on erilaisten ryhmien ohjaus. Sitä kautta innostuin ohjaamisesta enemmän ja enemmän ja sillä tiellä ollaan.” (Ohjaaja F)

The above answer clearly shows that the active lifestyle she used to have was one of the reasons she felt the need to fill it with something else. The same mindset can be read in between the lines from the earlier responses, since the previous active lifestyle was later on filled with something they didn't regard as an option in the beginning. The answers also give off a genuine exhilaration towards instructing. Finding a replacement for the previous sport career was thus transferred towards a new role. Wolff et. al. (1989), have studied the processes athletes go through after they retire, and explain it to be so drastic, that it can be compared to the dying process. The individual loses something so important that it can be seen as loss of identity. Coping with such a loss can be a long process, which

according to Wolff et. al. can lead to building a new identity. Sinclair et. al. (1993) studied the process of retirement amongst athletes, and found that the retirement process is usually smoother and more positive if the athlete had fulfilled his or her goals he or she had set out to do in sports. Another soothing factor in the process is the knowledge of an existing new position waiting after the sport career. This was seen as an aiding factor in building a new identity after giving up the previous one. For the instructors of the study, finding a new role within the field of sport and exercise may have eased the transition of giving up the former role of an athlete.

6.2 The Body as a Tool

This section explains the answers given regarding how the body is viewed in terms of being an instructor. All the instructors of this study had referred to the body being a tool for work, with mentions also about a strong sense of body awareness. The answers also gave an insight to how corporate values and the atmosphere in general project either a positive or negative body attitude.

6.2.1. Body Awareness

When asked to describe their own body, the answers from the participants of this study varied from very specific to vague adjectives. Since the answers were given anonymously and I do not know whose answer belongs to whom, it is interesting to read how the individuals have described their body. Solely on the descriptions of the body, you can somewhat tell the relationship between the body and the respondent.

“I would describe my body as familiar, trustworthy, proportionate, docile and elastic... My body is a part of myself, not an external object, which should primarily change or not change, or be something else. I try to relate to my body in a kind and curious manner but at the same time try to challenge it.” (Instructor A)

“Omaa kehoani kuvailisin tutuksi, luotettavaksi, sopusuhtaiseksi, oppivaksi ja elastiseksi...Kehoni on osa minua, ei ulkoinen tuote, jonka

tarvitsisi ensisijaisesti muuttua tai olla muuttumatta tai olla toisenlainen. Pyrin suhtautumaan kehooni uteliaasti ja lempeästi ja toisaalta myös haastaen sitä.” (Ohjaaja A)

“My body is sporty, muscular, proportionate, a little chubby at the thighs and stomach... I would describe my body as normal, maybe with a little extra here and there, which doesn't feel nice, but it doesn't bother me too much. I would describe my body as strong, muscular. I think that my body suits instructing well.” (Instructor C)

“ Kehoni on sporttinen, lihaksikas, sopusuhtainen, vähän pullea reisistä ja vatsasta... Kuvailisin kehoani normaaliksi, tällä hetkellä vähän ylimääräistä makkaraa on kertynyt, mikä ei tunnu mukavalta, mutta ei pahemmin haitta minua. Kuvailisin kehoani vahvaksi, lihaksikkaaksi. Koen että vartaloni sopii hyvin ohjaamiseen.” (Ohjaaja C)

“My body is strong but it has its weaknesses... I feel that I know my body's weaknesses and I can control them quite well.” (Instructor B)

“Oma kehoni on vahva mutta siinä on heikot lenkkinsä... Tunnen kuitenkin kehoni heikkoudet ja pystyn melko hyvin hallitsemaan niitä.” (Ohjaaja B)

According to Gyllensten et al. (2010) defining body awareness is not too straightforward, since it depends on the individual's worldview. However, body awareness can be seen to have two aspects: how an individual sees and feels his body and also how the body is in relation with others in society. Thus, the individual tries to be aware of internal bodily emotions and also external influences. All of the participants of the study show a strong sense of body awareness, or body knowledge (Finnish: kehontuntemus), and especially how it is connected with instructing group fitness. They are very aware of their strengths as well as their weaknesses, which they can use in instructing. Compared to instructor A, instructor B has a very specific description of the body. She describes it in an overall positive manner, even though she isn't completely happy with the extra weight at the

thighs and waist. In contrast, instructor A has a very worldly view of the body and has a deeper, almost forgiving relationship with it. Studies have been made on body awareness within dancers, showing that the profession itself drives to understand the totality of the body. Dancers have a physical profession much like the group fitness instructors, and thus have a different relationship with their bodies compared to non-dancers. The long hours of training and performing using their body as the only instrument has forced them to become very aware of their bodies, with all of its angles, curves, flaws and alignments. (Aalten 2007).

Since group fitness instructing has many similarities with dancing (performance, music, choreography, stage presence, communication etc.), it can be, at least on some level, compared with the sport of dancing. There have been plenty of studies on dancing and dancers as a group (See Wainwright et. al. 2006; Jackson 2006; Swami et. al. 2009), which can be used to examine the group fitness instructor's body as well. Along with body awareness, dancing has been seen to determine the dancer's body image in a positive manner. Dancers showing positive body image are more likely to regard themselves as strong and their body to be efficient, opposed to glorifying thinness or self-objectification (Langdon 2010). This isn't always the case with all dancers, since the level of dancing and the years within the sport can also have an effect on either positive or negative body image. Swami et. al (2012) found that there was differing results in positive body image and overall body appreciation within different dancers, such as ballet, modern, jazz etc. Also, the level of dancer was a factor, where the higher-level ballet dancers had lower body appreciation levels than beginners, who had just started dancing. On contrast, contemporary dancers at the highest level had higher scores for body appreciation, than the beginners in their same field. When comparing this to the given answers from the participants of the study, most of the group fitness instructors seem to have a good, positive body awareness, which they are able to harness in their work. This might be a result from years of perfecting movements and alignments, much like with dancers.

When describing their body further, some of the group fitness instructors of the study have noticed the changes in the body from years of vigorous exercising on stage. Some of the participants feel, that they wouldn't even know what their body would look like, if they didn't work as group class instructors. Others have a more specific list of all the qualities needed to instruct, and then pondering if they have checked out all of them.

Group fitness is a very broad term consisting of any form of training made in a group (Voimistelu 2015), so it is difficult to define all of the qualities needed to become an instructor, especially since not all instructors teach all of the classes. Instructor B specified some of the details and her body's relation towards them:

“Group fitness requires many bodily qualities; strength, stamina, mobility, coordination, balance etc. The more you instruct, the more versatile qualities are required. I can teach very different classes, so my body fits instructing well... My own body reacts and adapts to the class even though it isn't my personal training session.” (Instructor B)

“Ri [ryhmäliikunta] vaatii monia ominaisuuksia keholta; voimaa, kestävyyttä, liikkuvuutta, koordinaatiota, tasapainoa ym. Mitä monipuolisemmin ohjaat sen enemmän ominaisuuksia vaaditaan. Pystyn ohjaamaan hyvinkin erilaisia tunteja, kehoni siis soveltuu hyvin ohjaukseen... Omakin keho reagoi ja mukautuu tuntiin vaikka se ei ohjatessa mun oma harjoitus olekaan.” (Ohjaaja B)

Instructor B has a clear idea of all of the qualities required to teach a class and has embraced the fact, that her body can fit into many different contexts. Being able to change the mindset from one class to another makes the body of the instructor somewhat of a chameleon, changing color depending on the mood of the class, and always being able to bring forward the qualities needed for that specific class. Much like how the instructor changes the mood and qualities for each class, the classes itself can have an impact on the body. Instructor F explains how she has noticed the changes in her body every time she instructs something different;

“My body has changed also through what classes I tend to instruct more. When I instructed more basic and stretching classes, my body looked and felt very different to what it is now, when most of my weekly classes are upbeat and require a lot of stamina.” (Instructor F)

“Keho on muuttunut myös sen myötä millaisia tunteja ohjaan enemmän. Kun peruskestävyys ja kehonhuoltotunnit olivat enemmistöissä keho oli

hyvin erinäköinen ja erituntuinen kuin nyt kun suurin osa viikkotunneista on vauhtikestävyyttä ja räjähtävää lihasvoimaa vaativia lajeja.”

(Ohjaaja F)

Naturally the way we exercise shapes up our body, even though in this case it is done unintentionally. Most of the other essays had similar answers, some more detailed than others. But in contrast with the others, instructor D had not seen any change in the body regardless of the number of classes taught, which felt frustrating;

“At first I instructed 2-5 classes a week, nowadays 5-9 hours/ week, you would think that would be enough to lose weight, but there it [extra weight] still is. I feel like I have been on a diet my entire adult life.”

(Instructor D)

“Alkuunsa [oli] 2-5 ohjaustuntia viikossa, nyttemmin 5-9 tuntia/ viikko luulisi riittävän painon putoamiselle, mutta siinäpä se [paino] junnaa paikallaan. Tuntuu, että olen ollut hoikkiksella koko aikuiselämäni.”

(Ohjaaja D)

The evident frustration projected from this answer, shows that instructing group fitness classes might be more than a job position. As said earlier, most of the participants have a background in competitive sports and have somehow drifted into instructing group classes. Maybe the void left from sports could have been replaced by group fitness also as a means to achieve the athletic body of previous times. Athletes face many bodily alterations, as well as social and psychological changes during the retirement process (Yannick et. al. 2011), which goes to show that wanting the same bodily shape and maybe even the same type of training schedule of the athlete can be one of the motives to instruct several weekly classes.

6.2.2. Body as an Instrument

Much like with dancers, group fitness instructors have their body as their main tool for work. Most of the instructors in this study are very aware of this fact, and all six essays had referrals to the body being used as a tool. Some of the answers were more specific in

describing their instrument as some answers dealt with issues such as how to maintain their body in working condition.

“Just as a construction contractor maintains his trucks and diggers after work, I maintain my body, my work machine” (Instructor B)

“Siinä missä maurakoitsija huoltaa rekkansa ja kaivurinsa työpäivän jälkeen niin minä huollan kehoani, mun työkonetta” (Ohjaaja B)

“I can be very grateful towards my body, since it has kept up with my intense work. Surely I have had to make different choices, in order to manage. I have little by little learned my body’s limits... Partly because of this profession I managed to heal [from an eating disorder], because I learned to honor my body as a tool and to accept my body through the joy of exercising. My relationship with food has also changed, since I noticed that I don’t have the energy to move unless I eat.” (Instructor E)

“Olen saanut olla todella kiitollinen keholleni, kun se on jaksanut rankkaa työtäni. Toki olen vuosien varrella joutunut myös tekemään välillä valintoja, jotta jaksan. Olen oppinut pikkuhiljaa kehoni ja jaksamisen rajat. -- Osaksi tämän ammatin kautta paranin [syömishäiriöstä], koska opin kunnioittamaan kehoa työvälineenä ja opin hyväksymään kehoni liikunnan ilon kautta. Suhde ruokaakin on muuttunut positiivisemmaksi kun tajusin, etten jaksa liikkua jollen syö” (Ohjaaja E)

The working body is not a new concept. Shilling (2012) has studied the social construct of body from different points of views, one of them being the body seen as a tool. In his theories, Shilling (2005, 73-75) separates two different concepts of the working body; the official activities involved with work (for example drilling at a construction site) and the actions people do on and for the body (‘body work’). The latter term has three distinctive forms of activity, the first being job-related body work. This refers to any unofficial tasks concerned with keeping up the physical self at the work environment. The second term, cultural body work, indicates how the employee presents himself as an acceptable subject in everyday life. The final term, reproductive body work, can be seen as meaning the

same as domestic work. These include activities such as caring for basic bodily needs, such as eating, sleeping and having sex. Sharing emotions can also be seen as reproductive body work, as one ‘unloads’ his or her emotional burden onto someone else. Especially the first two terms of the concept can be seen in the answers from the instructors. They realize the need to take care of their tools in order to work properly, but also are able to make adjustments in order to fit in the environment. All of the essays also contained referrals to certain dress codes and other outer factors also associated presenting oneself at work.

The realization about the body being used as a tool, can only be seen as a positive matter. Sustaining a productive relationship with our body is the best way we can keep up with our natural, bodily needs. Investing into our body is in fact a necessity, since our bodies are quite fragile in the world surrounding us, especially if we consider the environment the group fitness instructor works in. Using the body as tool makes it even more vulnerable to injuries and weaknesses, unless it is taken care of. (Shilling 2005, 98).

I have compared group fitness instructing to dancing on several occasions, since there have been more studies made on dancing than group fitness. The social construct of a dancer's body, especially how it is seen as a tool, can offer an insight also to the body of group fitness instructors. In dance and dancing, the body is the main tool at use, and especially for female dancers it is socially constructed, according to Adair (1994, 24-25). She states that rather than having a natural view of the body, bodily actions and behavior is learnt from social relations. These social circumstances also change the individual's thoughts about the body through time by providing paradoxical messages about the body. In the sport of dance, the body is often referred to as an instrument, separating it from the mind. This easily gives off the impression of the body being solely a machine, or an object, which can be modified as one wishes. These sorts of thoughts are seen with instructor F's essay, as she explains the fragileness of her instrument and the fears related to it;

“When your body is your main tool, you talk about it [at work]. An IT-person probably talks about his computer the same way... Since my body is such an essential part of this job, but a sensitive instrument, it arises some sort of fears; what if I hurt myself, get sick etc. What then? How do I

cope? If I have to take a longer recovery period, it might be that for a certain period of time I cannot get anyone to substitute my classes and then it is a significant loss of income. I also have to weight potential flu cases, as in am I able to instruct, or is it even reasonable.” (Instructor F)

“Kun oma keho on työväline, siitä puhutaan [työpaikalla]. Joku IT-ihminen varmaan puhuisi tietokoneesta samalla tavoin... Koska keho on niin oleellinen osa työtä, mutta herkkä instrumentti, aiheuttaa se myös välillä tietynlaisia pelkoja: mitä jos satutan itseni, sairastun tms. Mitä sitten? Kuin selviän? Jos vaikka tulee pidempi toipumisjakso, voi olla, että jonkun ajanjakson ajalle ei saa tunteja ja silloin kyseessä on merkittävä tulonmenetys. Paljon joutuu myös punnitsemaan myös flunssatilanteissa, että selviydynkö ohjaamisesta, tai onko se järkevää” (Ohjaaja F)

This is a very honest answer about the fears related to her instrument, since it isn't replaceable. As instructor F explained, injuring the body, or instrument as she called it, can have a direct effect on income as well as other insecurities related with it. In a non-instructing job, coming to work with a mild flu might not undermine his or her work effort, but it is unlikely that the same individual would go to the fitness center after work and take on a group class. Having to battle with issues like these shows how delicate the body is to the instructor, and how very contradictory the role of the instructor is. Nobody would recommend working out with a minor flu, but what if their income is dependent on it? And how does this clash with wanting to take care of the body as sufficiently as possible? As a group fitness instructor myself, I know that these thoughts or even fears should be openly discussed with the work organization, in order to maintain healthy work motivation.

6.2.3. Corporate Values

When working with something as intimate as a body, it is only natural that bodies, or in this case tools, are compared, either with each other or with customers as well. Comparison is a natural behavior in a group of people interacting with each other. It is part of our normal social communication, and everyone takes part in it. It can be done either intentionally or unintentionally. People tend to compare everything from looks to

behavior, and from manners to a way of speech. (Laine 2005, 124-125). Since the group fitness instructors use their body as a tool in a very exposed manner, it is important to find out how they feel about their bodies in their work environment. All of the given answers in the essays were very positive, and a very permissive atmosphere showed through the responses.

“There aren’t any appearance related expectations at work. Of course, since I am only a part-time instructor, I come to work, do my job and then leave, so I’m not even there to listen to what the full-time employees have to say. But I think that anyone’s body can be just as he is” (Instructor D)

“Ei [ole] ulkonäköodotuksia työympäristössä. Toki koska olen vain tuntiohjaaja, tulen töihin, teen työni ja lähden kotiin, joten en ole kuuntelemassakaan vakihenksun juttuja. Mutta luulen, että jokainen saa olla täysin sellainen vartaloltaan kuin on.” (Ohjaaja D)

“There is a very permissive atmosphere at my work in terms of body shape. However, it is a bit hard to answer this question. I have always been in relatively good physical condition, so I don’t know how I would answer this if I was, for instance, 20 kilos heavier? Personally, I am not interested in anyone’s body but more about their performance and personality.” (Instructor B)

“Omassa työympäristössä on hyvin salliva ilmapiiri kehon suhteen. Toisaalta on vaikea vastata tähän. Olen aina ollut suhteellisen hyvässä kunnossa, joten en tiedä mitä vastaisin esim. 20 kiloa painavampana? Itseäni ei kiinnosta muiden ohjaajien ulkonäkö vaan enemmänkin suorituskyky ja persoona.” (Ohjaaja B)

The above answers clearly show a very welcoming and permissive work environment, even though as instructor B explained, her own body shape also affects how she feels at work, and it might be very different if she had another figure. Two of the respondents described the atmosphere to be positive and even compared to other fitness centers, where it was as tolerant.

“I have never experienced any [appearance related] pressure by my work colleagues. I know, that I am lucky in that sense. Not every workplace in this field is like that.” (Instructor E)

“Työympäristössä en ole koskaan kokenut paineita työkavereiden suunnalta. Tiedän, että olen onnekas sen suhteen. Kaikissa tämän alan työpaikoissa ei ole niin.” (Ohjaaja E)

“I can imagine that in a ‘superficial place’ appearances can be an important issue and sometimes I hear about how colleagues have received harsh, negative comments even about their appearances.” (Instructor F)

“Voisin kuvitella, että jossain ”pintaliitopaikassa” ulkonäkö voisi olla tärkeäkin osa ja joskus kuulee, että kollegat ovat kuulleet rajuakin palautetta jopa ulkonäköasioista.” (Ohjaaja F)

The answers make a clear distinction between their current work place, Fysioline Fressi, and other places which they have either been to or heard comments about. This gives off a very positive view about the work environment they are in, which allows them to be just as they are. Studies show that the overall values at the workplace can have an impact on organizational commitment and behavior between the employees (Abbott et. al. 2005). The values at Fysioline Fressi stress equality throughout the company and a strong appreciation towards the staff's know-how. These values alone can have a significant effect on how the employees thrive at the workplace. Values alone don't necessarily ensure this, since it needs to be implemented by the head of the staff, even with just setting an example. The positive comments from the instructors show that the values have been internalized and the overall ambiance has been made into a positive and permissive platform for all instructors to be just as they are.

6.3 Communicating Body

This section offers a chance to explore how the body of the group fitness instructor can be used as a means of communication. The essays explained how the body offers emotional experiences for the instructors as well as for the participants of the class. The body also helps to express messages that verbal communication cannot.

6.3.1. Experiencing Body

Group fitness classes revolve around customers, and the sole purpose of them is to try to get a group of people to move and exercise. Customers attend classes, because they know there will be someone to teach them and motivate them to move. Group fitness classes usually have clear descriptions about the class itself, so the customers know what to expect from the class. Each specific class has its own health-related goal. Nonetheless, the instructor gives each class his or her own twist, simply by teaching according to his or her unique personality. Depending on the class, the mood is set by external factors such as lighting, music and props. The most important factor affecting the overall ambience is how the instructor teaches and interacts with the customer. During a slow-paced body and mind class the instructor is assumed to be calm and soothing in order to create a relaxed atmosphere. In contrast, an up-beat class, such as a dance lesson, suggests that the instructor is excited, cheerful and supportive. The mood is set by the tone of the voice, posture and overall body language. (Kennedy & Yoke 2005, 5-8). Thus, the instructor interacts with the customers throughout the class with his or her body, not to mention the moments before and after the sessions.

During the group classes, the instructor's body is twisted into numerous different movements, choreographies and positions depending on the class being taught. All of this happens in front of audience, and most of the time up on a stage exposing the instructor's body completely. Using your body for such a purpose inevitably causes emotions such as success, or even moments of self-doubt and failure. All six instructors of this study had numerous examples of how the body had offered moments of exhilaration and success. The examples varied from single moments where the body had done just what the

individual had wanted to progress, and results noticed in the body over prolonged period of time.

“The sense of accomplishment I get from instructing has to do with trusting my body. More often than not, I can be sure that my body will execute the movements as I wish.” (Instructor A)

“Ohjaamisesta saadut onnistumisen kokemukset liittyvät myös omaan kehoon luottamiseen. Useimmiten voin olla varma siitä, että pystyn ja kykenen kehollani odotettuihin tai ohjaamiini liikkeisiin.” (Ohjaaja A)

“The emotions and joy that my body produces during dance lessons is indescribable. It is something, that I cannot achieve anywhere else... I experience all sort of emotions from extreme empowerment to exhaustion and disappointment. I am a person who experiences intensely with my body, and through this work it has only been emphasized.” (Instructor E)

“Tunteet ja riemu jota kehoni tuottaa tanssitunneilla, on sanoinkuvaamatonta. Se on jotain, mitä en saa mistään muualta... Kaikkia mahdollisia tunteita voimaantumisen ääriäsymykseen ja pettymykseen. Olen ihmisenä sellainen, että koen kaiken voimakkaasti keholla ja tämän ammatin kautta se on vain korostunut.” (Ohjaaja E)

The answers of instructors A and E show a deeper intake on experiencing through the body. The experiences they have received through their body are mostly positive, even though they admit to having negative thoughts as well. Other answers related to this issue dealt with more detailed descriptions about specific classes.

“I feel a sense of accomplishment especially at the extremities; the body endures even an intense class. However, I feel moments of success also during gentler classes when I am able to calm down my body... During the most intensive classes, when the lactic acid, sweat and adrenaline flows, I feel the same emotions as I did in competitive sports. I like to test

my limits and see what my body can do. I am used to doing it since I was a child, and I miss it.” (Instructor B)

“Onnistumisen kokemuksia koen erityisesti ääri rajoilla, keho kestää ja jaksaa kovankin tunnin. Toisaalta onnistumisia tulee myös lempeämmän liikunnan kautta kun saan kehoni rauhoittumaan... Rankemmilla tunneilla kun maitohapot, hiki ja adrenaliini virtaa koen samoja tuntemuksia kuin kilpaurheiluaikoina. Tykkään kokeilla rajojani ja testata mitä kropasta irtoaa. Siihen on tottunut lapsesta asti ja sitä kaipaa.” (Ohjaaja B)

“I feel moments of success especially during the most intense class: I can, I am able to, I am strong, I can jump high... ” (Instructor F)

“Onnistumisen kokemuksia tulee paljonkin juuri rankoilla tunneilla: jaksan, pystyn, olenpa vahva, hypinpä korkealle... ” (Ohjaaja F)

These answers give an insight to what the body offers during a single class. Most of the answers given regarding a sense of accomplishment were linked with the high-intensity classes, although a few answers dealt with body and mind classes as well. As said earlier, many of the participants in this study had a background in competitive sports, and are used to experiencing intense emotions through their bodies. As instructor B explained, she can see the similar emotions in both experiences and she actively seeks to find them in her new position.

It is a well-known fact that exercising releases different hormones into our bodies, one of them being endorphins. Endorphins are peptides released in the body, which have similar effects to morphine. It has been researched that, just like morphine, endorphins have the ability to reduce the feeling of pain, making it possible for humans to overcome extreme sporting acts. (Maughan et al. 1997, 135-136). As well as reducing pain, endorphins increase the sense of well-being, just like serotonin and dopamine. Other activities have been noted to increase endorphins as well, but none of them produce a longer effect on the mind than exercising. Even a 30-minute walk will start to release endorphins, and the harder the workout, the more hormones are released. (Hansen & Sundberg 2015, 33). The instructors in this study have been exercising their entire life

and found a new platform to hunt for endorphins. Since most of the accomplishments were linked with the high-impact classes, it goes to show that there is a better chance of achieving an adrenaline and endorphin rush there than from a calmer class. This provokes another conjecture about the motives of the group fitness instructors. Is it the joy of teaching or getting a workout done? This could be seen as a subject for future research.

Along with the accomplishments achieved through means the body, most essays dealt with negative emotions, frustrations and even failures linked with the body not functioning in the desired manner. As all of the instructors of this study had a strong sense of body awareness, they were also able to describe how this mishap happened, or why the body wasn't working properly.

“My moments of weaknesses are mostly linked with a certain body part, for example an old injury keeps flaring up and prevents me from instructing.” (Instructor B)

“Epäonnistumisen hetket liittyvät useimmiten mikäli jokin kehon heikoista lenkeistä eli vanhoista vammoista ilmoittelee itsestään ja estää ohjaamasta.” (Ohjaaja B)

“I feel moments of failure during dance sequins, because my movements are not flowing, and it is annoying; it doesn't look good and feels foolish.” (Instructor C)

”Epäonnistumisia tunnen mm. tanssillisissa liikkeissä, koska liikkeeni eivät ole sulavia ja se on ärsyttävää, se että liike ei näytä hyvältä tuntuu tyhmältä.” (Ohjaaja C)

“I don't particularly have any moments when I felt like I failed, but frustration sometimes hits me when there is a movement or a position (mostly yoga positions), that I cannot do or that I cannot master. The licensed classes require you to follow the choreography, even if there is a movement or a sequence, which doesn't feel natural to someone with joint-issues like myself.” (Instructor F)

“Ei varsinaista epäonnistumista, mutta turhautuminen iskee välillä jos on joku liike tai asento (lähinnä jooga-asennot) johon ei pysty tai joka ei millään meinaa onnistua. Lisenssitunneilla koreografiaa on noudatettava, vaikka olisi liike tai liikeyhdistelmä, joka ei itselle tunnu yhtään luonnolliselta tai joka vaikkapa tämmöiselle nivelvammaiselle tuntuu ikävältä.” (Ohjaaja F)

The strong connection the participants have with their bodies enables them to be very aware of what their bodies can or cannot do. Instructing different types of classes means that the body must function in a variety of ways, whether or not that body is able to. Instructor B specified earlier on, that she knows her body's weaknesses and tries her best to control them, yet in this answer the previous injuries have occasionally caused her body to not function adequately. Also instructor F is aware of her bodies condition, but certain classes she instructs forces her to teach in a manner, which might not suit her body. Past injuries and body flaws may cause some additional pressure towards the instructor in order to fit the part of being the leader of the group. This factor will be discussed in the following chapter.

6.3.2. Setting an Example

As said before, one of the main objectives for the group fitness instructor is to be a role model and lead the class. Leading the class includes being an example. When asked about how the instructors feel about their bodies with regard to being an instructor, most of the answers touched on the subject of being an example.

“Your body should be familiar in a sense, that you can trust it to function under the customers' eyes when your attention is somewhere else rather than your own body control or examining your movements. Being a group fitness instructor has increased my confidence in that my body fits to be an example or model when showing movements.” (Instructor A)

“Oman vartalon tulee olla siinä määrin tuttu, että sen toimintaan voi luottaa katseiden alla ja silloinkin kun huomio esimerkiksi ohjatessa on jossain muualla kuin oman kehon liikkeiden tai tuntemusten tarkastelussa. Ryhmäliikunnanohjaajana toimiminen on mm. lisännyt luottamusta siitä, että kehoni toimii sopivana esimerkkinä tai mallina liikkeitä näyttäessä.”
(Ohjaaja A)

Instructor A highlights again the importance of body awareness in being an instructor. Since the attention is mostly on the customers, one should be very aware of how the body works in different positions. From the previous answers given in the chapter ‘*Experiencing Body*’ many of the examples given described how their body was strong, lean and powerful. They illustrated a picture of a powerful body, capable of doing anything. The negative setbacks caused by the body were specifically moments when the body wasn’t at its strongest, causing negative emotions.

There has been scarce literature on the subject of group fitness instructors, but Parviainen (2011) has studied how group fitness instructors describe and define the emotional and esthetical requirements of their job, to find out more about the role of performance in their line of work. The results showed that the body of the group fitness instructor is at the same time intimate yet public. Based on the results, Parviainen (2011) was able to formulate eight different layers of performing. These levels were the physical execution, showing of movements, currency, performing, presence, communication, being a role model and representing the employer. The complex levels show that the profession of the group fitness instructor can easily be called performing arts due to the variety of performance in just a single class. Thus, being an example for an entire class isn’t a simple task. Internalizing all of the mentioned requirements can add excessive pressure for the instructor. On the other hand, ticking the box on most of them can increase self-confidence. Several essays described the increase in confidence, when knowing their skills and trusting that the body functions correctly.

“Showing the movements as an example, and knowing that I am doing the right things (for example core control) increases confidence.”
(Instructor C)

“Liikkeiden näyttäminen esimerkkinä, tieto siitä, että tekee oikein asioita (esim. keskivartalon hallinta) lisää itsevarmuutta.” (Ohjaaja C)

“...instructing group fitness classes has brought positive experiences about my own know-how, and also about the physical side of it, which has improved my self-confidence and perception of my body and the positive aspects of it. I feel, that I have learned to utilize my body and movements when instructing and through that can be an example for customers.” (Instructor F)

“...ryhmäliikunnan ohjaaminen on tuonut itselle positiivisia kokemuksia omasta osaamisesta ja myös siis fyysisestä osaamisesta, mikä on parantanut itsetuntoa ja käsitystä omasta kehosta ja sen hyvistä puolista. Koen, että olen oppinut hyödyntämään omaa kehoa ja liikkumista ohjauksessani ja voin olla oman tekemisen ja liikkumisen kautta esimerkkinä asiakkaille.” (Ohjaaja F)

We are constantly being influenced by other people since we are a social species and always looking for ways to interact with others. Some people have the tendency to influence on a greater scale, and achieving the role of a leader. (Jarvis 2006, 110). A leader of a group is someone who has the power to influence or have an impact on the members of a certain group. There are usually two types of leaders: management and leadership. Management leaders try to accomplish a given task, whilst leadership is linked with motivating and building a strong cohesion within the group. (Laine 2005, 203-204). A group fitness instructor can be seen as both types of leaders, if the instructor is willing to go the extra mile and build a connection between her and the customers. According to Laine (2005, 204-205) a popular leader is someone who is charismatic and self-confident, and who can take initiative in any situation. The answers from instructors C and F mirror the image of a confident instructor, who is in control of both her body and what is going on in the room. The answers also indicate, that the process of becoming a confident role model, who can be an example for the class, hasn't happened over night. It has included countless hours of self-examination and bodily exercises, in order to achieve the confidence needed to be in front, on the stage.

6.3.3. Communication

Instructing a class requires interacting with the customers verbally and non-verbally. The participants of the research touched this topic from their body's point of view. Four of the essays included thoughts about how the body has enabled interaction with the customers, or even helped them to get the message across.

“...I have experienced my body as a helper and an enabler for the customer’s experiences and learning outcomes through different facilitating techniques and assistance. For example, it feels very rewarding when I notice how my personal touch can help a customer realize something about their own body, without using words.”

(Instructor A)

“...olen kokenut oman kehoni auttajana ja mahdollistajana toisten kokemuksille tai oppimiselle erilaisten fasilitointitekniikoiden ja avustamisten kautta. Tuntuu esimerkiksi palkitsevalta, kun huomaa että oma koskettamisen tapa voi saada asiakkaan oivaltamaan jotain omasta kehostaan ilman, että tarvitaan sanallista ohjausta.” (Ohjaaja A)

Instructor A describes how her body is an extension of communication and where words end, the body continues to interact. When talking about communication it is essential to separate verbal and non- verbal communication from each other. Verbal communication is initially what we say and hear when talking with another person. Our spoken words are used to transfer information between people. Information can consist of ideas, thoughts, facts or opinions. The spoken words also project our emotions and mood, as well as our over all personality. Physical communication however, is everything that our body does to communicate; gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, movements, touch, scent and clothing. Physical communication is very intuitive, in a sense that at most times it is done unconsciously. But when used consciously it can have a very powerful message for the receiver. (Dunderfelt 2001, 18-28). Instructor A has noticed the power of touch and uses it consciously to achieve the wanted outcome. Willison and Masson (1986) studied the impact of touch between counselors and clients, and found that touching the client has a

positive effect on the client's judgment of the overall experience of the therapy. Vortherms (1991) also agrees on the role of touch between nurses and patients, as it can be an essential part of communication when other senses or words fail. She points out that communication can be greatly improved by the use of touch, enabling a deeper impact for the receiver.

Along with instructor A, instructor F also ponders about how the body gives off certain messages, about how the body is situated, how it looks and what emotions it is projecting:

“Through my body I think a lot about instructing: what [body] part am I moving to what direction and how, how is one movement more effective than another, how can I tone down [the intensity], where do I feel it, how does it feel... and these sort of sensations I transfer into the instruction and I try to tell the clients what sort of sensations they should be experiencing in the body...” (Instructor F)

“Oman kehon kautta mietin myös paljon ohjaamista: mitä osaa liikutan mihinkin suuntaan ja miten, mikä vaikuttaa siihen, että joku liike on tehokkaampi tai vähemmän tehokas, miten voin keventää, missä joku tuntuu, miltä se tuntuu... ja näitä omia tuntemuksia siirrän ohjaukseen ja pyrin kertomaan asiakkaille, millaisia tuntemuksia kehossa pitäisi ehkä tuntea...” (Ohjaaja F)

As said before, many of the instructors were very aware of their bodies and what sensations each movement brings. Being this aware of their body can ease the communication between the customers. Recognizing one's emotions and feelings makes them easier to project forward. Several researchers have studied how dancers are able to express emotions with their bodies, and especially how well the spectators can recognize them. Sawada et. al. (2003) studied how simple arm-movements can embody three types of emotions; joy, sadness and anger. The study showed that the emotions were clearly distinctive and were recognized by a panel of observers. Camurri et. al. (2003) also had positive results when studying the expressed emotions with dancers. The study showed that, during the dance performances, the audience was able to clearly recognize the projected emotions through the body language of the dancers. The emotions were

expressed using smaller or larger body movements, increasing or decreasing the pace of the movements, tempo changes and pauses in-between movements.

The bodily interaction between instructors and customers isn't only through the customer's point of view. One instructor of the study expressed her thoughts about what she observes during the class when instructing.

“Sometimes I look at my customers with admiration, how someone has incredible shoulders or a muscular back or something. Then I realize that anything is possible for myself as well if I just want it.” (Instructor D)

“Katselen asiakkaita joskus ihailen, miten jollakin on mahtavat olkapäät tai lihaksikas selkä tai jotain. Silloin ajattelen, että minullekin mikä vain on mahdollista jos vain haluan” (Ohjaaja D)

Instructor D describes the comparison she has made between herself and the customers taking part in her class. Rather than sparking a sensation of jealousy, she admires the bodies in front of her and feels inspired to achieve something that the customer has been able to succeed in.

People transfer emotions onto one another when communicating. Every interaction between a group or even two persons has its own atmosphere, which is made up of emotions. Emotional communication is a non-verbal interaction and is usually an unconscious behavior. To simplify, emotional communication is communicating the emotions of the wanted message, atmosphere, sensation and anything that cannot be put into words. A shared experience can be emotional communication when the individuals feel strongly about the atmosphere surrounding them. (Dunderfelt 2001, 28-30). Sharing strong emotions was a topic that arose in three of the essays in the study. In the earlier chapter, the participants described the emotions brought on by the instructing itself in terms of what it feels like to exceed expectations during a class or feel the adrenaline rush after a high-impact session. They also described what it is like to share these emotions with the customers:

“... I can share that (joy) when instructing others is irreplaceably important. All of that increases the gratitude towards my body.”

(Instructor E)

“... saan jakaa sitä (riemua) ohjatessa muille on korvaamattoman tärkeää. Kaikki tämä lisää kiittollisuuttani kehoa kohtaan.” (Ohjaaja E)

“Even though instructing isn't my own practice, the good vibes from the participants are projected on to me as well. If I feel like a winner after class, it encourages me to move forward on this chosen path and elsewhere in life. As I am helping others to develop, I'm developing too.”

(Instructor F)

“Vaikka ohjatessa kyse ei ole omasta treenistä, hyvä fiilis jumppaajista välittyy myös itseen. Jos kehossa on voittajaolo tunnin jälkeen, se entisestään motivoi jatkamaan valitulla tiellä ja antaa potkua muuhunkin elämään. Samalla kun auttaa asiakkaita kehittymään, kehittyy myös itse.”

(Ohjaaja F)

Rhythmic exercise has been said to release endorphins on a completely different level compared to other sports. Dancers incorporate music and movements to form a harmonious sequence, allowing the body to flow with the music. Anttila (2006, 62-72) describes that during a dance session the dancer can feel her body's movements as a source of understanding and meaning. The dancer can feel alive, whole, strong, and above all, feel part of a community and interact without words. Group fitness can be a very powerful experience if the instructor has engaged the entire class to form a cohesive and welcoming environment. Striving towards a positive, almost powerful experience is one of the biggest challenges an instructor faces when teaching a class. As Kennedy and Yoke (2005, 10) state it: “the instructor can make or brake the experience”.

6.4 Group Fitness Instructor as a Role

This next section will describe how the participants of this study feel about the given role of being an instructor at a fitness center. The essays also described certain body-related expectations regarding the role of the instructor as well as having felt that the body is constantly being monitored when being on the given platform.

6.4.1. Expectations

People belong to many groups and sub-groups, and you can find them in different settings such as at work, friends, family, hobbies etc. A group usually has a distinctive purpose or a goal, and the members of the group interact with each other either frequently or scarcely. For example, a hobby-based group can have a mutual goal of relaxing and unwinding, or to try a task together once a week. A group usually has different roles and the roles are distributed in an orderly fashion. (Laine 2005, 186) In this context, I talk about the group fitness class as a group of people with the mutual goal of exercising, and the group fitness instructor as the leader of the group. A specific group tends to have its own rules and behavioral policies, also known as norms. Norms are the hidden rules in society and groups that define behavior in certain situations. Norms create a culture where the individuals behave, act and interact in a certain manner. Norms also create expectations for certain roles; (Laine 2005, 186-188) for example. it is expected that the CEO of a multinational company wears a suit to work instead of shorts. The participants of this study pondered about the expectations regarding their role as a group fitness instructor, and specifically about the attributes of their bodies.

“I haven’t experienced any body-related expectations from the customers. The feedback usually is associated with the instructing as a whole. Of course sometimes the feedback is about the level of energy and the overall ‘demeanor’, which is linked to the body” (Instructor F)

“Asiakkailta ei ole kokenut myöskään niinkään kehoon liittyviä odotuksia. Palaute liittyy enemmän ohjaamiseen kokonaisuutena. Toki joskus palautteessa viitataan energisyyteen ja muuten ”olemukseen” mihin taas keho osana liittyy.”
(Ohjaaja F)

Instructor F explains that she hasn't received comments about her body specifically, yet her overall demeanor has sometimes received feedback. This brings up the question, of what the essence of the group fitness instructor should be like? Instructor E also claims that; *"When I was younger I thought that the customers expected a certain body type"* *"Nuorempana oletin, että asiakkaat odottavat ohjaajalta tietynlaista kehoa"*. According to instructor E, she was under the impression that taking on the role of the group fitness instructor also meant fitting into a certain body mold.

"I never thought of being in a real job. An awesome hobby just turned into a 'regular obligation' and maybe that is why I never thought of myself as a fitness- type of instructor." (Instructor D)

"En ole ajatellut olevani oikeissa töissä. Mahtava harrastus vain muuttui 'pakollisen säännölliseksi', ja siksi ehkä en ole pitänyt itseäni fitness-tyyppisenä ohjaajana." (Ohjaaja D)

"... When I was studying and even later on working in the rehabilitation field, I felt that group fitness instructing at fitness centers was superficial and scary (I was working as an instructor in fitness centers at this time). I admit, that I had prejudices about what kind of comments, pressures and expectations there were towards the body in the commercial world of fitness centers." (Instructor A)

"... Opiskeluaikana ja myöhemminkin kuntoutuksen ja terveysliikunnan alalla toimiessani koin liikuntakeskusten ryhmäliikunnanohjaustyön pinnallisena ja pelottavana alueena (tällöin en siis työskennellyt ryhmäliikunnanohjaajana liikuntakeskusmaailmassa). Myönnän, että pitkään minulla oli ennakkoluuloja siitä, millaisia kommentteja, paineita tai odotuksia kaupallisen liikuntakeskusmaailman ryhmäohjaajiin kohdistetaan." (Ohjaaja A)

Instructor D underlines that there is a prevailing body type for an instructor, but that she doesn't mind it, because her journey towards becoming an instructor happened by mistake, making her take the role by chance. Instructor A, on the other hand, had a certain image of what instructors look like and what the attributes are related to the body. Instructor A describes further where these assumptions are born from;

“In the work environment of the group fitness instructor, embodiment is present especially in different commercials and catalogues, and from which customers are assumed to identify with or even to pursue. Even though body awareness and gentle attitudes towards the body are present, I don't feel that the body positive- attitudes are seen enough in the group fitness world, at least not as much as is hoped for, since the bodies in the catalogues are constricted to molds of certain gender appearance norms.” (Instructor A)

“Ryhmäliikunnanohjaajan työympäristössä kehollisuus on läsnä etenkin erilaisissa mainoksissa ja kuvastossa, johon asiakkaiden oletetaan samaistuvan tai jota asiakkaiden oletetaan tavoittelevan. Vaikka kehontuntemus ja omaan kehoon lempeydellä suhtautuvat asenteet kenties ovatkin nykyään joissakin ryhmäliikuntatuotteissa läsnä, ei mielestäni body positive –asenne näy ryhmäliikuntamaailmassa vielä siinä laajuudessa kuin sen toivoisi näkyvän, vaan kuvastojen kehot asettuvat sukupuolinormeiltaan ja ulkonäkönormeiltaan yhdenmukaiseen muottiin. Oman kehon roolia työssä joutuu itsekin miettimään suhteessa näihin oletettuihin tavoitteellisiin kehoihin ja representaatioihin ja toisaalta suhteessa siihen mielestäni hyvinkin heterogeeniseen liikkujien porukkaan, jonka parissa itse työtä tehdään.” (Ohjaaja A)

Instructor A describes how the pictures shown in magazines and other media give off a certain picture of the industry and of the people working in it. The image portrayed through these pictures was so powerful, that it almost prevented her from becoming a group fitness instructor. Laine (2005, 189-191) states that with each role comes new expectations and assumptions to how the role should be internalized. The role occupier is expected to fill the duties given to him or her when agreeing to take on the role. The expectations include everything from dress code to overall behavior. Some roles are

linked with stronger expectations than others, making it more difficult for the role occupier to adopt the role. The above answers show that the instructors have had body-related expectations causing some of them to even be afraid of applying for a job post. The answers of instructor D and A show that the surrounding media can have a strong impact on building the image of the group fitness instructor's body.

6.4.2. Monitored Body

Almost all of the essays showed some thought about how the body of the group fitness instructor is being monitored and observed. The instructor is usually situated at the front of the class and sometimes even on a stage, making the body more visible. Most of the classes are instructed using verbal and visual instructions. Visual instructions are given through the body, with the instructor showing the example of the wanted movement or sequence. The class then mimics the movements to the desired tempo or music. Depending on the class, the instructor might be on stage for the entire duration of the session. (Kennedy and Yoke 2005, 29-30). Being on stage, or in front of a class, helps the participants follow the instructions, but it also creates opportunities for the participants to monitor and even evaluate the instructor's body. Instructor C describes how minor changes in the body don't go unnoticed by the clients:

“Personally, I haven't experienced too many expectations from the clients, but I have seen situations were, if the instructor gains weight, then immediately [they] start to question if she is pregnant or something... or [they] question if an overweight instructor is capable/professional enough, which is stupid...” (Instructor C)

“En ole itse kokenut kovasti odotuksia asiakkailta, mutta olen törmännyt siihen, että jos ohjaaja esim. lihoo, niin heti kysellään onko ohjaaja raskaana tms.. tai epäillään ylipainoisen ohjaajan jaksamista/ammattitaitoa, mikä on hölmöä...” (Ohjaaja C)

Instructor C states that she doesn't have personal experiences with having her body being monitored, but has seen it happen with her colleagues. According to instructor C, carrying

extra weight has sparked up the question of the instructor's professionalism. The instructor in question has a different body than what the instructors expected, creating a situation of deeper observation. Instructor A also describes her thoughts about the monitored body:

“The fact that I instruct mainly body and mind classes can, on its part, have an effect on what kind of expectations are associated with myself and also what sort of language I have adopted as an instructor.”

(Instructor A)

“Se, että ohjaan pääasiassa kehonhuollollisia tunteja voi osaltaan vaikuttaa siihen, millaisia odotuksia minuun ohjaajana liitetään ja toisaalta vaikuttaa ainakin siihen, millaisen kielenkäytön ohjauksessani olen omaksunut.” (Ohjaaja A)

Earlier on, instructor A described her personal expectations with the bodies of group fitness instructors working in fitness centers and how she didn't feel comfortable with the thought of working there. The above quotation describes, how she has found her body to be fit for certain types of classes and even how she has internalized the language expected with the class type.

Aside from the body being monitored by clients and customers, two of the essays showed thoughts about personal observation. All six participants of this study showed a strong sense of body awareness, and through the essays they were able to describe their body's strengths and weaknesses. Instructor D describes how her body goes through changes on a monthly and even daily basis:

“Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror critically and other times more approving. Especially before my period my body changes completely. I feel as if the hard work that I've been doing for a month to decrease fat layers has been a complete waste of time. My body builds up fluids all over (especially around the midriff), the tight active wear is too tight and my love handles hang over my waist...” (Instructor D)

“Välillä tulee katsottua peiliin kriittisemmin ja välillä pikkuisen suopeammin. Varsinkin ennen kuukautisia kroppani muuttuu totaalisesti. Tuntuu, että melkein kuukauden aikana tehty kova työ rasvakerroksen poistamiseksi on ollut täysin turhaa. Nestettä kertyy joka paikkaan (varsinkin keskivartaloon), tiukat jumppatrikoot kiristää ja jenkkakahvat roikkuu vyötärön yli...” (Ohjaaja D)

Instructor D describes her disappointment towards her body, when the body changes dramatically due to the menstrual cycle. She had worked on her body to achieve a certain desired feel or goal, and then had to be disappointed with the outcome. Instructor F also makes self-observations, but more as a way to improve;

“Filming your own classes is terrifying but at the same time very educational. Often you think that you are executing the movements in a certain way, but then the video reveals the truth.” (Instructor F)

“Omien tuntien videointi on myös paitsi aivan kamalaa, myös hurjan opettavaista. Monesti kuvittelee tekevänsä liikkeitä jollain tavalla, kunnes videolta paljastuu totuus.” (Ohjaaja F)

Many of the instructors of this study are used to filming classes, since many of the licensed classes require filming in order to achieve the final certificate (Les Mills International 2016). Instructor F explains how filming itself can be very contradictory, as watching herself isn't an easy task, yet she sees the opportunity to learn and view her body as an outsider and potentially improving her technique and instructional skills. She also sees the same potential when observing others during classes;

“During a class I do take notice of the instructor's body language. Not critically (except sometimes if the technique has been completely off, for example during a pump class and I wonder how can you safely teach if you can't do it yourself) but to learn.” (Instructor F)

“Itse tunnilla ollessani kiinnitän kyllä huomiota ohjaajan kehonkieleeseen. En arvostelevasti (paitsi joskus jos on ollut oikeasti tekniikka ihan pielessä

vaikkapa pumppitunnilla ja mietin, että kuin voi opettaa asiakkaalle turvallisesti jos ei itsekään pysty) vaan oppiakseni.” (Ohjaaja F)

The above answers show that the body of the instructor can be monitored and observed from many different viewpoints and for many different reasons. Personal observations can vary from self-dissatisfaction to means of improvement. Observing colleagues in this case is done more for professional reasons, even though traces of comparison can also be found. The most significant observations, however, are from the viewpoint of the customers taking part in a group fitness class. Several answers from the given essays touched the subject of their body being under a spotlight and made visibly clear for observations. Whether or not the instructor has accepted this as a part of the job description can be seen by how well the instructor has adopted the given role.

6.4.3. Role Internalization

A person can have many roles throughout the day: a mother, team-leader, student, friend or a client. These are all examples of different roles, with different behavioral expectations. A role tends to change noticeably regarding with whom we are interacting with, since the situation and people in it have different roles. Thus, roles have an effect on our interdependency. A role can be seen as a window from which we show different sides of ourselves. (Kopakkala 2005, 98-100).

Roles can be divided into three groups or categories: collective, social and personal roles. A collective role is something we cannot affect, such as age, gender, race and our outer habitus. Social roles are agreements with different roles. Employer, employee, teacher, student, speaker and listener are all roles that are dependent on the counterpart. These are roles that are also dependent on the situation they are in, which makes them easy to switch from role to role. Unlike social roles, personal roles are not agreements, even though they too are dependent on a counterpart. Personal roles include feelings and emotions, which are somewhat compelling. The work environment is based on social roles, but it is also filled with collective and personal roles. (Kopakkala 2005, 100). The social norms of a group create conformity in a group, but it doesn't require everyone to behave in the same

manner. The given roles, instead, place behavioral expectations on the individuals, which then are personalized by the collective and personal roles. (Laine 2005, 189).

Apart from the previous categories, roles can also be divided into bodily and psychological roles. Bodily roles are related with body functions, such as eating, drinking and sleeping, but also profound changes such as puberty. Some of the bodily roles are part of a specific occurrence, when others can last a lifetime. Changes in the body often cause changes in personal and social roles. For example, an athlete who is severely injured might cause him to take on a new social role outside of the sports world (Kopakkala 2005, 104-105). As we have discussed earlier on, most of the instructors in this study have had a role as a competitive athlete or trained at a competitive level. Their journey towards becoming a group fitness instructor has, by most part, happened by coincidence and not taking the role by choice. Laine (2005, 190) explains that a person can experience role contradictions, if the role hasn't been adopted fully. Different counter parts can place divergent expectations on the role, making it difficult to please everyone in the group. Several participants of the study explained how their body feels different during their free time than when instructing.

“It's funny, how my body feels better during my leisure time. I know that I am in good shape and I can manage my day-to-day routines a lot better than many others...” (Instructor D)

“Hassua, mutta tunnen kroppani jotenkin paremmaksi vapaa-ajalla. Tiedän olevani hyvässä kunnossa ja jaksan arjen pyörytyksen paljon, paljon paremmin kuin moni muu...” (Ohjaaja D)

“During my free time I can concentrate on taking care of my body. When I am instructing, the customers' training session is the priority, but during my leisure time I can focus on what is best for my body just then.”
(Instructor B)

“Vapaalla saan keskittyä pitämään huolta omasta kehostani. Ohjatessa asiakkaiden treeni on etusijalla mutta vapaalla saan keskittyä siihen mikä omalle keholleni on parasta juuri silloin.” (Ohjaaja B)

Instructors B and D both agree that during their free time they can focus on their bodies better. Instructing group fitness classes can be physically very challenging, and individual needs might not be taken care of. Instructor D also explains how she is aware of the fact that she is physically in good condition, yet does not always feel so when instructing. On the contrary, she feels better when not working. Instructor C also ponders if her outer habitus is visible to passer-byers; *“Sometimes I wonder if a stranger can tell that I exercise as much as I do”* *Toisinaan mieltii, että huomaakohan tuntematon ihminen, että harrastan liikuntaa niinkin paljon’*. She too, is aware of her physique, yet wonders if it is visible enough to be noticed by someone walking past. Is the role she has visible outside of fitness centers? Instructor F, on the other hand, realizes the restrictions related with the role. She explains how the given role of being a group fitness instructor doesn’t allow certain weaknesses, such as not being able to jump as high etc;

“The biggest difference between my home and work environment is probably the fact that I can let it be seen if my body isn’t in shape; I can be lazy and not so active. I can allow myself to lie on the couch. Even if I have a bad day during instructing, you cannot show it to the customers, not with your face or your body... if I am not able to find a pain-free or comfortable way of moving... I have to motivate myself in a completely different way in order to finish the track, so that my ‘weakness’ isn’t revealed or doesn’t disturb others” (Instructor F)

“Kotiympäristössä suurin ero ohjausympäristöön on varmaankin se, että saa näyttää jos keho ei ole kunnassa, saa olla myös laiskana ja ei niin aktiivisena. Saa antautua löhöömään sängylle. Ohjatessa vaikka olisi huono päivä, sitä ei voi näyttää asiakkaille, ei kasvoilla eikä keholla... jos ei millään löydä kivutonta tai miellyttävää tapaa tehdä... joutuu motivoimaan itseään ihan eri tavalla tekemään kappaleen läpi, jotta oma ”huonous” ei häiritse tai paljastu” (Ohjaaja F)

Instructor F describes the restrictions her body has to overcome when being a group fitness instructor. Her view of the role is to not show her weaknesses and always strive to be at her best. At home, she allows herself to be lazy, which at work isn’t possible.

Keeping up a high spirit and energy levels is what she feels is part of the role. According to Ahokas (1998, 121), our personal life is a constant trade of feelings and emotions, where people exchange expressions based on the receiver. Based on this theory, individuals calculate what emotions they owe the opposite side, before giving off their own emotional answer in that precise situation. When instructing, the exercise leader is expected to create a safe and motivational environment for the participants to achieve the goals of the class. This is a sum of motivational cheers, type of music and the overall presence of the instructor. (Kennedy and Yoke 2005, 16-17). Unable to fulfill these components might feel like a letdown for the participants. Not having the energy to create an active environment can also be a strain for the instructor.

Ahokas (1998, 123-125) states that an individual strives to scale down one's energy levels, depending on the role he or she is in. Different roles take up more energy than others, as shown in Figure 7. The roles that are as close to the subjective self as possible, take up little to no energy. The more an individual has to put on a false role, or even a show, the more energy it takes up. At the far end of the table is the roles, where the individual has no sense of self left, and can be utterly exhausted after it.

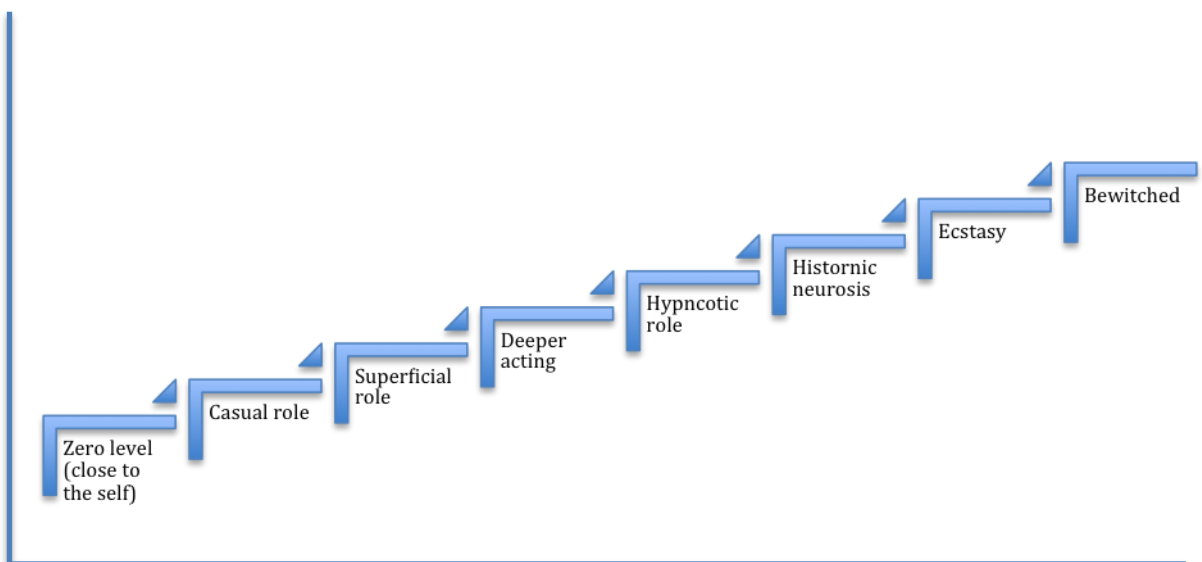


Figure 7: The intensity of the individual's role. The vertical line shows the body's stress level increasing when going further away from the origin. The horizontal line represents the relation of the self versus the role, becoming one where it meets the vertical line. . Adapted from Ahokas (1998, 123).

In our normal day-to-day lives, we move through levels one to three. In some professions, it is almost obligatory to deal with more emotions, such as customer service, medical care, and occupations where human interaction is deeper and more intense than meeting someone at the grocery store. Group fitness instructors have to encounter dozens of persons at once and try to stay positive throughout the class. People who work with other humans have to continuously try to control their emotions in their line of work. These individuals can move up to roles four and five depending on the situation. Putting up a stronger role for a longer period of time can expose these professionals to exhaustion, or even burnout. (Ahokas 1998, 125). Burnout doesn't happen overnight, as it takes time to build up even if symptoms are visible earlier. The condition is a clear response to prolonged anxiety due to emotional and personal stress factors caused by the work. The first symptoms are usually exhaustion and incapability to continue within the same position. (Maslach et al. 2001). A long-term, or even chronic exhaustion will inevitably compromise the individual's health, and thus in time will decrease the employee's capacity to be engaged and efficient at work. Noticing the symptoms early on, either by the employer or the employee, will help to reduce the risk of burnout and therefore prevent the employer from losing a member of the team as well as ensuring the health of the worker, which in this case is the group fitness instructor. (Leiter & Maslach 2014, 162-163).

Internalizing a role is a slow process, and can even regress before the individual has adopted the role. When a person has taken on new responsibilities, such as a promotion or changing jobs, it might at first feel as if he is acting out the new role. It might even feel unreal or artificial for the individual. Acting out the given role can help internalize it, before it develops to a more natural social role. (Burr 2004, 69). From the essays given by the instructors of this study, it seemed as if the internalization process was in various stages. Some of the instructors were more at ease with the role and all of the expectations regarded with it. Others still seem to struggle between finding the balance between the different roles in life. Internalizing the role, or in other words making the role part of the self, requires the individual to put aside oppositions. Comparing acted roles to what is assumed to be real roles will not support the process of the given role, on the contrary it will cause stress on the long run. Even though roles arise from different situations, it does not necessarily mean that each different role defines the self. (Burr 2004, 86).

Maksimainen (2016) describes the story of a personal trainer, whose body deviates from the norm. The body of the personal trainer stands out from the bodies portrayed in the magazines and surrounding media, as it represents more of a regular female body, with curves and shapes. Accepting the body as it is and continuing to work in the field of sports and fitness has required patience and a significant amount of time. This is also evident in the data revealed in the study. Most of the group fitness instructors are aware of the prevailing expectations, and some even admit to the negative thoughts brought on by them, yet all of them choose to continue on this path of leading group exercise classes in a fitness center. This goes to show that the process of role internalization has somewhat proceeded with all of the participants of the study, some further than others. Wanting to keep this passion in life is most likely one of the major factors of accepting the given role, and one day internalizing it fully.

7. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the results of the study, discussing the topic about the body of the group fitness instructor. I will also give my personal perceptions about the results as well as suggestions for future research.

7.1 Summary

In this Master's Thesis I tried to outline the experiences related with the body and embodiment within group fitness instructors in a specific case study. The purpose of this thesis was to find out what does the body mean for the group fitness instructor, how does the instructor experience his or her body and what are the most significant factors about embodiment being a group fitness instructor. The study was conducted with a phenomenological- hermeneutic approach, since this was a particular phenomenon being examined. Six instructors from the same organization took part in the study. The data was collected through essays, which the instructors of the organization sent out via e-mails. Being an instructor myself, and a part of this specific organization, I had pre-assumptions about the topic and thus it helped me with the analysis of the data. The data was analyzed using content analysis, and four main themes arose from the study; the history of the body, the body as a tool, communicating body and the group fitness instructor as a role. Each category had several sub-themes, which tackled the themes from different points of views. The different chapters contain detailed information about how the instructors see their bodies in the specific role. The data revealed that there are certain assumptions about what the body of the group fitness instructor should look like, and how they feel about fitting into the mold.

The data revealed that most of the instructors had a background in sports and even in competitive sports. After quitting competitive sports, the participants had found group fitness instructing and thus a new sport to manifest. Many of the participants described instructing to be a way of life and were very passionate about it. Interestingly, hardly any of the participants showed signs of initially wanting to become an instructor, and contrarily, most of them had ended up in the position by coincidence. The background in sports, however, made it easier for them to adopt a new passion. Even though almost all

of the participants regard instructing as a side-job or even as a hobby, they wish to continue instructing for as long as possible. According to Vallerand (2012) passion is one of the most significant factors in maintaining motivation, which is evident from the data. Most of the participants see instructing as a part-time job and they are willing to juggle several jobs in order to instruct group fitness, which in turn, requires strong motivation to do so.

The data showed a strong sense of body awareness, which Gyllensten et al. (2010) have defined to be an individual's perception of the living body and its relation with the external world. The participants were able to describe their bodies in detail, comparing strengths and weaknesses. Their descriptions and ability to understand their body was also linked with seeing the body as an instrument for their line of work. They are aware of the fact that instructing classes is a physical strain on their bodies and need to take precautions in order to ensure its functionality. Some of the instructors see their body as being separate from the mind, much like with Adair's (1994) study on the bodies of dancers. The body is seen as an outer instrument with a certain function, which in this case is physically instructing the class. Although several of the participants of the study described the realization of the body being an instrument of work, nearly all of the instructors agreed that the specific organization they worked in had a permissive atmosphere, allowing them to use their body freely.

The bodies of the instructors offered many experiences during group fitness classes, ranging from moments of success to even instants of failure. Several participants described their most significant moments of success to be linked with high-impact classes, where the body has been pushed to its limits. Failures, on the other hand, were described as moments when the body did not function as wished. Difficult choreographies, unfamiliar classes and injuries all inflicted sensations of failure. The moments of success can be seen as similar to the ones an athlete experiences during a competition. Stravou et al. (2007) found that the experience of success and flow was related to the level of performance during a competition, much like how the participants of the study described their achievements to be linked with pushing the body almost to an extreme. Along with the extremities the body offers, the instructors felt that setting an ideal example with the body is seen as a key element of instructing. Setting a precise example is also part of communicating with the customers using the body. The body is

seen as an extension of communication and as a necessity in group fitness classes. The participants of this study feel that they are able to project their emotions and messages to the audience with their body, and sometimes even without verbal communication. Thus, the body is used as a tool for communicating messages that might be difficult to project verbally.

The data revealed that most of the participants felt that the body of the instructor is associated with a certain body ideal. One particular participant even described her fears related with fitness centers and the assumptions of having to obtain a certain body type in order to become an instructor. Even though all of the participants felt that the organization they worked in had a permissive atmosphere towards the body, almost all of the instructors agreed that their bodies were being monitored during classes. Many of the participants make personal observations about their bodies and also of the customers' and even compare the two. Self-observations and comparisons are linked with how well the participant has internalized the role of being an instructor. According to Kopakkala (2005), people have many roles throughout a single day, and each role shows a different side of themselves. Almost all of the participants admitted to having a more permissive view of the body outside of the work environment, giving the impression of having a different role at the fitness center. Ahokas (1998) states that moving further away from an individual's self, towards a role which hasn't been internalized completely, is a major stress factor. The more acting that is involved with the role, the more stressful it becomes. If the instructor isn't comfortable with the body ideal of the given role, it can become more of a strain than a positive resource. On the contrary, Burr (2004) states that acting out a role can even help to internalize a role in the first stages of adopting it. Internalizing the role of the group fitness instructor can be seen as an important step in making sure the instructor can perform, and more importantly, instruct a class professionally and with ease without the pressure of fitting into a certain body mold.

Based on the results, the majority of the group fitness instructors in this specific organization have a positive perception of their body and are thankful of the permissive atmosphere created in the work environment. Even so, the contradiction between the body at home and at the fitness centers is evident. The position of being a group fitness instructor has offered a platform to practice overall body awareness, which the instructors regarded as an essential part of the job description. A strong body awareness can be seen

in the way they describe their experiences linked with embodiment. The body offers experiences ranging from one extreme to the other, and the participants also embrace the emotions brought on by the experiences. The group fitness instructors describe the meaning of the body to be more of a tool they use in their line of work. They are aware of the fact that their tool needs mending and maintenance, and they have to sometimes make difficult choices like putting their body first before something else. Overall the body is seen as a life partner offering experiences that cannot be attained anywhere else but in front of a group fitness class.

7.2 Perceptions of the Results

When I first introduced my topic to the organization I worked for, it was taken with great interest and positivity. The topic itself spurred conversations with anyone I talked with, and it seemed as if everyone had a personal opinion about it. The opinions ranged from what the individual's felt needed to be tackled in the thesis research, to opinions about the actual body of a group fitness instructor. Yet, when asked about how they felt about their own body, the conversation ceased almost completely. The same phenomenon was seen with the research participants when I first reached out to the target group and asked for volunteers to take part in the study. The initial reaction was very positive and many were intrigued by the topic, however, when asked to join the study and ponder about issues related to the body, the level of enthusiasm decreased. One of the participants even admitted that the topic was too personal, and wished to drop out entirely. Body talk (also known as fat talk) is a vastly researched topic within men and women (See Engeln et al. 2013; Britton et al. 2006; O'Dougherty 2011), describing the issue of the difficulties associated with talking about the body. Talking about the body includes giving a personal opinion about body ideals, body sizes and their own relationship with the body. When starting the research project, I hadn't realized the issues related with talking about this topic. As the research continued, the difficulties became evident. Many alterations were made in order to even finish the study, and it shows that more data is needed about the subject of embodiment within this subject group.

As said before, embodiment is a broad term and can be viewed from different schools of thought. According to Laine (1996) embodiment shows itself in a different angle depending on the viewpoint. Embodiment can include the physical body, social body, body image etc., and all of them can be examined from a certain point of view. The basic elements of a person's life are all associated with embodiment: the self, other humans, past experiences and meanings and a sense of belonging in the surrounding world. In this research the body of the group fitness instructor, and the embodiment concept related with it, was studied with a sociological point of view. The essays from the participants opened up a window to a complex picture of different meanings and assumptions related to the body.

The assumptions related with the body of the group fitness instructor were some of the salient themes brought up in the essays. Almost all of the participants agreed that a certain body type existed, even though it is still unclear where these assumptions come from. The answers showed vague indications to the surrounding media, customers and even other colleagues. The essays showed that even the instructors themselves could not define the source of the body-related assumptions. The negative thoughts were related precisely with these beliefs, even though the essays portrayed a positive body image overall. Guendouzi (2004) studied the conversations of women regarding the topic of body, and found that the body is a complex issue to converse about. Women tend to be satisfied with their body on average, yet when asked if they would want to change any part of their body, almost everyone would want to do so. Guendouzi claims that the surrounding society still has an impact on the female body, highlighting the importance of appearances over actual achievements. When talking about the core task of the group fitness instructor, appearances shouldn't be a part of it at all. One of the most essential functions of the instructor is to motivate the class to move in the desired manner, regardless what the body type or size is. Even though the participants agree that they work in a permissive work environment, the assumptions about the body were present on a daily basis.

The participants of this study had the chance to open up about their perceptions about embodiment, revealing how contradictive the role of the group fitness instructor is. Several essays had mentions of a 'strong body' and an 'athletic body', which was regarded as a positive factor when being a role model. This brings up the question of the necessity of owning a strong figure; can a person become an instructor without having

such a physique? Is having a different body type seen as deviating from the norm set for the instructors? And if so, we face yet again the question of where do these ideal body types come from? The contradiction between the ideal body type and the personal body of the instructor was distinct in several essays, suggesting that the instructors might take on a different body role when working at the fitness centers. Changing the body type alone, might not have an effect on changing the perceived body image, since body image and self-esteem issues are perceptions made by the individual regardless of what the actual body looks like (Kennedy and Yoke, 2005, 16). This is an important factor to remember when discussing the embodiment of the group fitness instructors. Encouraging them to embrace their roles as leaders of the class, rather than body icons, can have a dramatic effect on how they understand their bodies.

Group fitness and group fitness instructing offers a very unique point of view when examining the body. Group fitness includes several elements such as music, movements, communication and emotions, and all of which are brought by the instructor, and all felt through our body. Instructing group fitness brings distinctive bodily experiences, unlike anywhere else. Working with the body forces the instructor to be very aware of the body and all the sensations created during a single class. The body becomes a companion, with its positive and negative aspects, and it is important to enhance the positive features about it. Rudiger and Winstead (2013) state that sustaining a positive talk about the individual's body is related to positive body image and can increase the overall body satisfaction. This should be taken into careful consideration at fitness centers, where body talk can have superficial nuances. Embracing a positive body attitude can help both the customers and the instructors to appreciate their body just as it is. Group fitness instruction is a platform where the body is always present and visible, highlighting the importance of positive body attitudes even more. Luckily, some of the participants have already realized the uniqueness of this role and embraced the experiences given to them:

“Instructing group fitness has changed the perception of my body, since I am grateful for my body's ability to function and it being pain-but I also work on listening and respecting my body.” (Instructor A)

“Ryhmäliikunnanohjaaminen onkin muuttanut käsitystä omasta kehosta siten, että olen kiitollinen kehoni toimintakyvystä ja kivuttomuudesta ja

toisaalta pyrin toimimaan kehoni hyvinvointia kuunnellen ja kunnioittaen.”
(Ohjaaja A)

“This position has helped me to love my body just the way it is, and I have wanted to become my body’s best friend” (Instructor E)

“Tämä työ on opettanut rakastamaan kehoa sellaisena, kun se on ja olen halunnut tulla kehoni parhaaksi ystäväksi.” (Ohjaaja E)

7.3 Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The aim of this research was to take a deeper look into the embodiment experience of group fitness instructors rather than making generalizations from the results. The study was conducted at a specific organization to limit the variables related to organization specifications. The results showed in this research can only be limited to this particular fitness center, and cannot be generalized anywhere else. This study also dealt with the private sector, and did not take into consideration what the possible results would be in the third or public sector. The participants of the study were only female, limiting the results to a female point of view. The initial idea of the research was to engage both male and female instructors, but no male instructors took part in the study. The data collection method used can also be seen as a limitation, since even though it provided anonymity and the participants had the chance to reflect on the questions on their own, it required certain writing skills in order to generate thoughts on paper, and the lengths of the essays varied significantly. Conversing about the body was a difficult data collection method, but for future suggestions, this alternative can be offered to those with less-advanced writing skills. A profound sampling selection can also be conducted in order to obtain participants with the sufficient writing skills to express their thoughts about their bodies. Research limitations also include time and money, since the data collection could only have been collected during a certain period of time due to the researcher living in a different city. The researcher was also transferred to a different location during the study, narrowing the observations to a shorter period.

The data revealed that the assumptions related with the body of the group fitness instructor are persistent, but it is unclear where they come from. It is important to research this area further, in order to promote positive body attitudes at fitness centers. Conducting the research in other fitness centers can provide answers to how the corporate culture affects the individual's perception of the body. Future research should also include the male perspective and investigate similarities and differences with female group fitness instructors. The topic at hand is still very new, and continued research should be conducted elsewhere to broaden the study to different sectors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Participants' recruitment e-mail

Hei ohjaajat!

Olen tällä hetkellä opintovapaalla Fressiltä, sillä opiskelen Jyväskylän yliopistossa liikunnan yhteiskuntatieteitä. Opintoni ovat edenneet siihen pisteeseen asti, että on ainoastaan gradu jäljellä ja tällä hetkellä olen kasaamassa sitä varten aineistoa, johon tarvitsen teidän apua.

Tutkimukseni nimi on "ryhmäliikuntaohjaajien kokemuksia kehollisuudesta" ja tutkin erityisesti ryhmäliikuntaohjaajien kokemuksia ohjaamisesta kehollisuuden näkökulmasta, esimerkiksi mikä merkitys keholla on ohjaajille. Aihe on itselle henkilökohtainen, eikä sitä ole tutkittu juuri ollenkaan. Ryhmäliikuntaohjaajan ammatti on hyvin monipuolinen ja senkin takia sen ympärille liittyy erilaisia kokemuksia ja tunnetiloja.

Kerään aineiston kirjoituksina, eli jokainen osallistuja saa minulta kysymykset, johon voi vastata suoraan sähköpostilla. Aihetta voi täten jäädä pohtimaan omassa rauhassa ja kirjoittaa ajatukset paperille. Jos haluat osallistua tutkimukseen, vastaa minulle tähän sähköpostiin **tiistaihin 14.3. mennessä**, jotta voin lähettää tarvittavat kysymykset ja lisätiedot. Jokaisella osallistujalla on mahdollisuus vastata anonyymisti ja tutkimustulokset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti.

Toivoisin saavani vähintään 10 vastausta, ja mielellään annan lisätietoja, jos niitä kaipaa.

Aurinkoisin terveisin,

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Appendix 2 Research questions for the participants

TUTKIMUKSEEN OSALLISTUMISPYYNTÖ

Ryhmäliikuntaohjaajien kokemuksia kehollisuudesta

Ryhmäliikuntaohjaajat ovat vahvasti esillä kuntosaleissa, jossa ohjaavat eri tunteja kymmenille ihmisille. Täten ryhmäliikuntaohjaajien tärkein työvälin on oma keho, johon liittyy erilaisia kehollisuuden kokemuksia.

Kiinnostuin kyseisestä aiheesta omakohtaisten kokemusten perusteella ja päätin tutkia aihetta lisää. Pro Gradu- tutkielmani aiheeni on ryhmäliikuntaohjaajien kokemuksia kehollisuudesta, ja haluaisin selvittää ohjaajien suhdetta omaan kehoon ja kuinka se on vaikuttanut omaan kehollisuuteen ja sen kokemiseen.

Kerään aineistoni vapaamuotoisina esseekirjoituksina, jolloin voit rauhassa pohtia aihetta. Pyri sisällyttämään esimerkkejä sekä vastaamaan kaikkiin kysymyksiin, jotka löytyvät seuraavalta sivulta. Voit vastata suoraan sähköpostin viestikenttään tai sitten liittää siihen erillisen liitetiedoston. Kaikkia vastauksia käsitellään luottamuksellisesti eikä demograafisia tietoja, kuten ikää tai nimiä tule lopulliseen tutkimukseen. Voit halutessasi jättäytyä pois tutkimuksesta missä vaiheessa tahansa. Mielellään annan lisätietoja tarvittaessa.

Vastausaikaa on perjantaihin 7.4.2016 asti.

Kiitos osallistumisesta tutkimukseen.

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Jyväskylän Yliopisto

Kehollisuus on laaja-alainen käsite, joka kattaa sekä fyysisiä, sosiaalisia että emotionaalisia näkökulmia. Käsitettä ei tarvitse avata sen enempää, vaan olennaista on pyrkiä vastauksissa tuomaan omia ajatuksia ja pohdintoja kehollisuudesta, erityisesti esimerkkien avulla. Pyri vastaamaan kysymyksiin nimenomaan kehon näkökulmasta, mutta voit lisätä sinne ajatuksia itse ohjaamisesta, liikunnasta sekä muista aiheeseen liittyvistä asioista.

1. Kauanko olet ohjannut ryhmäliikuntaa?
2. Kerro lyhyesti ohjaushistoriasi ja miten olet päätenyt tämän työn pariin? Miksi sinusta tuli ryhmäliikuntaohjaaja?
3. Miten Sinä ryhmäliikuntaohjaajana, kuvailisit omaa kehoasi? Miten koet oman vartalosi sopivaksi ohjaamiseen?
4. Millainen käsitys sinulla on omasta kehostasi? Onko ryhmäliikunnan ohjaamisen muokannut käsitystäsi omasta kehostasi?
5. Minkälaisia onnistumisen kokemuksia koet kehoasi kautta ohjaamisen parissa? Entä epäonnistumisia? Kuvaile/ kerro esimerkkejä.
6. Minkälaisia kehollisia elämyksiä ohjaaminen antaa sinulle?
7. Miten kehollisuus mielestäsi näkyy työympäristössä esimerkiksi muiden ohjaajien kesken? Oletko kokenut jonkinlaisia odotuksia kehoa kohtaan asiakkailta tai työpaikalta?
8. Koetko kehollisuuden erilaiseksi työympäristön ulkopuolella? Millä tavalla?
9. Tuleeko muuta mieleen, joka liittyisi tähän aiheeseen? Muita esimerkkejä?