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Body perceptions of Western Australian female group fitness instructors and the influence of the workplace

Lana Leslie
Edith Cowan University

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**Body perceptions of Western Australian female group fitness instructors
and the influence of the workplace.**

Lana Leslie

Bachelor of Social Science (Leisure Sciences)

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Science in Leisure Sciences
in the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure,
Faculty of Business and Public Management
Edith Cowan University**

8 August, 2002

Abstract

Group fitness instructors work in an environment that promotes the often-unattainable pursuit of an ideal body shape. The fitness centre often displays pictures of slim body shapes on the walls and sells goods and services that relate to weight loss and the improvement of the appearance. The instructors are part of this environment that promotes ideal body shapes, and they are often seen as role models of health, fitness and slimness. It is possible that instructors are under pressure to attain or maintain an ideal body shape, to be consistent with what their work environment represents.

The purpose of this study was to explore workplace influences on the body perceptions of female group fitness instructors. This exploration gathered perceptions held by female group fitness instructors of their body perception and their work settings. Data were collected from female group fitness instructors working in and around Perth, Western Australia, using two methods. First, interviews with six female instructors explored body perception issues and workplace influence. Second, a survey based on interview results was conducted, to confirm the extent of instructors' views on workplace influences. Two hundred and nine questionnaires were distributed, with sixty-eight replies, a response rate of 32.5 percent.

Most of the women had a positive body perception, and were satisfied with their body shapes and weight. Although satisfied, many stated they wished they could change certain body parts if they could, such as have a flatter abdominal area.

There were several influences on body perception, the most interesting was the influence of the fitness industry. The women believed that their participants and their employers expected them to maintain a slim body shape in their role as an instructor. Although they felt that their employers did not mind overweight instructors, interestingly they also believed their employers favoured lean instructors. Some of the women stated that looking at and comparing themselves to other instructors also influenced their body perception, at times making them feel fat.

The women stated that management practices did not largely influence their body perception. They believed that recruitment was not based on appearance, and that wearing uniforms of tight Lycra was beneficial to show their body movements

efficiently. The selling of body improvement products at fitness centres did not appear to concern the women, and most accepted their existence as a normal practice.

The physical environment (large mirrors and pictures of slim body shapes) did not largely influence the body perception of the instructors. In fact, the majority of instructors liked the mirrors, as they were a teaching resource. The pictures of slim body shapes also inspired the instructors. Only a small number of instructors were negative towards the mirrors and pictures.

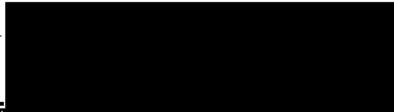
The profile of the women in the study had results that indicated that the women engaged in large amounts of exercise. The average instructor taught over seven classes per week and also did an additional 6 to 7 hours of exercise per week in their own time. These figures indicate that instructors are exercising over 200 percent of the Australian recommended guidelines.

This study suggests that the physical environment does not largely influence the body perception of female group fitness instructors. This study does suggest, however, that female instructors maintain or attain an ideal body shape in an effort to live up to expectations of others, such as employers, participants and other instructors. They do this by engaging in large amounts of exercise and attention to their diet regime.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text, or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.


Lana Leslie

8 August, 2002

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In Australia, aerobics classes are a popular fitness activity. Between 1998 and 1999, 1.5 million (or 11%) of Australians participated in aerobics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999, p. 3). The majority of aerobics participants are women. The National Recreation Participation Survey (1991) indicated that 19 percent of women participated in aerobics, compared to 3 percent of men. The survey also found that women outnumbered men in aerobics participation rates across the age groups of 14 to 19 years; 20 to 24 years; 25 to 39 years; 40 to 54 years; and 55 years and over (Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism & Territories, 1991, pp. 14-15).

An aerobics class is typically conducted with the instructor standing at the front of the room, usually on a stage. Participants stand facing the instructor during the class. A class is conducted to music, and both verbal and non-verbal instructions are delivered by the instructor. The duration of the class can last between 45 to 60 minutes. A class is structured to include exercises focusing on fitness, strength and flexibility. Aerobics classes are held in different locations such as fitness and recreation centres, halls and schools.

Aerobics instructors are the leaders of aerobics classes. They plan the sequence of exercises and direct participants through an exercise session in a safe and efficient way. They also inform participants about health and fitness issues (Vogel, 2000, p. 42) and often act as coach, dietician, therapist, advisor and friend (Nardini, 1998, p.1). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of aerobics instructors are female.

Instructors are frequently accepted as role models of health and fitness (Body Image & Health Inc., 1999, p. 5,13; Coghlan, 1999, p. 2; Martin & Hausenblas, 1998,

p. 180-181; Masingham, 1996, p. 49; Vogel, 2000, p. 42). Participants frequently aspire to have body shapes similar to their instructors (Markula, 1995, p. 438), and instructors are aware that participants feel this way (Olson, Williford, Richards, Brown, & Pugh, 1996, p. 1052). Consequently, as role models, instructors can be under pressure to lose weight, or to build a better body (Smeaton, 1993, p. 4; Thompson & Sargent 2000, p. 38), and may feel dissatisfied with their own body shape.

In several studies, female aerobic instructors reported body dissatisfaction. A study by Nardini (1998) looked at body image, disordered eating and obligatory exercise among women fitness instructors. This study found that despite having a lower average body fat compared with age matched norms, instructors were as dissatisfied with their bodies as both college age women and female athletes. Further, the majority of fitness instructors in the study perceived an ideal body as one that was thinner than their current body (Nardini, 1998, p. 84). A study by Thompson and Sargent (2000) examined the incidence of weight related disorders and body dissatisfaction among female group fitness instructors. They found that 43 percent of female instructors wanted to be thinner (Thompson & Sargent 2000, p. 42). An American fitness instructor survey of 477 female American aerobic instructors reported that 62 percent of instructors were overly concerned about their weight and that weight control was an important motivating factor to enter the fitness industry (Aerobics & Fitness Association of America, 1994, pp.9-10).

As most aerobics classes take place in a formal setting such as a fitness centre, the setting itself may also create expectations on instructors as it does for participants. The fitness centre is an environment of increased pressure for women participants to conform to a body image ideal that is thin (Smeaton, 1993, p.4). The fitness centre is a commercial business, which places emphasis on weight loss and the pursuit of a thin body shape. Ancillary services, such as weight loss courses, dieticians on site, the names of classes, advertising practices and even instructor recruiting policies all reflect this emphasis. Some aerobics class titles such as 'Fatbumer' and 'Tummies, Butts and Thighs' identify body parts as sites of concern for women, and reinforce cultural standards of the "ideal female body shape" (Coghlan, 1999, p. 2). Advertising methods focus on weight loss to attract new members, by using models with thin bodies and captions such as "Join now and beat the bulge".

Employees working in fitness centres are carefully chosen to ensure that they fit a slim image that is consistent with the emphasis on weight loss and body shape. Some fitness centres have a recruitment policy to hire instructors who are thin (S.Bower, personal communication, October 10, 2000; C.Kluwen, personal communication, September 22, 2000; Westaway, 1993a). Aerobics classes and fitness centres, while promoting fitness and health also promote and encourage members to pursue a thin body shape through different practices and policies.

A focus on a thin body shape is not just restricted to fitness centres. Fitness centres are a part of Western culture that promotes the ideal for a woman's body size as thin (Markula, 1995; Smeaton, 1993, p.4). Thinness is linked to perceptions of success, beauty and sex appeal (Bordo, 1993 cited in Lenart, Goldberg, Bailey, Dallal & Koff, 1995, p.832). Consequently, there are societal expectations on women to focus on physical appearance (Maguire & Mansfield, 1998, p.113). Women, in particular, respond to these expectations by trying to alter their body image using clothes and makeup to make their image attractive. Women exercise, diet and even resort to cosmetic surgery (Markula, 1995, p.425). They aspire to a body image distorted by the media and fashion industry to represent an ideal female shape: a shape that resembles a young boy with narrow hips, tight muscles and wide shoulders. This shape is unattainable for most women (Bordo, 1990, cited in Markula, 1995, p.435). Ironically, the fashionable body shape changes from generation to generation. In the 1950s, Marilyn Monroe, size 16, was a role model and a sex symbol of that time. In comparison, 2001 media is saturated with thin fashion models.

The fitness centre reflects the Western society focus on appearance and thinness. Like the multi-billion dollar cosmetic and weight loss industries, the fitness industry, specifically the fitness centre, promotes a range of products and services for a commercial return. Some women who are members of fitness centres have felt pressures to be thin. In some extreme cases, pressures to obtain a thin body shape can lead to dangerous weight loss methods such as diet pills, semi-starvation, purging, laxatives, vomiting and fasting (Berg, 1999, p. 277). While female fitness centre members are affected by the social environment, little is known of female workers in the fitness industry, specifically the aerobics instructors, and the extent to which these women are influenced by and respond to these societal expectations of the ideal female form.

This study focuses on the influence of the fitness centre (the workplace of the instructor) on the body perception of female group fitness instructors. There are many other influences on the body perception of women who are aerobics instructors, such as peers, the family, and the media, however this study focuses mainly on the workplace. There is little evidence of influences on body perceptions held by women who work in the fitness industry, particularly the influence of the workplace, its practices and environment.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the workplace influences on body perception issues of female group fitness instructors. This exploration gathered perceptions held by female group fitness instructors of their work settings.

Significance of the study

There is much research on aerobics participants. Some studies examined the ways in which aerobics classes and aerobics instructors influence the way female participants feel about their bodies. Attending aerobics classes can have a positive affect on the body perception of some female participants, while for others it can have the opposite affect. The literature suggests that aerobics instructors have the potential to positively or negatively affect the body perception of women in their classes either directly through their language and behaviour or indirectly by their appearance and attitudes (eg. Vogel, 1993; Markula, 1995; Warrick & Tinning, 1989).

Some literature recognised that female instructors do influence the body perceptions of female participants, for example, Vogel (1993) found that the impact of instructors on participants was multi-dimensional. The instructors who emphasised appearance and weight loss in their classes either inspired some women or offended others (Vogel, 1993). Some literature, as a consequence, provides recommendations for instructors to change their behaviour, in an attempt to make female participants feel better about their bodies. For instance, instructors were recommended to de-emphasise their own body shape in aerobics classes by wearing clothing other than the traditional Lycra tights and crop tops (Body Image and Health Inc and VicFit, 1999),

another study suggested that instructors refrain from discussing weight loss and body weight with participants (Frederick & Shaw, 1995, p.72).

There is little research on perceptions held by aerobics instructors. Injury rates, body dissatisfaction, and identification of eating disorders appear to be the point of focus on instructors so far (eg. Case, Sargent & Thompson, 2001; Martin & Hausenblas, 1998; Nardini, 1998). There appears to be no research that explores the way the workplace environment, including marketing and employment practices and the decor may influence the body perception held by female group fitness instructors.

The emphasis on weight loss and a thin body shape in fitness centres may be a cause for body dissatisfaction or satisfaction amongst instructors as it is for participants. Instructors are part of the environment of a fitness centre and they are viewed as role models for health and fitness. As role models for health and fitness, instructors may feel under pressure to maintain or gain a thin body shape. These pressures may result in aerobics instructors responding to their own body dissatisfaction and negatively influencing participants in their classes.

This study should show the extent to which the work environment of the fitness centre reinforces female stereotypes and ideal body shapes, and how it influences female aerobic instructors.

Research questions

1. What are the personal characteristics of the female group fitness instructors?
2. What are the body perception issues for female group fitness instructors?
3. What are the influences on body image perceptions reported by female group fitness instructors?
4. To what extent does management practices, including recruitment practices, uniforms and marketing practices influence body perceptions of female group fitness instructors?
5. To what extent does the physical décor (including mirrors and pictures) of fitness centres influence the body perception of female group fitness instructors?

An interpretative and positivist framework

This study adopted a mixed methodology. It combined two paradigms: interpretative (naturalistic) using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews followed by positivist (experimental) using a quantitative method of mailed questionnaires. The interpretative paradigm was chosen to identify themes with a small number of subjects, and to gain a better insight into the boundaries of the study. Once the themes were constructed they were used to aid in the development the questionnaire (Depoy & Gitlin, 1998, p. 32) to enable the study to reach a wider population. The second stage of the study adopted a positivist paradigm. The design of the study was a form of naturalistic inquiry that was followed by an experimental-type approach (Depoy & Gitlin, 1998, p. 32) (Figure 1).

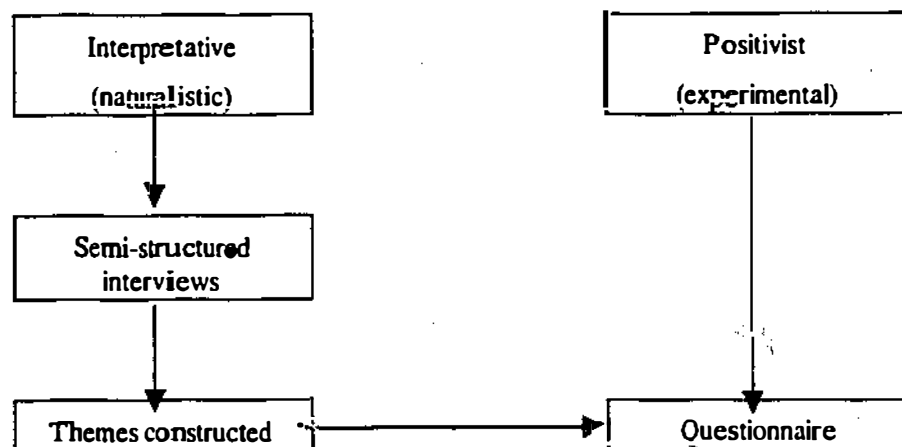


Figure 1. A mixed methodology showing the interpretative followed by the positivist paradigms.

The interpretative and positivist paradigms are quite different. The interpretative paradigm assumes that social reality is multiple and inter-related (Henderson, 1991, p. 24). In this paradigm, data discovery has few rules, and possibilities exist in uncovering meaningful conclusions (Henderson, 1991, p. 25). Unlike the interpretative paradigm, the positivist paradigm focuses on processes, facts and objectivity (Henderson, 1991, p. 24).

My industry experience had a direct influence on choosing these paradigms. My involvement in the industry allowed me to interview instructors who knew and trusted me. This was a real advantage in gaining rich data. To gain a breadth of data, I

needed to separate myself as a researcher from the respondents, so a questionnaire was ideal.

It became clear to me, however, that the interpretative and the positivist paradigms I was proposing were more relevant to the purpose of the study. The interpretative paradigm was useful to guide the exploratory phase, through qualitative techniques to identify the depth and richness of the experiences of the fitness instructors. The quantitative techniques of the positivist paradigm allowed for breadth of scope to confirm issues arising from the initial exploration.

Conceptual framework

There are several influences upon the body perception of female group fitness instructors. Figure 2 shows the workplace and other influences on the body perceptions of the female group fitness instructor. The workplace includes the management practices and the physical environment. The management practices include recruitment (hiring instructors who are thin), compulsory body revealing uniforms (tight Lycra) and marketing practices including advertising that focuses on weight loss and ideal body shapes, products and services sold that focus on weight loss and ideal body shapes. The physical environment includes pictures on the walls of the fitness centres (that depict unrealistic body shapes) and mirrors (that draw attention to the body shape). Many other aspects such as the media, peers and family were also expected to influence the body perception of female aerobic instructors.

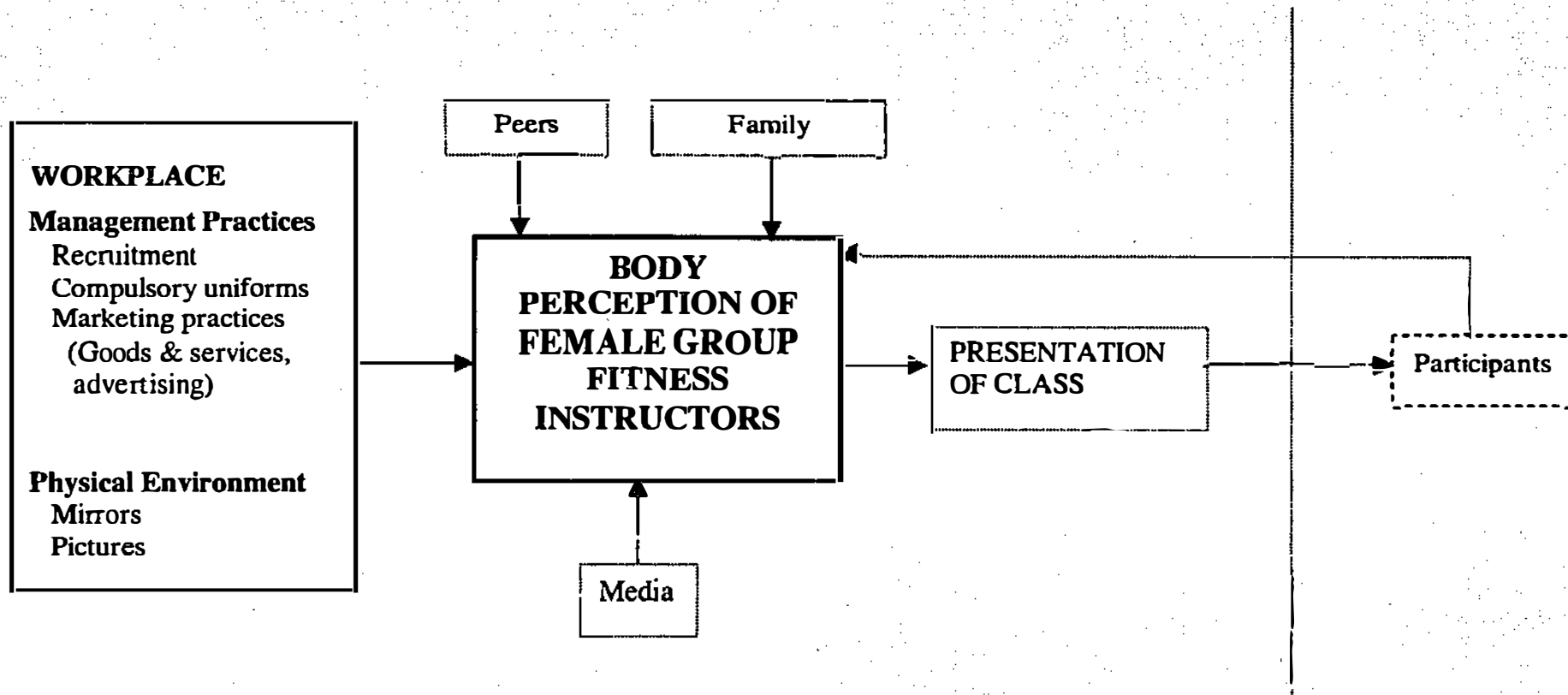


Figure 2. Conceptual framework suggesting that the workplace influences the body perception of the female group fitness instructor.

Definition of terms

The following terms are defined for this study:

Group Fitness Instructor or Aerobics instructor:

A group fitness instructor is a person who conducts fitness classes, on land or in water, to groups of people. The term 'aerobics instructor' is a traditional term used for group fitness instructors. In 2001, both terms are used within the fitness industry. In this study, both terms are also used interchangeably.

Group Fitness Manager or Aerobics Coordinator:

A person who coordinates the fitness class timetable, and is responsible for a team of group fitness instructors under their care at a fitness centre.

Fitness Centre

There are many different terms for places where fitness classes place. These include gymnasia, health clubs, church halls and recreation centres. For the purposes of this study, the term 'fitness centre' is used, and refers to commercially operated fitness and health clubs.

Training Provider

A training provider refers to the organisation that instructors gain their fitness industry training and qualifications.

Overview of study

This introductory chapter has outlined the purpose of the study. It is followed by a review of the literature. The methodology used in this study follows in chapter 3. Chapter 4 is the results of the interviews with six female instructors. Chapter 5 is the results of the survey. Chapter 6 presents the summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This study focused on female aerobics instructors who worked in the environments of fitness centres, exposed to a variety of practices designed to promote a thin ideal female body shape as the ideal. There is no research that deals with instructor perceptions of their workplace or workplace practices. Due to the lack of literature, background information is presented from many different sources, including scholarly publications and fitness industry publications.

The review of literature explores the earliest themes related to the female body shape through history to present day. Body image and body dissatisfaction, including influences on body image are discussed. The fitness centre environment as a site for body satisfaction and dissatisfaction, using examples of its décor, employment and marketing practices are examined. The review also explores aerobics classes, and aerobics instructors, including their role, behaviour and body satisfaction.

The depiction of the female body

The female body shape holds a fascination in many cultures. In some, the female body is covered totally, while in others it is worshipped for its association with art and history. As there are cultural influences in the perceptions of female beauty, this study is concerned only with Western society. In Western culture, the importance of the female form is represented through art, fashion and media of the time. This section deals with the depiction of the female body from an historical to a modern context.

Female images have been depicted in many different ways associated with art, religion and media that change over time (Wolf, 1990, p. 3). Some of the more influential aspects are discussed here. Through their art and literature, ancient Greeks placed high importance on the ideals of bodily perfection. One example of bodily

perfection in art is the Greek sculpture Venus of Milo in 100 B.C. (Clark, 1956, p. 83). In addition to the body, dress and body adornment represented self-expression and the pursuit of beauty. Being beautiful in ancient times had social, political, religious and moral advantages (DeBrohun, 2001, p. 18), and still does in the 21st century.

Between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, paintings of women were depicted with realistic and not idealistic bodies. They had body fat and rounded bellies. In the early nineteenth century, women were depicted with plump faces and shoulders, dimpled thighs and buttocks (Wolf, 1990, p. 150). An example is a painting by Edouard Manet, titled *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* (Clark, 1980, p. 17) that was a painting of a picnic showing clothed men and nude women. Painting in this style continued into the twentieth century (Wolf, 1990, p. 150). While art in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries represented women with body fat, this was soon to change to a thin body shape.

In 1890, artist Charles Dana Gibson painted a slim, athletic female body titled the 'Gibson Girl'. This work is said to mark the beginning of an 'ideal' thin female body shape that remained an image of beauty until World War I in 1914 (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 3). This body shape ideal was flat and straight, without indentation at the waist. To create the flat look, the 'flapper' was wrapped tightly around the body under the clothing (Presley, 1998, p. 2) to flatten the rounded female form. By the 1930s the flapper became unfashionable, and larger, stronger bodies became acceptable during the Great Depression. After World War II women's magazines began to promote a body shape ideal that included a small waist. As a result, corsets, girdles, waist cinches and diets were promoted to achieve the new look (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 3). This was the foundation of the impact of fashion magazines on the body shape ideal.

In the 1950s the images of women became more full-figured reflecting the idolised body shape of Marilyn Monroe, a movie star of the time. In the 1960s, the ideal image of women changed to a thin body shape again. Popular magazines of the time 'Mademoiselle' and 'Seventeen' promoted strategies and exercise habits of the models (Zimmennan, 1997, p. 3). A thin model named Twiggy was introduced, but interestingly received a cold welcome from the media, with critical comments in magazines about her 'under nurtured' body shape (Wolf, 1990, p. 150-151). At 1.67

metres, and 40 kilograms, Twiggy's thin body became the ideal body shape for women to pursue (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 3). In the 1970s, thin models were still regarded as the desirable body shape for women to pursue. While the 1970s promoted healthier looking images, models' diet secrets were still printed in popular magazines for women to follow. As an example, model Cheryl Tiegs, declared that when she wanted to lose a pound, she skipped dinner breakfast and lunch the following day and only ate a small dinner the next evening (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 4). Similarly in the 1980s, models such as Brooke Shields also gave weight control advice in popular women's magazines. In the late twentieth century, model agencies scouted for models who were strong, lean and more muscularly defined (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 7).

In the late 20th century, the ideal body shape for a woman is described as "firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin" (Markula, 1995). This ideal body shape had shifted to being thin but also athletic with firm, tight muscles (Markula, 1995, p. 426). The same ideal body shape remains popular in 2001. Krane, Michalenok, Stiles-Shipley and Waldron (2001) found that women in their study perceived the ideal body shape as being toned with minimal body fat, "tall, really skinny, and beautiful" with an "athletic build" (Krane, et al., 2001, p. 17, 29).

Summary

In Western culture, the depiction of the female body has undergone many changes through time. Through art, literature, fashion and fashion models the ideal body shape has portrayed larger, rounder figures with body fat, as well as thin shapes. The current ideal female body shape in Western culture is one that is thin.

Body image perceptions are determined by numerous factors. Peers, the media and family all reflect social values and influence a woman's perception of her body shape. The next section reports body image, body image influences and body dissatisfaction.

Body image

Body image refers to "the mental picture we have of our bodies and the way we think and feel about our bodies" (Body Image and Health Inc & Vic Fit, 1999, p.1). Sometimes the mental picture of one's body is perceived by the individual to be

a negative image: either too fat, too thin or unattractive. Women employ a range of methods to 'improve' their body image. Weight loss, pills, semi-starvation, diets, stomach reduction surgery, purging, laxatives, diuretics, vomiting and fasting are all methods to lose weight (Berg, 1999, p. 277). Clothes and cosmetic surgery are further examples of ways to change body image (Markula, 1995, p. 425). A common and popular method to alter the body shape and become thinner is to exercise (Frederick & Shaw, 1994, p. 23). Women, for example, use aerobics classes to lose weight and shape up in an attempt to achieve the "ideal" body (Loland, 2000, p. 112).

Influences on body image

There are many influences on the body image of an individual. The primary influences are the family and peers. Secondary influences are more external and include fashion and the media.

Parents

Parents have a large role in the development of body image of their children (Mee & Wertheim, 2000, p. 1). In particular, parents influence their daughters' body image by encouraging them to lose weight, which can lead to feelings of body dissatisfaction (Mee & Wertheim, 2000, p. 3). Parents encourage their daughters to lose weight, as they reinforce prevailing ideals of body shape. The thinness ideal is so strong that parents believe that if their daughters do not conform to this ideal that they will be disadvantaged in their life by having fewer partners, friends and jobs (Mee & Wertheim, 2000, p. 3). Similarly, McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001) investigated the parent, peer and media influences of 644 female adolescents. They found that the girls with the highest body mass index stated that their mothers encouraged them to lose weight and increase their muscle tone, and also gave them feedback on their bodies. The mothers encouraged their daughters to adopt strategies to lose weight and therefore get closer to the ideal body shape (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001, p. 6, 7).

Peers

Researchers, who investigated the peer influence on body image, found that peers have an influence on body image. McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001) found that the majority of adolescent girls in their study reported that their peers gave them

general feedback about their bodies and encouraged them to lose weight and increase their muscle tone (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001, p. 7). Another similar study by Dunkley, Paxton and Wertheim (2001), reported the role of parents, peers and the media on 577 adolescent girls. They found that peers had the strongest reported pressure on the girls to be thin (Dunkley, Paxton & Wertheim, 2001, p. 5).

The Media

The powerful influence of the media has a major role in determining fashion and consequently desirable body shapes (Waters & Crook, 1993, p. 356). Its commercial aspects have created a market for excessive self-consciousness for women (Redican & Hadley, 1988, p. 60). Magazines, as an example of the media, inform, direct, correct and display the attributes that their readers should possess. They also send subtle messages of the way women should look, feel and act (Redican & Hadley, 1988, p. 51). They depict images of beautiful and thin models, with accompanying advice on how to achieve the “model look” (Markula, 1995, p.424-425). Exposure to beautiful and thin models in magazines has implications to the health and well being of women. A study by Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood & Dwyer (1997) indicated that women’s exposure to magazines is related to their preoccupation with dissatisfaction with their bodies, being thin, their frustration with their weight and fear of being fat (Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood & Dwyer, 1997, p. 5). A study of 577 female adolescents found that magazine information about weight loss was directly related to their dieting, and the girls rated magazines as important in determining how to get a good body (Dunkley, Paxton & Wertheim, 2001, p. 6).

The popular media in particular, sustains an endless reporting saga on female fat and the battle to get rid of it by promoting diets and exercises (Wolf, 1990, p. 153). Recent magazine covers carry such emotive banners as, “Lose weight without dieting” (New Idea, November, 2001), “Bum fat while you sleep and other tricks” (B, December, 2001) “Mega swimsuit guide- 6 step beach body plan” (Girlfriend, December, 2001) and “The hidden habit that’s making you fat” (She, November, 2001).

Television images of thin females affect the body image of women. The regular exposure to thin, unrealistic female body shapes on television may be

detrimental to women who are at risk of an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa (Burggraf & Fouts, 1999, p. 2). In a study of 52 female actors in situation comedies, 33 percent were below average in weight (Burggraf & Fouts, 1999, p. 2). The study found that: the thinner a female actor, the more positive comments she received from males; 12 percent of the main female actors dieting, and women who were dieting were more likely to make negative comments about their own body shape (Burggraf & Fouts, 1999, p. 4). Television commercials, as well as television shows also promote thinness. In a study by Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas and Williams (2000), 180 female college students viewed either a 12 minute video of commercials with thin female models or a 12 minute control video of commercials with females who did not fit the thin body ideal. Participants who viewed the ideal images displayed increases in depression anger and anxiety about their body shape, while those participants who viewed the control tape displayed decreases in depression and anger and anxiety about their body shape. The findings of this study suggested that images of women in television images have the power to negatively or positively affect the mood and satisfaction concerning the appearance.

The media does not represent the average woman. Women's bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but the media tends to portray only one shape that is thin (Markula, 1995, p. 425). To help create this image of thinness, photographs of women in magazines are digitally manipulated to appear thinner (Mead, 2001, p. 44). Underneath this portrayal of thin images are the commercial interests of the media. To sell a magazine, magazines rely heavily on revenue from advertisers and sales to remain profitable (Clark & Hornery, 1997). Kirsten Burgoyne, one of the largest image-makers (and spokeswoman for the Sydney marketing consultancy Desire Brand Management) behind Australia's billion-dollar cosmetics industry, stated that readers of magazines wanted to aspire to an image. She commented that "Nobody wants to buy a lipstick modelled on a big, fat, frumpy woman" (Clark & Hornery, 1997, p. 1).

The depiction of the thin female body was reinforced through the media. Magazines depict female models with thin bodies, while television also displays images of thin females in television shows and commercials. Research suggests that women exposed to these unreal images may adopt a negative body image and develop depression, anger and anxiety about their body shape. It is doubtful if the media will

portray different shapes and sizes of women, as it is not in its best financial interests to do so.

Body image dissatisfaction

Many women are dissatisfied with their body image. Several studies highlight the dissatisfaction women have with their bodies. One study reported that 89 percent of women surveyed wanted to lose weight, and 15 percent said that they would trade 5 years of their life to achieve their weight goals (Garner, 1997, p. 1, 3, 4). The Australian magazine 'Who?' conducted a survey in 2000 that revealed 45 percent of women were dissatisfied with their body shape, 35 percent claimed to feel depressed when thinking about their body, and 12 percent said they felt stressed about their body (How do I look? 2000, p.103). In another study of 180 women between the ages of 18 and 59, showed that women report body dissatisfaction in all age groups. This study presented subjects with 9 silhouette drawings of bodies ranging from very thin to very heavy. The women were asked to indicate what drawings most closely resembled their current body shape, and also to rate their ideal body shape. The study found that across all age groups, women rated their current body shape as significantly larger than their ideal body shape, indicating their body dissatisfaction (Stevens & Tiggemann, 1998, p. 1).

These studies and reports suggest that being dissatisfied with body image is a concern to some women, resulting in depression and wishing years from their life in return for being thin.

Summary of body image

Some women employ a number of methods to alter their appearance in efforts to improve their body image. There are a number of influences on the body image of a woman, including parental, peers and media influences. Studies and reports suggests that many women generally are dissatisfied with their body shapes, and this dissatisfaction is connected to their body weight.

One of the ways some women change their body shapes is to lose weight. They attend fitness classes to shed unwanted body fat. The fitness centre environment reinforces the ideal body shape, and is described next.

The fitness centre environment

Fitness centres are commercial exercise settings that produce services for the improvement of bodily appearance (Loland, 2000, p. 114). They focus on women's desires to lose weight in their attempts to comply with the thin body ideal (Frederick & Shaw, 1994, p. 26). The promotion of the ideal body shape in fitness centres can have negative affects on female participants and female fitness instructors by increasing the societal pressures upon them to be thin (Smeaton, 1993, p.4). This section discusses the ways that fitness centres promote a thin body ideal for women through their décor, employment practices and marketing practices. In addition, women's perceptions of the fitness centre environment are discussed.

Décor

The décor of a fitness centre can incorporate many different aspects. This section reports on the use of mirrors and pictures in fitness centres, and how they can influence the body perception of females. It is acknowledged that while there are many other aspects of the décor of fitness centres, this study focussed on mirrors and pictures only. These features are directly related to body image. They provide strong visual feedback on the ideal (pictures) and real (mirrors) images for comparison.

Mirrors

Mirrors are common features in group fitness rooms within fitness centres. As participants and instructors enter an aerobics room with mirrors, an emphasis is immediately placed on the visible body (Haravon, 1995, p. 36; Loland, 2001, p. 120). Some studies have indicated that mirrors are detrimental to the body image of female participants. Maguire and Mansfield (1998, p. 130) found that some class participants stared at themselves during the entire class, and privately criticised their body shape and body parts. Others, often beginner participants, reacted to the mirrors by distancing themselves as far from them as they could, so they did not have to look at their body shapes (Maguire & Mansfield, 1998, p. 120). Another study reported that mirrors also had their advantages. The participants enjoyed looking at their own bodies while exercising. It made them feel proud of their bodies (Loland, 2000, p.

121). These participants also reported that they enjoyed others looking at them (Loland, 2000,p. 123).

Pictures

Posters and photographs are used in fitness centres to enhance the décor of a fitness centre. They often depict ideal female body shapes dressed in brief, tight clothing. Pictures that depict thin females are perceived both positively and negatively by their female viewers. In a positive sense, the pictures can inspire women to improve their body shapes (Coghlan, 1999, p. 2). However, the pictures on the walls may reinforce body insecurities that women may feel, making them feel even more inadequate about their bodies. Pictures are perceived differently, according to the viewer. Body shapes of staff are another example of the provision of ideal body shapes in fitness centres. Anecdotal evidence suggests that staff are chosen that have ideal body shapes. Employment practices in fitness centres are described next.

Employment practices

No studies were found that indicated fitness centre staff are chosen because of their body shape. One article titled 'The Perfect Body' featured in a fitness instructor magazine called *Network* (Westaway, 1993a, p. 27). This article reflected on society's infatuation with achieving the perfect body, and stated that instructors contributed to this infatuation by educating people to achieve perfection. The article commented that a common problem in the fitness industry was that "looking slim was a condition of employment" (Westaway, 1993a, p. 27). While there is no academic research on this topic, there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that potential female employees have a better chance of obtaining work at fitness centres if they are thin and attractive.

Three representatives from aerobics Western Australian training providers (both private aerobics academies and TAFE) were interviewed on this issue. Two training providers stated that they believed that the majority of fitness centres favoured hiring fitness instructors who are thin (S.Bower, personal communication, October 10, 2000; C.Kluwen, personal communication, September 22, 2000). One training provider stated that after students completed their course, he determined an "employability rating" of each student. The employability rating was a rating he gave to each student when recommending staff to future employers. The rating was based

primarily on skills, but also was based on whether the student “looked the part”. The students were unaware of this rating (R.Creagh, personal communication, November 9, 2001). As well as imposing unwritten rules on appearance, employers have other means to enforce particular controls on body shape of their instructors.

Employers can place an emphasis on instructors' bodies by imposing a compulsory uniform upon instructors. Although no studies were found that covers this issue, it is known that many fitness centres in Perth impose a rule upon instructors to wear a uniform when teaching. This uniform is described as traditional female aerobics attire of close fitting, body revealing Lycra crop tops (that expose the abdomen) and tights. While many instructors may feel comfortable in this clothing, it is possible that others may feel uncomfortable. In a study of body image and female exercisers and athletes, the athletes commented on wearing their uniforms, which were described as a one-piece swimsuit or leotard. The women stated at times they felt anxious about their body shape in the uniforms, as they were aware of the potential evaluation of their bodies (Krane, Michalenok, Stiles-Shipley & Waldron, 2001, p.42). While this study covered swim, gymnastics and track athletes, similar anxieties may be experienced by female fitness instructors who wear similar tight fitted clothing.

Anxieties may also be conveyed to aerobics participants. Instructors wearing tight clothing may make female participants feel insecure about their bodies, as the participants compare their body shapes with the instructors. The emphasis on the thin body and revealing exercise clothing may represent thinness and displaying the clothing could unconsciously promote the expectation that participants must be thin to participate (Martin & Hausenblas, 1998, p.188). The popularity of wearing tight revealing clothing in fitness centres continues the theme of the appearance of the body and its shape. This theme is continued into the marketing practices of a fitness centre which are described next.

Marketing practices

Marketing practices in fitness centres assist to create an environment that focuses on the ideal body shape. Marketing practices include many different activities within fitness centres, however this study explores only the products sold at fitness centres (retail) and the methods of advertising. Retail products were chosen as they

are sold for the improvement of the body shape. Advertising was chosen because it represents an image that the fitness centre wants to portray.

Retail

Fitness centres sell many different products that are related to their core product. The core product represents the 'heart of a product': it is what the customer buys, or the main reason the product exists (Brassington & Pettitt, 1997, p. 254). In relation to a fitness centre, the core product is described as the attainment of an ideal body shape. The core product also has 'add-on extras' that increase the attractiveness of the core product (Brassington & Pettitt, 1997, p. 255). These products include specialised food and beverages such as sports performance drinks, protein bars and powders, and weight loss supplements. Other products include exercise equipment such as weights gloves and exercise clothing. Aerobics instructors work in an environment where the promotion of the ideal body shape is portrayed through the fitness centre. Retail products reflect this. The constant attention to the improvement of the body shape may make the aerobics instructor feel under pressure to conform to the ideal body shape that is promoted not only in retail products, but also in advertising methods.

Advertising

Fitness centres use thin female body shapes in their advertising to entice new members. Advertising depicting ideal body shapes in fitness centres can influence the body image of women in either a positive or negative way (Coghlan, 1999, p. 2), by inspiring women to improve their bodies, or by drawing attention to the women's body imperfections. Examples of women losing weight appear to be a favourite form of advertising. As an example, a recent advertisement to join a fitness centre in Perth, Western Australia, showed two photographs of 'Joyce' in a bikini. The first photograph showed Joyce with a larger build, and was labelled 'from this'. The second photograph showed a thinner, happier Joyce, labelled 'to this' (The Stirling Times, November 17, 2001). This advertisement showed the transformation of Joyce, suggesting that if Joyce could become thinner, so could other women who joined that fitness centre. Advertisements like this suggest that women must focus on their bodies to achieve happiness (Torrens, 1998, p.27).

Women's perceptions of the fitness centre environment

There were no studies found on the perception of fitness centre environments, including décor, management and marketing practices. There is, however, evidence that indicates that some exercise settings may create anxiety in some women who attend them (e.g., Crawford & Eklund, 1994, p.72). Anxiety can occur in some women in exercise settings for various reasons such as the fitness centre's emphasis on ideal body shapes, and comparing themselves to other members.

Exercise settings and anxiety

The emphasis on thinness and ideal body shapes in fitness centres can be intimidating to participants or aspiring new members. A study by Brooks and Lindenfield (1994) examined the reasons why people (both men and women) felt intimidated when attending health clubs (fitness centres). They found that images of ideal body shapes that the club portrayed made some people feel dissatisfied with their bodies and inadequate. Advertising, signs and the representation of the thin bodies of staff and members all had the potential to intimidate and thus turn people away from joining a health club.

Social physique anxiety can occur during exercise when a person is comparing her body to the bodies of others (Crawford & Eklund, 1994; Lantz, Hardy & Ainsworth, 1997; Spink, 1992). Exercise settings such as aerobics classes can be places where women feel anxious about their body shapes. In particular the aerobics class is a specific setting where social physique anxiety occurs, as the activity is practised in a group, and there is a large emphasis on the presentation of the body (Crawford & Eklund, 1994, p.72). Shaw (1991, p. 362) found that adolescent women associated aerobics classes with weight loss and slimness, and that their participation actually decreased positive feelings about their body shapes.

A study by Frederick, Havitz and Shaw (1994) found that participants experienced anxiety when comparing their physical ability (such as strength and fitness) and their body shape to others in the class (Frederick, Havitz & Shaw, 1994, p. 162). Anxiety in exercise settings can have serious health implications. It is suggested that social physique anxiety may be a risk factor for the development of eating disorders, especially for those who are in group situations where evaluations of body shapes with others occur (Hausenblas & Mack, 1999, p.2).

Summary of fitness centre environment

The fitness centre environment, including the aerobics room can be a negative environment for some women. It can be a place where all anxieties about body weight and shape are concentrated. Women can compare their body shapes with others and instructors in close proximity.

The environment includes the décor, mirrors and pictures of ideal body shapes, all that place emphasis on the visible body. Anecdotal evidence suggests that fitness centres employ instructors with thin body shapes. Some fitness centres impose rules upon their female instructors to wear close fitting revealing clothing. This type of clothing emphasises the body allowing female participants to compare their body to the instructors', possibly producing feelings of dissatisfaction and inadequacy. Fitness centres use marketing practices that encourage ideal body shapes, with advertising of ideal body shapes and products that relate to the improvement of the body. Although there is little research that covers the perceptions of the fitness centre environments, there is research that some participants, females in particular, feel anxiety in exercise settings that promote ideal body shapes.

None of the available studies reported the perceptions of female fitness instructors of fitness centre environments. It is unknown if the body perceptions of female fitness instructors are influenced by their workplace environment. It is possible, that female aerobics instructors have the same anxieties as female members in fitness centres. As role models in fitness centres that promote ideal body shapes, it was suggested that female fitness instructors could be under pressure to lose weight, maintain their weight or to build a better body (Smeaton, 1993, p. 4; Thompson & Sargent, 2000, p. 38). As the literature states that some female participants feel anxiety in fitness centre environments, it is possible that some female fitness instructors feel the same way. The area that aerobics instructors spend the most time is the aerobics room. Aerobics classes were originally created for the use of women to improve their body shapes. The focus of aerobics was and still is, on the pursuit of a better body. The history of aerobics confirms this notion. Present day aerobics has continued this theme, although some new classes have emphasised mind and body programmes, taking the emphasis off the appearance.

Aerobics

This section presents a brief history of aerobics and a description of classes in 2001. Following is a description of the fitness industry in Western Australia, including a brief history of Fitness WA and instructor accreditation. The advantages and disadvantages of participation are then discussed.

History of aerobics

In the early 1900s, aerobics exercise programmes for women were known as callisthenics in school physical education classes. Callisthenics were defined as exercises without weights using the body as resistance (Egger & Champion, 1994, p. 52). Callisthenics were pursued to encourage “beauty of form” and to discourage “flabby, superfluous flesh from forming” (The Launceston Examiner, 1902 in National Film and Sound Archive 1993, p. 15). Later forms of aerobics exercise programmes were developed by the military.

In the 1950s the Royal Canadian Air Force developed a series of exercises (without equipment) known as the 5bx plan. Designed for men and women, the reported benefits were an increase in fitness (Royal Canadian Air Force, 1958). Between the 1960s and 1980s Kenneth Cooper developed and updated an aerobics programme for men and women. The programme featured exercises such as running, swimming and cycling. In 1968, Cooper was critical of women and their application to exercise, regarding them as being disinterested in exercise, and suggested they would rather spend most of their time on their hair and make-up than exercise (Cooper, 1968, p. 135). In a following book, Cooper apologised for his earlier words (Cooper & Cooper, 1972, p.7) and began to focus on women as a group that would benefit from his programme, but he continued to emphasise women's appearance. In his book, ‘The New Aerobics’, Cooper stated women needed to perform aerobic exercise for the sake of their appearance (Cooper, 1970, p. 134). Further, he stated that a woman's appearance was central to being a woman: appearance was linked to her personality, her advancement in career, what others thought of her, even the respect from her children. To market his programme, Cooper promoted improved appearance as the main benefit for women's exercise, while fitness and health were its by-products (Cooper, 1970, p. 134). It is interesting to note Cooper's change in

attitude towards women's exercise (from negative to positive); perhaps his commercial interests affected this change.

Exercise to music classes began in America in the late 1960s, and were made popular by Jackie Sorenson (Walsh, 1986). In Australia, aerobic dancing became popular in the late 1970s and 1980s. In Western Australia at this time, local government community recreation centres held aerobics classes and aerobics grew popular (C.Kluwen, personal communication, September 22, 2000). In an early attempt to commercialise the popularity of aerobics, Jane Fonda's workout book in 1981 and later a video, promoted the new 'ideal' female body shape as muscular and athletic, in contrast to the previous "ideal" shape that was slender and curvy (Markula, 1995, p. 432). Aerobics was no longer just a fitness class – it had become the new way to improve the appearance, to obtain a new body, and a way of life for some women.

Aerobics classes in the 1990s were still popular, and many different styles of classes were introduced such as BodyPump™, (Pump, 1996, p. 17), cardio funk (Williams, 1990, p. 5), slide (Phillips, 1994, p. 5) and Spinning™, (Smeaton, 1996, p. 12-15). Traditionally aerobics classes were 'freestyle' classes where instructors devised their own routines. With the introduction of Les Mills Body Training Systems, aerobics programmes became more commercialised. Pre-choreographed classes were produced, for which instructors could pay for specialised training, and purchase 'scripts' of routines to learn. Fitness centres purchased special licences to hold these programmes.

Aerobics classes in 2001

Of the current information about aerobics classes, much of the material comes from promotional materials such as fitness instructor magazines and aerobics timetables. Aerobics classes in 2001 are also called 'group fitness classes' as there are many different class formats featured on group fitness timetables. A survey by Australian Fitness Network of 533 Australian group fitness instructors in 2000, revealed that the most commonly taught group fitness classes were step (stepping on and off a box), circuit (class with a variety of exercises where participants move from one exercise to another), low intensity (low impact class without running or jumping),

hi lo, (a class alternating between high and low impact exercises) and body pump/body power (classes with barbells and weights) (Australian Fitness Network, 2000, p. 42).

In 2000, martial arts based fitness classes such as Tae Bo™, BodyCombat™, boxing circuits and kickboxing classes became popular (Butterworth, 2000, p. 14). The martial arts theme extended to aqua aerobics classes with kickboxing themes (Archer, 2000, p. 20). Pre-choreographed programmes such as those from Les Mills, are still popular inclusions on group fitness timetables for example BodyPump™ and BodyCombat™ (Loftus Recreation Centre, 2001; Craigie Leisure Centre, 2001; Shapes Health Club, 2001; CBD Health Spa, 2001). BodyPump™, as an example (by Les Mills) features in 50 percent of all fitness and health clubs in Australia (Network, 2000, p. 13).

In 2001, mind and body programmes such as Yoga and BodyBalance™ also feature on fitness class timetables (CBD Health Spa, 2001; Craigie Leisure Centre, 2001; Challenge Stadium, 2001). Other classes include indoor cycling programmes such as spinning and Raw Power in Motion™ (RPM™) (CBD Health Spa, 2001). While all styles cannot be mentioned here, other classes such as fatburner classes and ATB (abdominals, thighs and buns) are also included on group fitness timetables (eg. Craigie Leisure Centre, 2001).

Aerobics classes have experienced many different trends over time. Many different styles of classes are continually introduced to create new interest for consumers. Like other products in the market place, some aerobic styles enter the product life cycle and grow to maturity and to the heights of popularity until they eventually die out (Brassington & Pettitt, 1997, p.294). While some trends do not last, such as slide classes (participants would slide on a rubber mat from side to side), others such as Body Pump™ (pre-choreographed resistance training class) remain popular despite being introduced six years ago in Australia. In 2001, trends play a major part in the contents of an aerobics timetable. The emergence of mind and body programmes in fitness centres has seen many outside operators (such as Yoga instructors) leave their traditional schools and present their programmes in fitness centres.

With trends, aerobics has become more commercialised. Previously, the instructor created aerobics routines, by 2001 routines were supplied to instructors. Instructors pay for specialised training, music choreography and special uniforms on a regular basis. Participants paid as much as \$25 AUD for one visit to a fitness centre. The fashion industry, such as Nike, has specialised clothing lines and shoes for aerobics.

The fitness industry in Western Australia

This section reports on the evolution of the fitness industry in Western Australia. It includes a brief history of the peak fitness organization, Fitness WA, description of instructor accreditation, and the benefits (and disbenefits) of participation in aerobics.

Brief History of Fitness WA

In the early 1980s, there were no control on instructors or the ways classes were instructed. Untrained instructors were not prepared to deal with injury risk potential of exercises in their classes (G. Chan, personal communication, September 28, 2000). Public meetings were held to discuss concerns about the standard of aerobics instruction, qualifications of instructors and safety of participants. As a response to these concerns, the Aerobic Institute of WA was formed in 1982. The Institute set up instructor training courses that included practical and theoretical examinations (Walsh, 1986). In 1995, the Institute became the Fitness Institute of WA. In 1997, the Fitness Institute of Western Australia amalgamated with the Western Australian Fitness Accreditation Council and the Fitness Industry Association. The merge of these organisations formed a peak body known as Fitness WA (Fitness WA, n.d., p.1). In October 2000, Fitness WA was the peak organisation representing the fitness industry in Western Australia (Ministry of Sport and Recreation, 2000, p. 15). The organisation has a strong focus on registration and training of aerobic, aqua and gym instructors (Fitness WA, n.d., p.1).

Instructor Accreditation

Anyone wishing to become an accredited group fitness instructor (known in Western Australia as Fitness Leader-Exercise to Music) has to take formal tests with

Fitness WA. Testing includes both a practical examination (a thirty minute modified class) and a 2½ hour theory examination (C. Kluwen, personal communication, September 22, 2000).

There are different pathways for preparation for the accreditation exams. One method is by undertaking courses with private academies such as Colleen Kluwen Aerobic Academy and the Australian Institute of Fitness. Another training method is by undertaking Certificates 3 and 4 at Central Metropolitan College of TAFE (Technical and Further Education). Certificate 3 is described as Health and Fitness while Certificate 4 is Health and Fitness (Exercise to Music Instruction) (R.Howell, personal communication, September 21, 2000). A further method is a correspondence course that uses videos and instruction manuals provided by Australian Fitness Network (Australian Fitness Network, 2000, p. 65). Aerobics has become more professional with instructors engaging in courses to become accredited. This means that aerobics classes are now under the guidance of professional instructors who are trained in all aspects relating to group exercise. Classes now are safer and more enjoyable. Participants receive many benefits from classes, however there are some disbenefits.

The benefits of participation

Aerobics classes have a recognised positive benefit on the physical body, and offer social benefits and influence body perception. Aerobics classes involve a combination of cardiovascular, strength and flexibility exercises to music over a period between 40 to 60 minutes. Aerobics classes produces health benefits such as improved heart and lung function, increased muscle tone and fat reduction (Brabazon, 2000, p.100). The classes also provide an opportunity for a social occasion, to make friends and escape from daily pressures (Maguire & Mansfield, 1998, p. 110; Markula, 1995, p. 450). Participation in aerobics also has a positive influence on the body image of women, reducing the social pressures that a woman may feel about being thin and keeping a low body weight, as well as increasing self-confidence (Markula, 1995, p. 450; Warrick & Tinning, 1989, p. 23).

The negatives of participation

Aerobics classes can also be a negative experience for women participants. Aerobics classes represent a site for societal pressures for women to be slim, and are seen as a “necessary evil” to obtain the ideal physique (Frederick & Shaw, 1995, p. 72; Markula, 1995, p. 424; Warrick & Tinning, 1989, p. 8). The titles of some aerobics classes, such as ‘Fatburner’ and ‘Abdominals, Butts and Thighs’ declare that body fat must be ‘burned’, and that the lower half of women’s bodies needs specific attention (Markula, 1995, p. 435). Instructors can contribute to an existing view that there are sites on women’s bodies known as ‘problem areas’ (hips, bottoms, legs, abdominals). Instructors presume that participants want exercises in their class that concentrate on these sites, and teach repetitive, isolation exercises in their classes. Although exercises on these areas are repetitious and painful, female participants endure them in the hope they will build a better body (Frederick & Shaw, 1995, p. 69; Markula, 1995, p. 433).

The typical aerobics attire is intimidating to some female participants. The traditional aerobics clothing is close fitting Lycra that outlines the body shape of the wearer (Frederick & Shaw, 1995, p. 63, 65). While it is suitable for thin people to wear, for others it shows every lump and bump of flesh. This type of clothing emphasises the body shape and may make female participants feel insecure about their own body shapes, and could unconsciously suggest to participants that they must be thin to participate (Martin & Hausenblas, 1998).

Summary of aerobics

This section reported the history of aerobics to aerobics in 2001. It described the fitness industry in Western Australia, including a brief history of Fitness WA and instructor accreditation. The section also described the benefits and negatives of participation in aerobics. While there are many benefits to participation, the negatives of participation may influence the body perception of female participants. Aerobics classes place emphasis on women obtaining a thin body shape to meet the societal ideal. The next section describes the female aerobics instructor, including their role, role modelling, body satisfaction and recommendations for their behaviour.

The female aerobics instructor

Aerobics instructors are the leaders of group fitness classes. They direct participants through the exercise session in a safe and efficient way. They inform participants about health and fitness issues (Vogel, 2000, p. 42) and often act as coach, dietician, therapist, advisor and friend (Nardini, 1998, p.1).

Role Modelling

Role modelling is an effective tool to influence others to improve their health (Glover, 1978, p. 175). Instructors show their values non-verbally through their actions such as their facial expressions, mental outlook, posture, voice tone, gestures and physical health (Glover, 1978, p. 175). A positive role model of health and fitness provides an image to which to aspire, and in a fitness instructor's case, motivates people to exercise (Gerrard & Gibbons, 1997). To be a credible role model in health and fitness, the fitness instructor must maintain a healthy body weight, to "practice what one preaches" (Glover, 1978, p. 175).

Instructors are clearly identified as role models of health and fitness (Body Image & Health Inc., 1999, p. 5,13; Coghlan, 1999, p. 2; Martin & Hausenblas, 1998, p. 180-181; Masingham, 1996, p. 49). Participants aspire to have bodies similar to instructors (Markula, 1995, p.438). They also perceive instructors to be a reliable source of health information (Worsley, 1989, p. 369). Instructors also believe they are role models (Flynn, Hare, King & Price, 2000, p.5; Olson, Williford, Richards, Brown & Pugh, 1996, p. 1052). As role models, instructors can be under pressure to lose weight, maintain their weight or to build a better body (Smeaton, 1993, p. 4; Thompson & Sargent, 2000, p. 38). It could be expected that they would also undertake a high level exercise regime.

One study found that female aerobic instructors were not the excessive exercisers who were at risk of eating disorders (Martin & Hausenblas, 1998). They found that the instructors did not display high levels of commitment to exercise, nor did they display behavioural and attitudinal habits of those associated with eating disorders (Martin & Hausenblas, 1998, p.181).

Another study reported the perceptions that participants held of their instructors and classes (Huntly, 2000). Huntly also found that the most important

quality that participants wanted from an instructor was their ability to teach. The second most important quality was approachability, then ability to motivate, then health and fitness knowledge. Only 4 percent of those surveyed felt that an important quality of the instructor was his or her physical appearance (Huntley, 2000).

Body Satisfaction

Several studies, (e.g. Thompson & Sargent, 2000; Nardini, 1998) reported that female aerobic instructors wanted to be thinner, despite having an average body fat lower than most women. In one study, the rating of body-dissatisfaction of instructors was comparable to women with poor body image who also had unhealthy eating and exercising habits (Clayton, 2000, p. 86). Similarly, a study by Nardini (1998) found that 64 percent of instructors perceived an ideal body as one that was thinner than their current body. Another study found that 43 percent of instructors wanted to be thinner (Thompson & Sargent, 2000, p. 42).

A study by Markula (1995) suggested that instructors had a distorted self-perception of their body shape and an intense fear of being fat, while another study reported that 62 percent of instructors were overly concerned about their weight (Aerobics & Fitness Association of America, 1994). Further, an in-house survey was conducted at Winning Edge Gymnasium in Victoria, Australia to establish perceptions of body shape held by clients and fitness centre employees. This study found that instructors believed that they needed to have an athletic, trim physique to be an instructor, as they believed their clients looked to them as role models. The majority of participants, however, commented that the physique of their instructors did not matter (Wigg, 1998, p. 3).

Fitness instructor publications seldom address the pressures of role modelling. An article in *Network*, titled 'The Perfect Body', attempted to relieve pressure that instructors put themselves under to be "perfect". Recommendations included "Try and find a sense of yourself that is not related to your appearance" and "When you are teaching, don't feel that you need to perform for the class all the time" (Westaway, 1993a, p. 27). Despite reported body dissatisfaction, no training to deal with role modelling or body dissatisfaction is offered in any aerobics training modules. There is little professional discussion or debate of such issues.

Instructor behaviour

There is much research (e.g. Frederick & Shaw, 1995; Coghlan, 1999) about aerobic instructors dealing with participants who attend their classes. Instructors are warned to be sensitive to the body image perceptions of their female participants. Coghlan (1999) advised instructors not to draw attention to the body shape of participants. She suggested that instructors avoid comments such "Think how good you will look in a swimming costume" (Coghlan, 1999, p. 1-2). Other language to avoid was any reference to weight loss and body image (Frederick & Shaw, 1995, p. 72; Westaway, 1993a, p. 27).

The way instructors dress was also subject to advice from Coghlan. Instructors who wear tight, Lycra clothing while teaching classes could intimidate some female participants by making them feel inadequate. Instructors were encouraged to change their attire from body revealing Lycra to other clothing such as shorts and t-shirts that did not accentuate the body. This is especially important in classes for overweight participants (Coghlan, 1999, p. 2). Further, instructors were encouraged to use empathy and sensitivity towards overweight participants in classes (Coghlan, 1999, p. 2 ; Masingham, 1996, p. 49).

Summary of the female aerobics instructor

Female aerobic instructors have many different roles that relate to their relationship with their participants. They are clearly identified as role models and their behaviour towards aerobics class participants has been the subject of research. Studies have found that female instructors experienced body dissatisfaction, and wished they could be thinner. There are recommendations to instructors to modify their behaviour towards participants, including their language and the way they dress to reduce the negative influences participants may experience. Despite the studies reporting that female instructors have body dissatisfaction, there has not been any investigation into influences on their body perception, including any workplace influences on their body perception.

Summary of chapter

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature. It discussed the depiction of the female body through history, body image and body image influences, including peer, parents and media influence. The chapter also reported body dissatisfaction in women. The fitness centre environment was discussed, including the influence of the décor of fitness centres, employment and marketing practices. Women's perceptions of the fitness centre environment and exercise settings and anxiety were also discussed. The aerobics trend was discussed, including a brief history and the status of aerobics in 2001. The fitness industry in Western Australia was examined, including a description of the peak aerobics organization, Fitness WA, and information on instructor accreditation. The benefits and negatives of aerobics participation were also reported. Finally, the aerobics instructor was discussed, including her status as a role model, body dissatisfaction and instructor behaviour.

This review highlighted some ways in which ideal body shapes are promoted in the fitness centre environment. No studies were found that investigated the influence of the workplace on the body perception of female fitness instructors. The literature appears to suggest that the fitness centre environment influences the body perception of female instructors by depicting ideal body shapes in their advertising, and their décor, through the use of pictures of slim women and the use of mirrors in group fitness rooms.

The practices used by management also influence the body perception of the female instructors by appearing to favour female instructors who are slim, and enforcing a rule where instructors must wear tight, body hugging clothing. The products sold by fitness centres, such as weight loss powders appear to place an emphasis on the importance of losing weight and improving the body.

The literature suggests that women participants feel anxiety in exercise settings such as aerobics classes. The aerobics exercise setting emphasises the presentation of the body that can make some women feel inadequate, as they feel they do not live up to the thin body shape that is promoted in the fitness centre. It is possible that female instructors could feel the same. Several studies have reported that female instructors are not satisfied with their bodies, despite their status as role models of health, fitness and slimness. Working in an environment that promotes

ideal body shapes, there are expectations on the instructor to be consistent with this promotion. There are expectations on them to lose weight or to improve their body shape. The study set out to explore some these issues with female group fitness instructors in Perth, Western Australia.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the workplace influences on body perception held by female group fitness instructors. This exploration gathered perceptions held by female group fitness instructors of their work settings. There were two methods of data collection. First, a qualitative approach involved six instructors in semi-structured interviews to explore the issues in the literature. Secondly, a quantitative approach using a questionnaire was used to explore the issues more widely across instructors in the industry. The questionnaire was distributed to 26 fitness centres employing 209 female group fitness instructors.

This chapter outlines the detail of the methods used in the study. First, the rationale is given for the overall research design. Secondly, the interviews are described including: the target population, instrument, procedure, data analysis and themes from the interviews. Thirdly, the questionnaires are described, including the target population, instrument, procedure and data analysis. The limitations and ethical considerations are also discussed for both research methods.

Rationale of research design

This study combined two paradigms - interpretative (naturalistic) using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews followed by positivist (experimental) using a quantitative method of mailed questionnaires. As a mixed method study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were selected. The qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews, was appropriate to allow the exploration of issues from the literature with women who worked in the fitness industry. The emerging issues were refined into themes used to develop the questionnaire. A survey was an efficient way to reach a large number of a very mobile group of instructors. This method was

used to confirm the issues from the literature and the interviews, and to identify any other issues that may be discussed from a wider section of the industry.

The study was based on a conceptual framework outlined in the introductory chapter (p. 8), that explored the workplace influences on the body perception of female aerobic instructors. In particular, the influences of management practices and the décor of the workplace (fitness centre) were examined. The study also covered body perceptions of instructors and other influences. The first part of the data collection was interviews that are outlined next.

Interviews

Target population

The population of interest in this study was female group fitness instructors employed in fitness centres in the Perth area in Western Australia. The method of sampling was purposive, as the required information could only be obtained from a select group (Sekaran, 1992, p.235). Ten subjects were sought as subjects for the interviews. Six subjects were chosen from this initial group of subjects. Four subjects remained as back-ups should other subjects drop out. Criteria set for the selection of interviewees are outlined below:

1. Female group fitness instructors working in the Perth metropolitan area (or have been working in the Perth Metro area in the 6 months prior to the study).
2. The subjects, as a group of six, had to show a range of different years of experience as an instructor. As an example, two instructors with experience for 1-4 years; two instructors 5-9; two instructors 10 years and over. The ranges were chosen to represent instructors across different levels of experience.
3. The group fitness instructors could work in a casual, part time or full time capacity.
4. Any subjects must not be managers of any fitness centres where they worked (They must not be in control of promotional strategies, decor. room set up).
5. Subjects could be responsible for aerobic coordination duties (many aerobic coordinators also teach group fitness classes).

6. Subjects must not be teaching to specialised groups only, such as seniors, people with disabilities, pregnant participants, school children and other specialty groups.
7. Subjects may work in more than one fitness centre, or branches of a fitness centre chain.
8. Subjects may teach any style of class.
9. Subjects were known to the researcher.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as these allowed the exploration of body perception and workplace issues and, in particular, provided the opportunity to explore individual experiences and perspectives of the subjects (Henderson, 1991, p. 73). Interviews gathered rich data that would not be possible from a survey. A semi-structured interview method was desirable as the researcher knew what information was needed (Sekaran, 1992, p. 192) and topics were referred to during the interview. Some deviations were made to follow prospective leads during the interviews (Sekaran, 1992, p. 192). This resulted in a deeper understanding of the issues at hand.

The interviews identified body perception issues of the female aerobic instructor, including workplace influences. An interview schedule (Appendix A) was referred to during the interview, but was not followed in sequence. The interview schedule was structured into several sections that were: how they started in the fitness industry, the classes they taught, participants' expectations of an instructor (including appearance and teaching skills), the policies and practices of the fitness centres at which they worked, the ideal body for a female group fitness instructor, and their exercise and nutrition regime. The themes that arose from the interviews formed the basis of a confirmatory survey of the industry.

Procedure

The subjects were contacted by telephone or spoken to in person and the nature of the study was explained. When an invitee accepted to be interviewed, a date and time was set for the interview. A follow-up letter (Appendix B) was sent to the

subjects confirming the interview time and date. Attached to the letter was a letter of informed consent (Appendix C) for the subject's perusal. The subjects were asked to read the letter of informed consent but not to sign it until the interview. Three interviews were held at the subjects' homes, two were at a fitness centre where the subjects worked, and one was held outdoors at a park.

Prior to each interview, the purpose of the study was explained, and a signed statement of informed consent was obtained. All interviews were approximately one hour to an hour and thirty minutes in duration. Interviews were recorded on audiotapes and given to a transcriber. Upon receipt of the transcripts, they were checked carefully by listening to each tape and reading the transcript to verify correctness. Minor alterations were made.

A copy of the subject's transcript was sent to each woman interviewed, with a covering letter explaining that she should read and check her transcript, and make alterations if she wished. A stamped, return addressed envelope was provided to them in the event they wished to return the transcript with alterations. One subject returned her transcript and a small amount of data was deleted at her request. Two subjects were also sent several questions relating to their transcript. These questions further probed issues that arose in the interview. All subjects were thanked for their involvement in the study and were assured of confidentiality. This is further explained in Ethical considerations later in this section.

Data analysis

The analysis of data was manual. A qualitative data analysis computer program (such as NUDIST) was not used, due to the small number of subjects. The data was coded using Henderson's suggestions (1991, p.128) of organizing data according to the research questions, and later revising them. The data were filed in "chunks" in folders on a computer, according to emerging themes (Henderson, 1991, p. 128).

Themes and their content that arose from the interviews became questions in the questionnaire. Appendix D provides a table in which the themes and content are presented with the corresponding questions and statements that were included in the questionnaire. As an example, the body perception themes were: body weight (a

natural body shape/can't put on weight; felt better at a lower weight); change body (body parts; lose weight/body fat) and ideal instructor (athletic, fit, slim, obligation to be slim as part of fitness industry). The themes were placed in various categories in the questionnaire. These were: On being an instructor; Your workplace; Yourself; and Your profile. Body perception, for example, was placed in the Yourself and On being an instructor sections (see also Table 1).

Questionnaire

The pilot study

To test the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with eleven female instructors, employed at one fitness centre in Perth. The criteria for subject selection, the instrument and procedure are described below:

Criteria For Pilot Subject Selection

The criteria for subject selection were dependent on:

- I. The aerobics coordinator must be known to the researcher. It was important that the coordinator trust the researcher, to ensure cooperation with the pilot study.
2. The fitness centre must be located within 10 kilometres of the Perth central business district.
3. The subjects must not include any subjects already interviewed in Phase 1 of the study. The subjects were informed they would only be included in the pilot study, and were asked not to complete any future questionnaires for the main study.

The Pilot Instrument

The pilot questionnaire had a 'Questionnaire feedback sheet' attached to it (Appendix E). It consisted of questions that asked subjects to comment on the ease of completion, terms used in the questionnaire (for example, 'How do you feel about the use of the words in the questionnaire 'thin', 'slim' and 'trim?'), and suggestions for

improvement. Also attached to the questionnaire was a covering letter explaining the study (Appendix F), as well as a stamped envelope for return of questionnaires.

Procedure

The aerobics coordinator at a Perth fitness centre was contacted by email by the researcher, and the purpose of the study was explained. On Saturday 9 June 2001, eleven questionnaires were hand delivered to the fitness centre by the researcher. A return date of Tuesday, 19 June, allowed 10 days for return of the survey forms. On the 19 June, a reminder letter was sent to all participants with accompanying questionnaires, covering letter and reply paid envelopes. There were six responses. Minor changes were made to the questionnaire (for example replacing the word 'thin' with 'lean'). It was then prepared for a wider distribution.

Main study

Target Population

The population of interest in this study was female group fitness instructors employed in fitness centres in the Perth metropolitan area in Western Australia. The method of sampling was purposive of a selected group of female group fitness instructors (Sekaran, 1992, p. 235). The questionnaires were bundled up into packages and delivered or mailed to aerobic coordinators to distribute. There were 209 questionnaires distributed to 26 fitness centres. The criteria for subject selection were dependent on:

1. The subjects must not include any subjects already interviewed nor involved in the pilot study. The interviewees and the pilot subjects had been asked not to complete any future questionnaires connected with this study.
2. The subjects must be currently working as a group fitness (aerobics) instructor, teaching classes on land or in water (water aerobics) at the time of the study.
3. Questionnaires were only sent to fitness centres where the researcher knew the aerobics coordinators. This was advantageous, as the coordinators trusted the

researcher, therefore cooperation with the distribution of the questionnaires was guaranteed.

- 4. Subjects may work in more than one fitness centre. The questionnaires asked instructors to only complete one questionnaire.
- 5. Subjects must represent different geographical locations north and south of Perth central business district.

Instrument

The instrument used in this phase was a questionnaire (Appendix G). The questions were developed from the themes from the interviews and feedback from the pilot study. The questionnaire had four sections, shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Description of Content of Questionnaire.

Section	Title of Section	Explanation of Questions
1.	On being an Instructor	19 Statements where instructors had to agree or disagree (5 point Likert Scale). These were arranged in the following sections: Perceptions of Employers; Perceptions of Self; Participants expectations; The ideal instructor. Note: Some questions were negatively phrased e.g. Question 3, "Female group fitness instructors don't have to be lean". Negatively phrased questions were reversed to positively phrased at time of analysis.
2.	Your Workplace	14 questions that related to: The instructors' workplace, including retail, décor and the class timetable. In addition, there were questions on clothing worn when instructing. Questions required subjects to either tick boxes, rate items in order of importance or describe feelings in open-ended responses.
3.	Yourself	5 questions related to: How subjects felt about themselves, and what influenced their feelings. The questions required subjects to rate in order of importance (1, 2 or 3) and also describe their thoughts and feelings.
4.	Your Profile	8 questions. This section obtained: characteristics of the instructors, including qualifications, training provider, time as a group fitness instructor, age, classes taught per week, hours of exercise per week, number of locations working north of Perth and south of Perth.
5.	Open-ended	Asked subjects if they had any comments about being a group fitness instructor and maintaining a particular body shape. It also asked for any other comments.

Procedure

Twenty-six fitness centres, employing 209 casual female group fitness instructors were included in this study. In July 2001, Aerobic Coordinators from each fitness centre were contacted by the researcher by telephone and informed of the study. Upon gaining interest, a letter was sent to each coordinator detailing the study and inviting their involvement (Appendix H). The number of female group fitness instructors at each fitness centre was obtained. Bundles of questionnaires were mailed or personally delivered to each coordinator to distribute. A letter accompanied each questionnaire outlining the study. A reply paid envelope was included for the return of the questionnaire. The reply date for questionnaire return was 6 August 2001.

Approximately ten days after the initial mail-out, a reminder letter was sent to all subjects (Appendix I). Attached to each reminder letter was a copy of the questionnaire and a reply paid envelope. Each coordinator assisted again by distributing the questionnaires to her staff. There were two reply dates. One coordinator informed the researcher she could not distribute the questionnaires at the required date. The researcher accepted this. This meant that one reply date for subjects to return their questionnaires was 13 August, while the other reply date (to suit one coordinator) was 17 August 2001.

Although 209 surveys were distributed, this was possibly an overestimate of the number of individual instructors, as many worked at more than one fitness centre. Therefore it was difficult to determine the exact size of the population for the study.

Data analysis

Basic descriptive statistics were used for this part of the study. The results from each questionnaire were entered into a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. Each questionnaire was edited at the time of input, for example, spelling mistakes were corrected. The questionnaire responses were analysed by different methods. Measures of central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation) were calculated for responses to the Likert-type scale statements in section 1. The mean and standard deviation of each statement was obtained using calculations in Microsoft Excel.

Responses were tallied for 'tick the box' questions and yes/no questions. Two questions (question 33 and 34) asked respondents to rank from 1 to 3, for example question 33 'Please rank from 1 to 3 the top three strategies your fitness centre uses

when advertising'. These responses were analysed by totalling the number of rankings for each strategy.

Questions that required respondents to write descriptions or explanations were coded by searching for common themes and content among the answers given. All answers to each question were placed into individual Microsoft Word documents. As an example, question 32, What recruitment practices are you aware of that specify a particular body shape to be employed as a group fitness instructor? was coded as Recruitment practices. All answers to this question were then cut and pasted under this theme. The answers became the content that was divided into common areas. As an example, the content for question 32 were: none; instruction skills; recruited without being seen; image important and body shape important.

Ethical considerations

Before the commencement of the study, an ethics clearance was obtained from the Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research at Edith Cowan University (Appendix J). In addition, the Research and Higher Degrees Committee of the Faculty of Business and Public Management approved the study.

Several ethical considerations were applied in the interviews. Subjects were sent a letter outlining the study (Appendix K). This letter explained that interviews were confidential, and that pseudonym names would be used. A copy of a statement of informed consent was attached to the letter for subjects to peruse, prior to the interview (see Appendix C). The subjects were informed that their real names would be recorded separately from the transcripts and placed in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's house. Subjects were informed that the tapes from the interviews would be destroyed at the completion of the study. Prior to the interview, the subjects were again informed of the confidential nature of the interview. A signed statement of informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. A copy was given to each participant.

The questionnaire (and pilot questionnaire) followed ethical guidelines. Questionnaires were anonymous and had no provision for names to be included. Each questionnaire had a statement on the front outlining the anonymous involvement of

each subject (see Appendix G). In addition, it was stated that by completing the questionnaire, subjects were consenting to their participation in the study.

Limitations

The limitations for this study were:

- There were 26 fitness centres used in this study. This study population represented about 25 percent of all fitness centres in Western Australia, as there were approximately one hundred fitness centres in the state at the time of the study. Due to time limitations and resources available, all fitness centres could not be surveyed. The study attempted to alleviate this by surveying an even number in centres of the north and south of metropolitan areas of Perth.
- Only female group fitness instructors were included in the study. Male instructors were deliberately omitted from this study due to time, resource constraints and the purpose of the study.
- In the interviews, questions regarding mirrors were omitted from the interview schedule. In the questionnaires, two questions that related to mirrors were included and gained sufficient information relevant to the study.
- Some respondents may not have found the subject matter interesting to them and as such, would not complete the survey. The instructors who did reply provided valuable data for the study, however their self-selected participation may have presented a biased view.
- As many instructors work at several centres at once, some instructors could have completed more than one questionnaire. Attempts to alleviate this included a statement on the front of the questionnaire stating, "These questionnaires have been distributed to many fitness centres in the Perth area. If you have already completed this questionnaire, please do not complete another".
- Many instructors worked at more than one fitness centre and this may have affected the accuracy of the response rate. The twenty-six fitness centres that were surveyed were reported to have 209 instructors, however many of these worked at other centres involved in this study.

- The researcher was well known in the fitness industry. This aspect could have been both an advantage and a disadvantage. As an advantage, instructors would feel comfortable in completing a questionnaire if they knew and trusted the researcher. As a disadvantage, the instructors may have been reticent to give personal information to someone with whom they worked.
- The method of distribution (utilising aerobic coordinators) could have affected the reply rate. Instructors may have felt that their Coordinators could have read their responses. To reduce this limitation, reply paid envelopes were attached to each questionnaire, ensuring that completed questionnaires were not returned to the coordinators. Alternatively, coordinators may have influenced the study positively or negatively by their attitudes, which may have affected the response rate. The researcher knew each coordinator and all appeared to be interested in the study when initially approached.
- Aerobic coordinators may not have been interested in the study, and as such, may not have distributed the questionnaires. To alleviate this, each coordinator was spoken to either in person or over the telephone, and the importance of the study was explained.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methods employed in this study. The overall research design was described, followed by the methods used in the interviews. The questionnaire methods were described followed by the limitations and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the outcomes of the interviews. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the survey, and the conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH SIX FEMALE INSTRUCTORS

Introduction

This chapter reports the results of the qualitative phase of this study that provided the foundation of the survey instrument. Interviews were conducted with six female group fitness instructors to identify themes to gain a better insight into the boundaries of the study. Once the themes were constructed they were used to aid in the development the questionnaire to enable the study to reach a wider population.

Six female group fitness instructors were interviewed to explore body perception issues and workplace influences. The instructors were allocated aliases: Superwoman, Julie, Susan, Olive, Natasha and Storm. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the women.

Table 2
Characteristics of Interviewees

Instructor	Age Range	Number of fitness centres worked	Classes taught	Experience teaching in years	Capacity worked in industry
Superwoman, Julie, Susan	19-24	Superwoman 7 Julie 1 Susan 6	Various not specialised	1 to 3	Susan: full time Julie & Susan: Casual
Olive, Natasha, Storm	40-43	Olive 2 Storm 0 Natasha 3	As above	9 to 16	Storm: not working due to injury Natasha: casual Olive: casual and Aerobics Coordinator

The instructors discussed topics that were presented to them during a semi-structured interview. These topics were: how they started in the fitness industry, the

classes they taught, participants' expectations of an instructor (including appearance and teaching skills), the policies and practices of the fitness centres at which they worked, the ideal body for a female group fitness instructor and their exercise and nutrition regime. The topics were intentionally broad to allow an exploration of issues as they arose.

The discussion reports the themes and content from the interviews of the instructors. Themes and their content are presented using direct (relatively unedited) quotes from the instructors as examples, starting with body perception, exercise and nutrition regime, the influence of management practices on body perception, the influence of employers on body perception, the influence of participants on body perception, and physical influences from workplace on body perception. Table 3 presents the themes taken from the grouped responses. Each theme is expanded into content areas.

Table 3
Themes and content from interviews

Theme	Content
Body perception	Satisfaction with body shape Body weight Changing some body parts Ideal body shape for instructors Fitness of instructors
Exercise and nutrition regime	Eat anything without gaining weight Choosing low fat foods Exercise routines
The influence of management practices on body perception	Recruitment Uniforms Marketing practices:- Body revealing/concealing Body improvement products Advertising body improvement Advertising extra services
The influence of employers	Image
The influence of participants	A slim role model
Physical influences from workplace	Judgment of instructor's bodies Pictures of slim, attractive bodies Inspirational signs Sexual emphasis Unrealistic *Note: mirrors not mentioned in interviews
Characteristics	

Body perception

The women, in response to the questions about body perception, raised a range of issues. The question and prompts are listed below. Following is the content of the theme.

Question:	Describe to me what you believe a group fitness instructor should look like.
Prompts:	How do you feel about your body? Is there anything you would change about your body?
Content of theme:	Satisfaction with body shape; body weight; changing some parts, ideal body shape for aerobics instructors and fitness of instructors.

Satisfaction with body shape

Instructors reported that they were generally satisfied with their body shape. Satisfaction of body shape was spoken about and linked to the amount of body weight or fat on the bodies of instructors. Some stated that they felt lucky as their bodies did not carry excess body weight. They believed that their slim bodies were due to a natural body shape and genetic characteristics that enabled them to stay slim:

I am lucky for how I look. I have got the right metabolism, I've got the right kind of body shape I don't carry any weight. (Natasha)

I know that I am extremely lucky with my body, extremely lucky. I have abdominals that people would really like to have and people are often commenting on that, and I say "I know you think it looks great but trust me I am really, really lucky that I have this and it is just one of those things" and often when people say that to me I say, "look my dad has given me some of the best genes in the world, you know, and that's where it comes from". (Olive)

Body weight

The women reported that they felt better about their bodies when they had a lower body weight. When the body weight was lower, there were more positive

feelings about their body shape, and instructors stated they felt good about their body shapes. When the instructors lost body weight, they stated that their muscles were visible therefore they felt they looked more athletic. Losing weight also meant it was easier to perform daily tasks without carrying extra weight. Interestingly, although instructors stated they were satisfied with their body shape, they also commented on perceived flaws in their bodies and wanted to decrease their body fat/body weight levels even more, and increase their muscle tone.

... I weighed somewhere around 90 kilos ... I now weigh 71 kilos ... I feel good now, and visually I look toned I look athletic, I have visible muscles in my arms, my back, my legs that sort of thing and I don't wobble when I walk basically, except the bits that are supposed to. (Julie)

... I usually weigh 10 - 15 kilos more when I am not competing or not in competition condition. So the pure logistics of pushing an extra 15 kilos around all day, is quite hard and especially someone of my size. It's a lot of weight to carry around but you do get used to it, I guess, yeah, but you feel good when you are lean. (Susan)

I would still like to be leaner. (Julie)

It is always like yeah my gut is hanging out a bit here or my boobs are a bit saggy but nothing drastic. I have actually got to the point where I'm very satisfied with how I look. (Supervoman)

[I want] muscle tone which I haven't [got]... I've only just been able to start working on that and body fat probably as well...lying down for 5 months [recovering from an injury], not moving around much, and my body is a body that needs to move around to get the metabolism kicking over. (Storm)

Changing some body parts

Along with losing weight, the women also wished they would change different body parts. They stated that they wanted to change the size and shape of body parts such as improving their complexion or increasing the size of their breasts with plastic surgery. Other comments included wishing for a tapered waist were tapered instead of being shaped "straight up and down".

If I had plastic surgery yeah funnily enough it would just be off my skin. Maybe if I had lots and lots of money I might (have) boobs. (Olive)

I would like a waist. I would like my waist to go but that is just my shape. I have got a very sort of boy shape straight up and down very small hips, but I wouldn't change anything else. (Natasha)

Ideal body shape for aerobics instructors

When describing the ideal body shape for a female instructor, the women stated that instructors should look athletic. To look 'athletic' was to look 'toned', with muscles firm. By looking athletic, they portrayed professionalism in their occupation.

Someone who is well toned... reasonably athletic. (Storm)

[Instructors] should look athletic, I mean I would expect an instructor to look toned. (Julie)

[They should be] neat and tidy, a professional to be quite honest. If they look professional, they look like what they are: a group fitness instructor, ok maybe some degree of athleticism. (Olive)

Fitness of instructor

The women stated that an ideal instructor should have good teaching skills. They felt that instructors should have a fitness level that is appropriate to the type of class they teach. This included a physical capability to teach classes and being fit to teach. While the majority of women said they felt that instructors should be fit, one woman stated that instructors did not have to have a good fitness level, only be in a healthy weight range.

I guess someone who is fit enough to be able to teach the class they are teaching is really all that's required...You don't want someone up there doing a high impact class who can't breathe and forgets what they are doing. I guess just being able to teach within the physical, or being physically capable of executing 100 percent of what's required. (Susan)

People do like to see an instructor who's fit...I think they want an instructor who seems fit and can do the class easily without looking like they're struggling. (Storm)

They don't have to be too fit. (Julie)

Summary of body perception

The theme discussed in this section was body perception. On the whole, the women were generally satisfied with their body shapes. It appeared that the satisfaction of their body shapes was connected to their body weight. Some instructors stated they were lucky that they had bodies that did not carry weight. Others stated they felt better about themselves when they were carrying less weight. It was interesting to note that although instructors stated that they were satisfied, they also stated that they would change their body if they could. The women described the ideal instructor as athletic with a body that looked toned. Fitness was also an important quality of the 'ideal' instructor. The ways and means of maintaining their body shapes and body weight are discussed in the next section. It examines the exercise and nutrition practices of the instructors.

Exercise and nutrition regime

A number of issues arose in response to the questions about the instructors' exercise and nutrition regimes. The question and prompts are listed below. Following is the content of the theme.

Question:	Tell me about your nutrition and exercise regime
Prompts:	Do you maintain certain eating habits for your position as a group fitness instructor?
Content of theme:	Eat anything without gaining weight; choosing low fat foods, and exercise routines.

Eat anything without gaining weight

Some instructors believed they had a body type that allowed them to eat whatever they wished, without gaining weight. They explained that they felt it was due to their metabolism or genetics that enabled them to eat and drink anything without gaining weight. While some women believed that genetics played a part in their weight control, most stated that the amount of exercise they did helped them control their weight, so that they could eat whatever they wished. Susan stated she did 30 to 35 hours of exercise each week and she felt that allowed her to eat anything.

I know I can get away with eating a bit more because of my genes or my metabolism or whatever it is. (Olive)

I am lucky... I don't worry about diet or anything like that, I eat what I want, I drink what I want. (Natasha)

I do enough exercise to counteract all the crap that I do eat I guess when people say to me do I diet, I say "well no I don't but I do 30 - 35 hours of exercise a week so that will counteract what I would eat". (Susan)

Low fat foods

The women chose low fat foods to assist them to lose weight. Low fat foods were described as vegetables and fruit. In addition, the women ate energy giving foods containing carbohydrates that gave them extra energy for teaching classes. Superwoman described her nutritional habits as poor due to her work times clashing with home meal times. Her evening classes were held either at 5.30pm, 6.30pm or 7.30pm; her typical evening meal time. This caused Superwoman to eat snack foods instead of meals.

Mainly low fat and I try to have reasonable amounts of vegetables and fruit. (Storm)

I would probably still be eating a diet like that [low fat] even if I wasn't an instructor purely I think because I would be wanting to lose weight but certainly not as much carbs [carbohydrates] if I wasn't teaching. (Julie)

You think ... you have got to eat better because you are an instructor... so you probably need more of those sugary sort of energy foods to keep you going, perhaps more carbohydrates. (Superwoman)

I get home from the gym and often it will be 9 o'clock and I don't like eating dinner that late at night. I prefer to eat it at 6 o'clock, so things like that definitely disrupt or are disrupted because of the teaching. (Superwoman)

Exercise habits

The women's exercise habits varied. Some of the instructors used their classes as their sole exercise. Others chose physical activities to lose weight or to for rehabilitative reasons to recover from an injury. One woman described her exercise as addictive:

I don't do any exercises myself anymore, it's all my classes, I don't have time, I don't have energy, so all my exercises are around my classes (Superwoman – teaches 10 to 14 classes per week)

Outside my classes (I do) cardio obviously for weight loss. I don't do any weights. (Julie)

My aim [is] to get my back strong so that I can go back to teaching my classes and just having a normal life, where I don't have to lie down every half hour. (Storm – currently not teaching and recovering from an injury)

I guess I am addicted to it. I've always been really active so it's something that I've been brought up doing. I think when I finished school I got a bit lazy and didn't do it, and then started doing it and realised how good it did make me feel. So since then I haven't stopped really. (Susan - fitness figure competitor, exercise regime 30 to 35 hours per week, including 20 to 25 classes per week)

Summary of exercise and nutrition regime

The women used a variety of approaches in their exercise and nutrition to keep weight low and to be fit and strong for their work as instructors. Some ate whatever they wished, others chose low fat foods to lose weight or for extra energy for teaching. Exercise habits also varied where some instructors used their classes as their

exercise while others sought extra exercise to lose weight or for strengthening to recover from an injury. These women indicated that they maintained their desired body shape and weight in response to the expectations of workplaces as much as for their own satisfaction with their bodies.

The influence of management practices on body perception

Several issues arose during the interviews that related to the influence on body perception of management practices at the fitness centres at which the instructors worked. Management practices were described as recruitment practices, uniforms and other clothing, and marketing practices.

Question:	Tell me about the place/s you work at
Prompts:	How are instructors recruited at the places you work? What sorts of advertisements does your fitness centre use to attract new members?
Content of theme:	Recruitment of instructors with a particular body appearance, revealing and unrevealing uniforms and clothing during teaching, and marketing practices that emphasised slim bodies and weight loss.

Recruitment

Instructors described how instructors were recruited at the gymnasia at which they worked. For two women, attaining a position was difficult. Julie found it difficult to find a position due to being overweight and not looking like an instructor. Superwoman also had difficulty getting employment, but this was due to a lack of experience.

...I actually found it really difficult to get a class initially. I had one of the managers at [fitness centre] actually told me that I didn't look like an instructor, and she was reluctant to give me classes on that basis... I was carrying a lot of weight at the time, I was a size 18. (Julie)

After I got my qualifications I just rang up gyms in the local area and said "Look I've done my course I am available for teaching" and some

of them I think, even though they didn't say it straight out, were a bit hesitant because it was like, "what experience have you had?" (Superwoman)

Similar to Julie's experience, Olive stated that her employer indicated that the body shape of new employees was important. Although Olive was responsible for hiring the instructors at one of the fitness centres where she worked, management did pass an opinion on the body shape of employees that they looked overweight or in good shape. While the physical appearance of instructors may be important to some managers, instructors also attained positions without the employer seeing their body shape. They were recruited by word of mouth or by a phone call.

I am led to believe that I get the final say but more often than not management will pass an opinion, sometimes I think there's merit in the opinion but often I don't. (Olive)

Yes [the management] tell me, [about] instructor[s] who seems to be a little on the heavy side, they tell me. I have employed at least one person here that I get several comments about in terms of physical image but all I say when I am told is that instructor has a wealth of knowledge and has an enormous amount to offer. I don't really care what they look like although I will also say that most men in the bigger gym in management or even on staff, think it is a huge problem. (Olive)

Word of mouth a lot of the time. (Storm)

People just knowing people and people recommending you. (Susan)

Uniforms and other clothing

Instructors described the clothing they wore when they taught classes. The women wore close fitting clothing of Lycra type material. For some, uniforms bearing the fitness centre name were enforced by their employers. Other uniforms were Les Mills uniforms, which advertised the type of programme they were teaching. The women had varying views on how they felt about wearing close fitting clothing when teaching. They believed they needed to wear body hugging clothing to show their body positions to participants when performing exercises.

I always wear what I call my lovely little Lycra, usually my fitted singlet with the programme logo and then some tights and training shoes. (Julie)

Most of [my clothing I wear to classes] are tight fitting. I have got one combat top which is like a singlet top a bit looser, but generally close fitting and I wear leggings most of the time or sometimes shorts but usually leggings. (Superwoman)

The [fitness centre] tops are a Lycra top, a singlet...I've got cotton type materials, a couple of things that's your Lycra sort of materials. (Superwoman)

It is important for the class to be able to see where your body is, especially with programmes like body balance where they can't always stand up and have a good look at exactly what you are doing without losing track of where they are. They need to be able to look out of the corner of their eye and see that "yes her hips are there, her knees are there, her head is there", and body hugging clothes are the best way to demonstrate that. (Julie)

[Instructors wear tight clothing so participants] can actually see your body, they can see the proper move that you are doing. If you are wearing trackies [track suit pants] and a t- shirt they are not going to be able to see the movement properly. (Superwoman)

The main element is that it is fitted so your body is presented so that participants know what they are supposed to be mirroring. (Susan)

All instructors stated that they were generally comfortable with what they wore when they taught classes. However, several of the women said that as a new instructor teaching her first classes or when overweight they felt self-conscious about the tight fitting clothing.

Initially when I first started teaching I hated having to wear it... when I was so over weight I hated wearing them. (Julie)

[When I started teaching] a few other new [instructors] were kind of like "ooh" [about wearing tight clothing], because that may have taken them out of their comfort zone but it didn't bother me at the time. (Superwoman)

Instructors reported that participants noticed and responded to what they wore. Olive recalled that she had more than once received comments from male participants on her choice of clothing. Men made favourable comments when she wore brief clothing. Women participants also made envious comments about the clothing Olive wore, comparing the way they looked in similar clothing. These type of comments were flattering to the women.

Some men go "oh I like that outfit" or "had I known you were going to wear that I would have been here earlier". These are just some very recent comments. (Olive)

People notice what you wear and I think if I come up every week with the same music and the same programme and the same clothes, what is there to inspire them? There is nothing different about that. So yeah, I will actually think about what outfit I am going to wear. (Olive)

I bought [some short tights] and I wore them to class one day and they are really comfortable. One of the girls said "look how good they look on you, I tried them on and they didn't look half as good". (Olive)

Marketing practices

The women were asked about the products sold and the methods of advertising at the fitness centres at which they worked.

- Question: What does your centre sell, other than memberships?
- What sort of advertisements does your gym use to attract new members?
- Content of theme: Body revealing/concealing clothing and Body improvement products. The themes in relation to advertising were:
- Advertising body improvement and extra services.

Body revealing/concealing clothing

The clothing sold at fitness centres was either body revealing or body concealing. Tight fitting Lycra type clothing, such as crop tops and tights, was commonly sold at centres. They indicated that as well as the tight fitting clothes, a range of baggy clothing was sold. This type of clothing included pants (long and short, tight and baggy), singlets, and shorts:

[One gym I work at has] shorts and little tops. Towards winter we are going to fashionable stage of having on three quarter length or full-length pants. The other gym [I work at] has a range of everything from short shorts to three quarters to long legs to T-shirts and crop tops and jackets. (Olive)

It is aerobics wear with little Lycra fitted T shirts, singlets, cropped tops, hot pants, bike pants, shorts and singlets for guys. (Julie)

Obviously the big baggy things and the Lycra numbers. (Susan)

Body improvement products

The instructors described many products sold at their fitness centre that related to body improvement. These included sports performance drinks and various supplements. The supplements included protein powders that claimed to build muscle and fat burner supplements that claimed to decrease body fat. Some women were sceptical about the reliability of the supplements.

Pepsi Max and Diet Solo which I sell them. Pepsi Max, they are all addicted at the gym. Gatorades and Lucozades, most gyms sell those. (Natasha)

They sell fat burners and (other supplements to) build yourself up but they are usually for the guys who want to build up their muscles. All sorts of powders and potions. (Storm)

Some of them might sell like protein powders or ... whatever the body supplement of the moment is. (Susan)

A lot of the gyms also have a café. A lot of those powders, skimmed milk and a bit of flavouring thrown in. You could easily do that at home but it is the image. If they think "this is going to burn off my fat" or "this is going to make my muscles bigger" and "because I have bought it from the gym, it has got to be good, and it has got to work". (Storm)

Advertising body improvement

Fitness centres advertised using various methods such as radio, fliers, tele-marketing and newspaper advertisements. The women described the images and advertising captions used by their fitness centre to entice new members to join. The

descriptions focused on body improvement while the images focused on fit bodies exercising.

[An example of an advertisement at my gym was] the summer one ... 'get your body in shape for summer and everybody is at...' [fitness centre] ... and everything was on body. (Julie)

[the pictures in the advertisements at my gym are] are female, [with a] good body. They may have photos of people exercising and ...they will always use a model person. (Olive)

[They say] "you too could look gorgeous" and "come to this gym and see all these people wandering around see how fit they are, you too could be like that". (Storm)

Advertising extra services

The women stated that their fitness centres also advertised additional services to entice members to join. These included the various facilities, cheap prices, social atmosphere and friendly staff.

I think [they advertise] the facilities they offer. (Superwoman)

One of the ads had two of the members that are just really nice fit girls that come to all of the classes. [They advertise] friendly staff, ... crèche, ... great classes, and a [good] atmosphere. (Natasha)

Summary of the influence of management practices on body perception

Some of the women believed that it was advantageous to be slim when applying for an instructing position. The women felt that their employers wanted an instructor with a slim body shape. One instructor was refused work due to her larger body shape. Some of the women stated that their employers made it compulsory for them to wear uniforms when teaching classes. The uniforms were tight Lycra type material. Wearing this type of clothing did not appear to concern the women as they felt that tight clothing was necessary to show the proper techniques during class. Some women initially felt self-conscious about their bodies when they started work as an instructor, but accepted their attire. One instructor was flattered when male

participants commented on her brief clothing, and women envied her body shape in types of exercise clothing. These practices and responses appear to reinforce the requirement for a slim appearance when working as an aerobics instructor.

Not surprisingly, fitness centres sold many different types of products that related to the body appearance or to the improvement of the body. The clothing sold was either tight clothing that revealed the body shape or baggy clothing that concealed the body. By providing both tight and baggy clothing, the fitness centres appeared to accommodate those who wished to display or hide their bodies.

The energy drinks and supplements sold related to the improvement of the body shape for instance the improvement of endurance, powders to burn fat and to build muscle. The supplements appeared to be aimed at both genders. Fat burner supplements appeared to appeal to female clients while protein (muscle building) powders appeared to appeal to males. The presence of these types of products assumed that losing fat and building muscle were important goals to pursue.

Advertising also focussed on the improvement of the body and made appeals to readers to lose weight and get fit. Pictures of attractive slim people were used in advertising in an effort to inspire new members. Other methods of advertising were also used, such as pictures of 'regular' members of the fitness centre, and information about facilities and other services.

It appears that management placed a strong emphasis on the appearance of the body, rather than health. There were many products used by management of fitness centres to achieve this.

The instructors and their bodies are one of their products, and "packaged" with compulsory tight uniforms at some fitness centres. The instructors accepted wearing this type of clothing, although they did not always feel comfortable wearing it. The other products sold at fitness centres contributed to an environment that focused on body appearance and its improvement. The management practices also appeared to create an environment of a culture that valued appearance above all. The employers, who implement these management practices are discussed next and their influence examined.

The influence of employers

The main issue for this theme was body image and how instructors are affected by their employer's attitudes and practices. Apart from skills and qualifications, instructors perceived that fitness centre employers preferred their instructors and other staff to portray an image of an attractive, fit, slim body. Instructors reported that obtaining work was easier if they presented this image.

The employers are looking for reliable instructor. They probably do look at the body image, how they look. (Storm)

I think that [appearance has] a bit of an impact. If you look good of course [the employers] are going to look at you stronger than if you are not looking right. (Natasha)

[Employers want instructors who are]... young with all the bits tucked in properly. I suppose it's the image that for eons people have been striving for - the muscly, athletic, fit looking body and you can't have a roll of extra skin hanging over shorts, or you can't be rounded, or you know if you haven't got boobs. (Olive)

[Employers] usually have people in the front line who are attractive, even the receptionists. (Storm)

One instructor was refused work because she did not fit an image of a slim body shape that the employer wanted. Although she was angry and offended, Julie also felt the comments were justified as she felt she was not slim at the time, and therefore did not fit the image that the employer wanted:

While I was angry and I was hurt, I still felt that some of it was justified too, because I knew that I didn't look as I felt an instructor should look. (Julie)

One instructor reported that her employer regularly made comments about the image of his instructors. Interestingly, Olive (whose position is to recruit instructors) stated that her male employer made comments about the body shape of potential and current employees, stating that they looked overweight or in good shape. Comments, however did not go back to the instructors.

Comments don't go back, or as far as I know don't go back to the instructor. They are always kind of sideways, covert type of comments. As far as I know, they never go back to the instructor. (Olive)

Summary of the influence of employers on body perception

Employers' attitudes and practices affected the body image perceptions of the instructors. It appears that the women believed that their employers wanted female instructors who fitted a particular body image that was fit, slim, and attractive, with some muscle definition. While these criteria were rarely openly stated by employers, there appeared to be an undercurrent of innuendo about the required slim body shape and suitable attractive appearance of aerobics instructors. This was maintained by employers and also reflected in comments from participants, both male and female. The women felt that they had a better chance of obtaining work if they fulfilled this image.

The influence of participants on body perception

The reported responses of participants to instructors body presentation suggested that they have a strong influence on the female instructors. The instructors have already indicated that on occasion they 'dress' for the class. As instructing has elements of performance for an audience (the class participants) then a response to the appearance and behaviour of the instructors could be expected.

Several issues arose during the interviews that related to the influence of participants on body perception.

Question:	Tell me about the classes you teach
Prompts:	What do you think participants want in an instructor?
Content of theme:	A slim role model and judgment of instructor's bodies.

Slim role model

The women believed that participants wanted to see a female instructor who had a slim, firm body. They stated that participants thought of instructors as role

models for not only a slim body, but also a role model of health who did not engage in habits such as smoking.

Participants want to be able to look up to you and look at you and think "I want to be like that". I don't think they want to look up there and go "oh damn", you know they don't want to look up and go "oh wobbling all over the joint", oh dear, I think always you want something to aspire to. (Julie)

I do get [complimentary] comments [about my slim body shape] and I think that's kind of sad because that means a lot of people are always aspiring to be like that, to be like that [slim] person. (Olive)

If I walked in [to teach a class]... not looking as I do they would notice. The same thing if I was at a social function and they saw me smoking or something like that, ...if they ever saw me doing that I am sure it would shock them to the core. (Olive)

Judgment of instructor's bodies

The women felt that participants were critical of the bodies of the instructors. They felt that the participants judged their body shapes, making private criticisms of the amount of body fat they had, or the size of their breasts. Susan observed that judgments occur as soon as participants saw the instructor, whether the instructor liked it or not.

...they are just looking at you the whole time and they are probably saying "oh yeah they could lose a few pounds" or "they could put on some weight" or "gee their muscles are big" or "I know a couple of instructors [that] have had their boobs done, gee I must have boobs like that". (Storm)

I mean people judge you by their first impressions and the way they see you with their eyes is their first impression, whether you like it or not really. (Susan)

Summary of the influence on participants on body perception

Participants influenced the body perception of the female instructors. The women felt that the participants expected them to have a physical appearance that

modelled health and fitness, in particular a slim body shape. The women also felt that participants judged and criticized the bodies of the instructors.

The instructors reported workplace pressures either directly or indirectly from both their employers and the participants in their classes. These pressures related to their body shape, to their general appearance and style of clothing worn when instructing. Their behaviour was also under scrutiny as role models for health and fitness. As this behaviour and the responses to it occur in a particular environment of the fitness centre, the influences within the physical setting were examined.

Physical influences from workplace on body perception

The physical setting of the workplace excludes the structure of the building and focuses on the décor (pictures and mirrors).

Question: What sort of posters or pictures are on the walls of your fitness centre?

What sort of signs are used to motivate people in your fitness centres?

Content of theme: Pictures of attractive, slim bodies, inspirational signs, sexual pictures and unrealistic pictures.

Pictures of attractive, slim bodies

The women described the pictures that were displayed on the walls of their fitness centres as generally depicting attractive people with slim body shapes. There were more women than men portrayed in the pictures, and clothing was described as skimpy and tight aerobics wear. Some pictures were of torsos only, with no heads, while others were described as having nice body shapes, but not overly muscular:

... there are a couple of big block mounted pictures of bodies, they don't even have heads, there's a male one and a female one and both them are very posed, with weights ...the female one has one of those horrible G-string, you know, like leotard over the tights, absolutely awful. (Julie)

They have got nice shapes. Definitely aesthetically pleasing, they look great, but not incredibly muscular, just really nice bodies and very pretty girls. (Natasha)

Inspirational signs

Other pictures and signs on the walls of the fitness centres were described as inspirational and motivational, with captions that invited viewers to work towards their goals in life and to succeed:

Things like "reach for the stars and you'll hit the moon" or "aim higher in your life", "go where you didn't think you could" and "just strive for what is good". (Olive)

At the moment not much. We have got a little board that one of the personal trainers [places] little motivational sayings every week. (Julie)

Some gyms have the motivational sayings with the waterfall pictures. (Susan)

Sexual pictures

Some pictures of women were also described as having a sexual emphasis depicting the women either nude or in their underwear. Two instructors compared some pictures as similar to pornographic pictures. Their comments revealed negative feelings about this type of depiction of the female body. The women felt these pictures were there to please the male members:

[Some gyms] have the semi pornographic nude photos. (Susan)

Let's face it if there is testosterone around then they want to see nice female bodies. I think it's as simple as that. (Olive)

[The pictures] had the chicks in their bras and stuff draped around, not like porno shops or anything. They probably had a weight set in the background, it was a kind of dodgy men's kind of thing. (Superwoman)

Unrealistic pictures

The women felt that some of the pictures of people were unrealistic as they did not depict normal body shapes nor represented the members at the fitness centres. They believed that some participants could look at these pictures and feel inadequate, as though they could never achieve the slim body shapes that were depicted on the walls.

They don't [depict the people who come to the gym]. They are so far away from that it is ridiculous. (Olive)

I don't think there are really too many members up there who are anywhere near that lean [as those in the pictures]. (Julie)

[Some participants] have [the] idea that they can look like that and then they probably get congested there for a while when they realise it is an unrealistic goal. (Storm)

I would imagine it would probably demotivate some people too. They look up and go "oh my god I am never going to get there, ok I am going home now". (Julie)

One instructor felt that the pictures at her fitness centre were unrealistic and voiced her concerns to her aerobics coordinator. While the (female) coordinator agreed with the instructor, no action was taken to remove the pictures.

Well I mean there is not a lot you can do [about the pictures] if management is just that way inclined. (Storm)

Summary of physical influences from workplace on body perception

Pictures on the walls depicted male and female bodies that were attractive and slim. Some pictures were seen to have a sexual, even pornographic emphasis. The women felt that many of the pictures were unrealistic, in that they did not depict normal body shapes. However, they appeared to accept them as a feature of the décor of their workplace. One instructor, who voiced her concern over the unrealistic pictures, found her complaint futile as it was the management's decision hang pictures on the walls. Apart from the pictures of bodies, some fitness centres had signs with inspirational captions.

Themes, their content and development of the questions in questionnaire

There were several main themes that arose from the interviews. Each theme and its content were used in the development of questions in the questionnaire. Table 4 shows an example of this process. In this case, the theme of body perception has five items of content. The questions were devised from the content. The remaining themes, content and questions are shown in Appendix D.

Table 4

Themes and content from interviews showing development of questions in questionnaire.

Theme	Content	Question(s) and statements
Body perception	Satisfaction with body shape	<i>How do you feel about your body shape?</i>
		I am satisfied with the way my body looks
	Body weight	I am naturally lean
		I feel better when I weigh less
	Changing some body parts	<i>What would you change about your body shape?</i>
		I need to lose weight
	Ideal body shape for instructors	I believe a female group fitness instructor should look athletic
		Female group fitness instructors don't have to be lean
		I believe that female group fitness instructors can be any shape or size
		As an instructor, I feel pressure to be have a lean body
		I feel that an overweight female group fitness instructor doesn't look right
		I believe that female group fitness instructors are role models of health and fitness:
Fitness of instructors		Describe any expectations that you feel are placed upon you to maintain a lean body shape as an instructor
		I feel that a female group fitness instructor should be fit enough to teach classes

Summary of results of interviews with six female instructors

This chapter reported the results of the interviews with the six female instructors. There were six themes that emerged from the interviews, and each theme had its own content. The first theme was body perception. The content of this theme was: satisfaction with body shape; body weight; changing some body parts, ideal body shape for aerobics instructors and fitness of instructors. The women stated that they were generally satisfied with their body shape, and it appeared that their satisfaction was linked to body weight. They reported that they were happier with their bodies when they weighed less. Even though the women reported that they were satisfied, they wished they could lose weight or change certain body parts. The women described the ideal female instructor as one who was athletic and toned.

The second theme was exercise and nutrition regime. The content of this theme was: eat anything without gaining weight; choosing low fat foods, and exercise routines. The women varied in their responses. Some stated they could eat whatever they wished without gaining weight, while others chose low fat foods to either lose weight or have extra energy for teaching classes. Exercise routines also varied. Some used their classes as their exercise while others sought extra exercise in addition to their classes. They pursued extra exercise to lose weight, or to gain strength to recover from an injury. They stated that they liked to maintain their body shape and weight for their own satisfaction, as well as the expectations that came with their position as an instructor.

The third theme was the influence of management practices at the fitness centres on their body perception. The content included recruitment practices, uniforms and other clothing, and marketing practices. The women believed that it was beneficial to have a slim body shape when applying for an instructing position. Once instructors were recruited, some of the women stated that they had to wear compulsory uniforms, which were described as tight Lycra clothing. Although wearing this clothing did not appear to worry the women, some felt that it was difficult to accept when they started work as an instructor. Some of the women felt self-conscious about their body shapes in Lycra clothing when they first started instructing. It appeared that brief tight clothing attracted comments from participants

that the women accepted as complimentary. Such comments served to reinforce the emphasis on the slim, fit body.

The management practices also included marketing methods of the products sold and the advertising. Most of the products sold at the fitness centres were reported to be related to the appearance and improvement of the body shape, for example protein powders to build muscle, and fat burners to lose fat. Advertising mainly focussed on slim ideal body shapes, as an outcome or benefit of the exercise.

The fourth theme was the influence of employers. The women believed that employers wanted them to portray an image that was described as being fit, attractive, and slim, with some muscle definition.

The fifth theme was the influence of participants. The women felt that participants expected them to have a slim body shape and they also felt that participants judged their body shapes. To fulfil this expectation, instructors worked on their body shape by extra exercise on top of their classes, and ate healthily.

The sixth theme was influences from the physical setting, or the workplace of the instructor. Several issues arose from this theme. Pictures that hung on the walls of fitness centres were of slim body shapes that did not depict normal body shapes and were unrealistic. Some pictures had sexual themes. Signs had inspirational captions to inspire the viewers. It appeared that the women were not greatly influenced to emulate the pictures on the walls. Some were offended by the unrealistic, sexual, even pornographic nature of some pictures. They felt they had little influence to change the type of images displayed. The major influences on the women are their employers and the participants.

The next chapter reports results of the survey. The questions in the survey were derived from the themes and content from this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF SURVEY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the workplace influences on body perception issues of female group fitness instructors. This exploration gathered perceptions held by female group fitness instructors of their work settings.

The discussion of the responses to the questionnaire does not follow the sequence of the questionnaire. Responses are grouped in a logical sequence for readability. This chapter presents characteristics of the instructors, followed by a discussion of body perception issues. The influence of management practices and employers on the body perception of female instructors is reported, followed by the physical environment influences of the workplace setting (the décor). The quantitative data from the questionnaires are presented in raw scores, percentages and standard deviations. The qualitative responses to open questions were analysed by theme and content. The quotations are used to support the discussion of themes and content of responses to open ended questions. Each respondent is identified only by a number, age and experience as a group fitness instructor, to give a personal perspective to otherwise anonymous respondents.

Two hundred and nine questionnaires were sent to 26 fitness centres in and surrounding Perth, Western Australia. There were 68 responses, a response rate of 32.5 per cent. The response rate was probably higher, as instructors reported that they worked at two or more fitness centres. It is suggested that the response rate, therefore, could be closer to 65 percent.

Personal profile of the instructors

Introduction

This section presents characteristics of the instructors who responded to the questionnaire. This includes their age, their qualifications, their training provider, years as an aerobics instructor, the number of classes taught each week, the hours of exercise (not including classes) they did each week and the number of fitness centres at which they worked.

Age

Figure 3 shows the ages of the sixty eight instructors in this study. The majority (45%) of the women instructors were aged between thirty to thirty-nine, followed by 24 percent who were aged twenty to twenty-nine, then 22 percent aged between forty to forty-nine. It is interesting to note that 67 percent of instructors were aged between 30 to 49. In the upper and lower age ranges, a small number of instructors (3%) were aged under twenty, while 4 percent were aged over fifty. Instructors aged over 40s comprised more than a quarter of these female aerobic instructors. One instructor did not state her age. The mean age was 35 years.

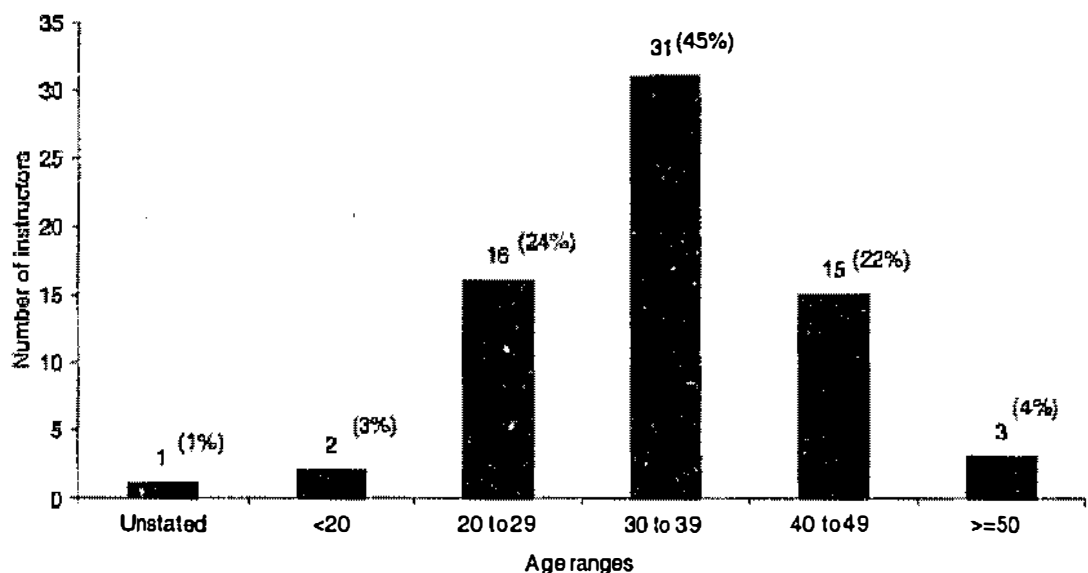


Figure 3. Ages of the female instructors in ranges.

Qualifications

The sixty-eight instructors reported they had collectively 171 qualifications, which suggests approximately 2.5 qualifications per instructor. Many of the instructors had multiple qualifications for accreditation (eg exercise to music, technical and further education, aqua), academic qualifications (Undergraduate and Postgraduate) and specialised courses (Les Mills courses). Figure 4 shows the majority of qualifications (35%) was in exercise to music (ETM), followed by Les Mills qualifications (LM Inst) at 30 percent. Twenty-two percent of qualifications were in aqua instruction. It is not surprising that ETM and aqua instruction ranked highly as they are qualifications for accreditation. It is also not surprising that LM qualifications ranked highly, as LM pre-choreographed classes are popular in many fitness centres, therefore many instructors would need these qualifications to teach these classes. Eight percent of qualifications were at undergraduate tertiary level, while two percent were at postgraduate level. In the 'other' category, twelve percent of the listed qualifications included gym instructor, personal training, dance teacher, Tae Kwon Do instructor, gym coach, swimming coach, boxing instructor, fat loss leader and TAFE Health and Fitness certificate.

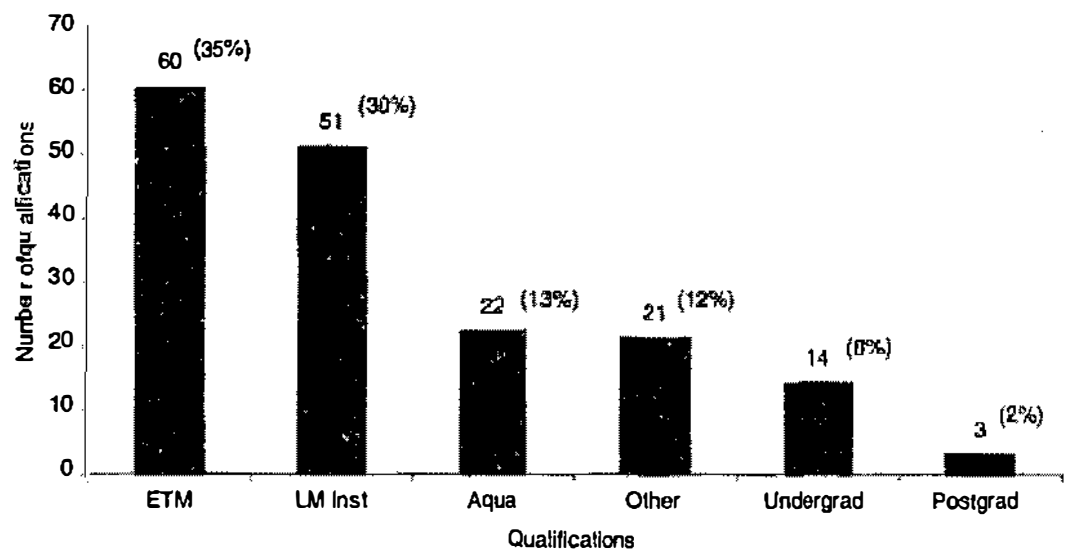


Figure 4. Qualification of Western Australian female group fitness instructors

Training providers

There were seventy-eight responses to the question in relation to training providers, at which instructors gained their fitness industry training and qualifications. Of the seventy-eight, the Australian Institute of Fitness (AIF) was the highest training (private) provider (38%). The second highest training provider was private aerobic academies (such as Colleen Kluwen’s Aerobics Academy) at 24 percent. It is interesting to note that the highest number of responses (AIF and Colleen Kluwen’s Aerobics Academy) related to private aerobic organizations. This suggests that instructors pursue these courses as they are relevant for accreditation. Technical and Further Education (TAFE) followed at 17 percent, and Network for Fitness Professionals (fitness leader organization) at 2.5 percent. In the ‘other’ category, 18 percent of responses were as listed YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association), personal study, Les Mills, Fitness NSW, VicFit (Victoria Fitness), and University (Figure 5).

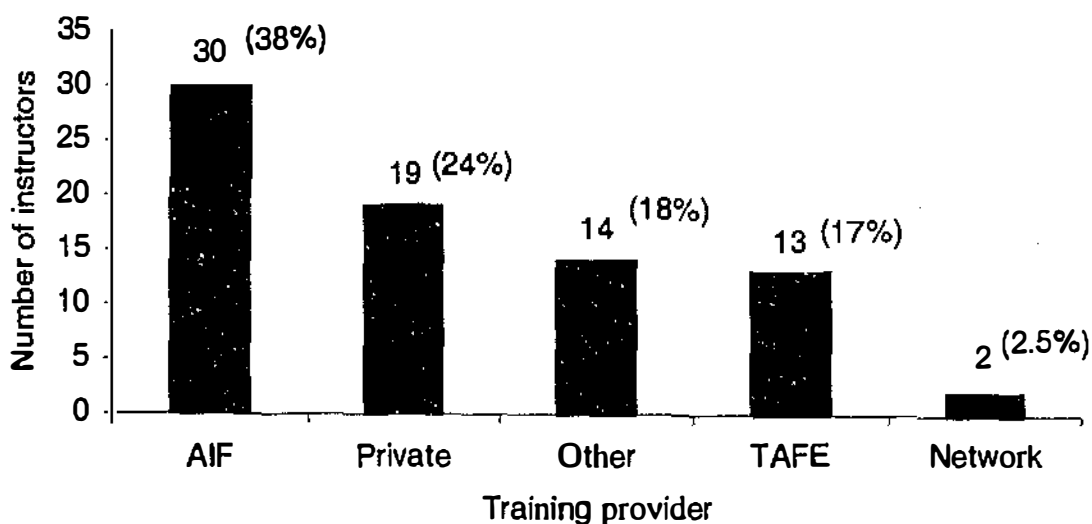


Figure 5. Training Providers at which instructors obtained their qualifications.

Years as an aerobics instructor

Figure 6 shows the years of experience the sixty eight instructors have in the fitness industry. Twenty six percent of instructors had been in the industry for five to nine years, followed by 20 percent who had been in the industry for 10 to 14 years. Grouped together, almost half of the instructors (46%) had been in the fitness industry between 5 to 14 years. It is interesting to note the longevity of instructors in the fitness industry, with 18 percent of instructors in the industry for more than 15 years. Twelve percent of instructors had been in the industry for less than five years while twelve percent did not respond. The mean years of experience was 9.6 years.

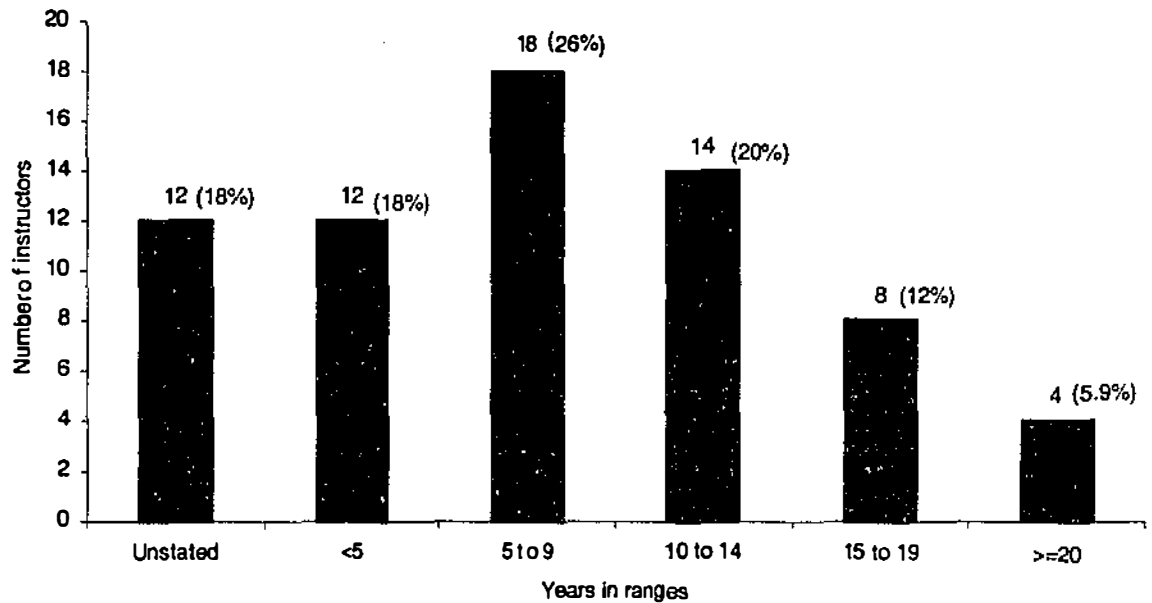


Figure 6. Years of experience as group fitness instructors.

Number of classes taught each week

The number of classes taught each week was dependant on the number of permanent classes and cover classes (where they covered a class for an unavailable instructor). The majority of instructors (38%) taught five to nine fitness classes a week, followed by 29 percent who taught less than five classes per week. There were 23 percent of instructors who taught between 10 to 14 classes per week. There are, therefore 90% of instructors who teach between 1 and 14 classes per week, or less than 2 classes per day on average. A small percentage of instructors taught fifteen to nineteen classes (2%), and over twenty classes per week (2%). The mean number of classes was 7.6 (Figure 7)

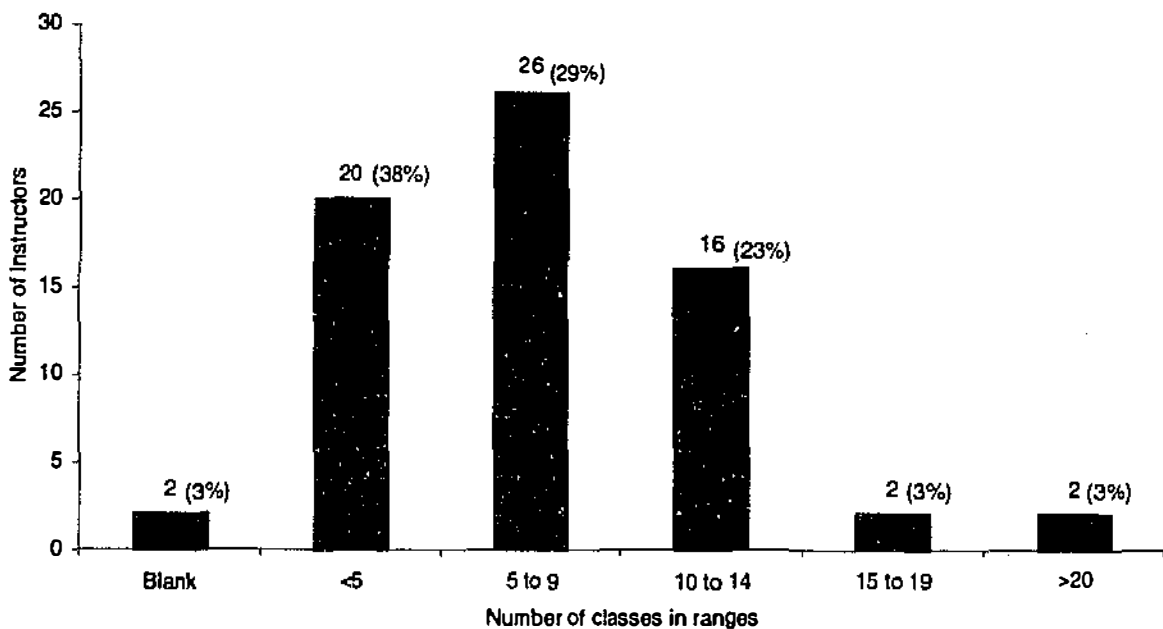


Figure 7. The number of classes group fitness instructors taught each week.

Hours of exercise each week (not including classes taught)

Figure 8 shows the amount of exercise instructors did, outside of the classes they taught. Forty-one percent of instructors did one to five additional hours of exercise each week, while twenty six percent did six to nine additional hours. Fifteen percent of instructors did more than 10 hours of exercise, while sixteen percent did no additional exercise outside their instruction. Overall, instructors averaged about 6-7 hours (or 360-420 minutes) per week in exercise outside the classes they taught. This is an interesting when considering the Australian recommended level of physical activity per week is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, or 60 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week (Bull, Milligan, Rosenberg & MacGowan, 2000, p.4). This response indicates that instructors did over 200 percent of the recommended state guidelines for exercise per week, in addition to the classes they taught.

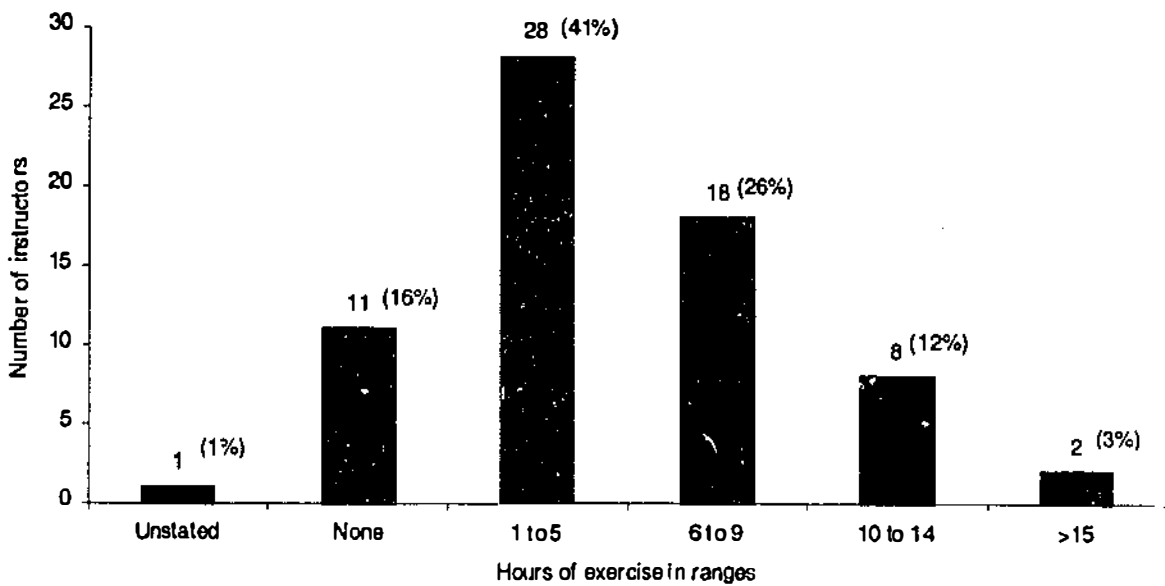


Figure 8. The hours of exercise per week, in addition to classes taught.

Number of fitness centres worked

Instructors reported the number of fitness centres at which they worked. There were 44 percent of instructors who reported that they worked at 1 to 2 fitness centres. There were 29% of instructors who worked at 1 fitness centre only. Over half of the instructors (51%) of instructors stated they worked at 3 to 6 fitness centres. A small number of instructors (4%) worked at 7 or more fitness centres. The number of fitness centres worked is not surprising as instructors generally only taught 1 or 2 classes each time they attended their fitness centre, therefore an instructor had to work at various centres to earn a living (Figure 9).

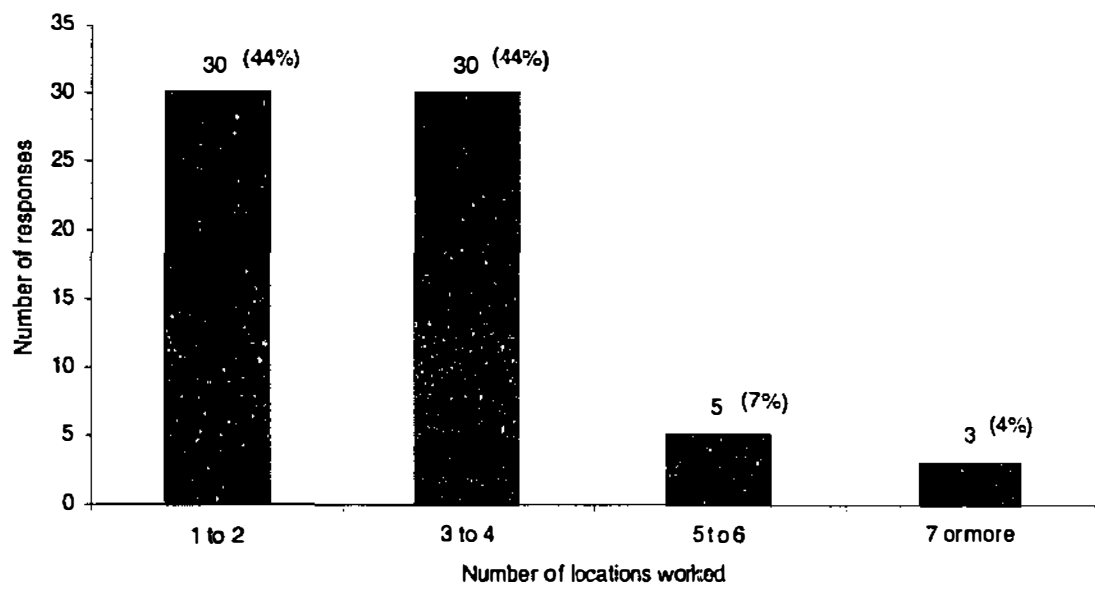


Figure 9. The number of locations worked for group fitness instructors.

Summary of characteristics of the instructors

The data reveal several characteristics of the women who completed the questionnaire. The data indicate that older women (M=35 years) were employed as group fitness instructors and they enjoyed a longevity in the fitness industry, with a mean of 9.6 years experience. This indicates that they started working as an aerobics instructor in the early 1990s. They taught on average, 7.6 classes per week and did 6-7

hours of exercise per week, in addition to their teaching. The extra exercise they did was over 200 percent of the Australian recommended guidelines for exercise. They had multiple fitness qualifications, and were mainly trained for accreditation by the Australian Institute of Fitness or for a specialist course by Les Mills Australia. Finally, three quarters of instructors worked at more than two fitness centres. With their longevity and scope of experience across a range of class types and centres, the instructors were well placed to contribute to this study. The next section reports on the body perception issues of the instructors involved in this study.

Body perception issues

Introduction

In this section, instructors reported their body shape perceptions indicating their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their body shape. In addition, they reflected the influences on their body shape and how these influences make them feel. The quantitative data is presented in tables, highlighting the mean and standard deviation for each statement. The open-ended questions are presented by themes and content, using quotes as examples.

Perceptions of body shape

Table 5 shows the responses to the body perception statements (1: I am naturally lean; 4: As an instructor I have pressure to have a lean body; and 6: I watch what I eat to maintain my body shape as an instructor) were generally neutral (between 2.5 and 3.5 on the Likert-type scale). These instructors appeared to be generally satisfied with their body shape ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.1$) and believed they did not need to lose weight ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 1.35$) and feel better when they weighed less ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.21$). The high standard deviations suggest a wide range of responses on these aspects of body perception. While the women are satisfied with their appearance they also feel better when they lose weight and believe they need to lose weight.

Table 5
Body Perception Statements

Statements from Section 1 in Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Perception of body shape							
1. I am naturally lean (Q.18 in questionnaire)	15	15	15	14	9	2.8	1.35
2. I feel better when I weigh less (Q.7)	4	7	15	18	24	3.8	1.21
3. I am satisfied with the way my body looks (Q.9)	4	7	16	28	13	3.6	1.10
4. As an instructor, I feel pressure to be have a lean body(Q.11)	11	7	21	19	10	3.1	1.27
5. I need to lose weight (Q.12)	28	16	11	6	7	2.2	1.35
6. I watch what I eat to maintain my body shape as an instructor (Q.14)	9	9	17	24	9	3.2	1.23

The ideal instructor

The women were more in agreement with the statements about the ideal group fitness instructor, especially 7, 8 and 10. They believe that fitness to teach is more important than looking athletic - although both of these statements were ranked highly, (looking athletic: M = 3.9, SD = 0.97); being fit to teach M = 4.8, SD = .58). While they agreed that instructors did not have to be lean and could be any shape (M = 3.4, SD = 1.19), the women also agreed that overweight instructors did not look right (M = 2.7, SD = 1.15). The relatively high standard deviations for questions 9,11 and 12 also suggest a wide range of responses on these issues, showing different responses (Table 6).

Table 6
Perception of Body Shape – Ideal Instructor

Statements from Section 1 in Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
The ideal instructor							
7. I believe a female group fitness instructor should look athletic (Q. 1)	2	2	16	27	20	3.9	0.97
8. I feel that a female group fitness instructor should be fit enough to teach classes (Q.2)	1	-	-	9	57	4.8	0.58
9 ^a . Female group fitness instructors do have to be lean (Q.3)	22	16	22	4	4	2.3	1.16
10. I believe that female group fitness instructors are role models of health and fitness (Q.4)	2	-	7	19	39	4.4	0.90
11. I believe that female group fitness instructors can be any shape or size (Q.10)	4	11	21	16	16	3.4	1.19
12 ^b . I feel that an overweight female group fitness instructor does look right (Q.17)	11	19	22	11	5	2.7	1.15

Note. 1 on the scale denotes strongly disagreed; 5 denotes strongly agreed. A dash indicates no data was obtained. Statements ^a and ^b were originally negatively worded in the questionnaire, for example ^a was originally ‘I feel that an overweight female group fitness instructor doesn’t look right’. For the purpose of analysis, the question was phrased positively, and the scores were reversed.

Body shape perceptions

The women were asked questions that related to their body shape perception, including: *How do you feel about your body shape?* and *What would you change about your body shape?* The women expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their body shapes. Of those who were satisfied, their satisfaction was linked to their acceptance of their body shape as they grew older and had children. Dissatisfaction with body shape tended to be linked with an increase of body weight

or body fat. The women also stated they would change their body if they could, by losing weight or changing body parts such as their breasts or thighs.

Satisfaction with acceptance

On the positive side, the women stated they were satisfied with their body shapes. They accepted their body shape and felt at ease with their body shape. Acceptance was also linked to getting older, having children and the experience of life.

I feel at ease with my body shape. I accept it for what I put into it. (Instructor 12, aged 23, instructor for 1 yr)

I feel good about the person I am, therefore my body shape is embraced. (Instructor 28, aged 27, instructor for 2 yrs)

I have had 2 children and am in my mid thirties so I am fairly happy with my body. (Instructor 41, aged 35, instructor for 6 yrs)

Ok, not lean but have muscle definition [in my] legs, arms [and] shoulders. Abs could be better - but 3 kids and 55 years old. I feel ok about that. (Instructor 59, aged 55, instructor for 16 yrs)

At 37, 4 children, many moves around the country and overseas, divorce relocation, I am very happy where I am. My body has served me well and now I cherish it like a temple. My view now is if you don't like it go some place else. Years and experience have mellowed me and my view of myself. (Instructor 54, aged 37, instructor for 16 yrs)

Dissatisfaction

Some women were dissatisfied with their body shapes. The women stated they were dissatisfied when they increased their body weight or body fat. Happiness with body shape was mentioned by the women in relation to losing or gaining weight. Losing weight increased a general feeling of happiness, while increasing weight had the opposite affect with the women reporting that they felt unhappy about any weight gain.

Never happy-always those couple of kilos to lose. (Instructor 21, aged 29, instructor for 11 yrs)

Mostly happy, depending on weight fluctuation. (Instructor 24, aged 28, instructor for 9 yrs)

I am reasonably happy with my body shape. However I was more happy when I was leaner due to the fact that my cellulite disappeared and my muscles seemed more defined. (Instructor 27, aged 38, instructor for 15 yrs)

Changing body

Some of the women wished they could change their body. This included a desire to lose body weight or body fat. In addition to losing weight, they wished they could improve the lower half of their body. They desired a smaller, firmer bottom, longer, leaner legs and a flatter abdominal area. Some women wanted to increase their breast size. Various other comments were made about changes the women would like to make to other parts of their bodies including: more muscles, bigger upper body, a more defined waist, taller, fewer stretch marks around the abdomen and smaller ears. Ten instructors mentioned they did not wish to change any part of their body shape. It was interesting to note that although there were many women who stated they were satisfied with their body shape, they still wanted to change certain body parts.

Excess body fat gone. (Instructor 1, aged 37, instructor for 13 yrs)

Longer, leaner legs, smaller, firmer butt, leaner all over. (Instructor 5, aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

If I could change anything, I would like to lean up my stomach. (Instructor 14, aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Bigger boobs please. (Instructor 33, aged 38, instructor for 6 yrs)

Influences on body perception

Instructors were asked to rank the three most important influences in their life on their body perception where a ranking of 1 indicated the most important influence; 2 indicated second most important influence; and 3 the third influence). The most important influence on the women's body perception was their own mirror images. The second largest influence was the fitness industry in which they worked. The third

most important influence was the fashion industry. Partners received a similar score to the fashion industry. Television and family rated very low as influences, and employers had a zero response. It was interesting to note that the women rated the fitness industry highly as an influence on their body perception, but did not rank employers as an influence.

Peers (other instructors) and participants were ranked at 5th and 6th respectively. These data show two interesting points. The first is that the women’s feelings about their bodies are most strongly are influenced by their mirror image. The second is that these women believe the fitness industry, including the participants and their fellow instructors is a strong influence on the way they feel about their bodies, while employers were not rated as an important influence on their body perception (Table 7). Family and employers appeared to have little influence on body perception and are not discussed. A discussion of influences follows Table 7.

Table 7
Influences on Body Perception

Influence	Number of responses			Total	Rank
	1	2	3		
Mirror image	44	2	3	49	1
Fitness industry	11	20	16	47	2
Fashion industry	1	4	18	23	3
Partner	4	11	6	21	4
Peers (other instructors)	1	9	7	17	5
Participants	1	8	7	16	6
Television images	-	2	2	4	7
Family	-	3	1	4	8
Employer	-	-	-	-	9

Note. Dashes indicates no data was obtained.

Mirror image

The women described how their mirror image influenced their body perception. Mirrors were used for self-awareness of body shape. Mirrors were used as a tool to monitor the external image, and also as a motivation to improve the body shape. For some women, the mirror image made them feel disappointed about their body shape, making them worry, get upset and change their eating behaviour until they felt better about their mirror image.

I monitor how I look and feel about myself. (Instructor 14, aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Mirror image is the motivation to get the body I want. (Instructor 17, aged 26, instructor for 3 yrs)

It's the first thing I see in the morning. If it's not looking right I get upset. (Instructor 59, aged 55, instructor for 16 yrs)

If I look in the mirror and can see extra weight on, I focus on excluding 'junk' from my diet, no other changes. (Instructor 26, aged 41, experience not specified)

Sometimes seeing myself in the mirror worries me but I get over it pretty quickly. (Instructor 47, aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

Fitness industry

The women felt there was an expectation from the fitness industry for them to be a role model. They believed that being a fitness instructor meant they had to be fit, and have a lean body. The women also felt that being in the fitness industry motivated them to be healthy and eat only moderate amounts of food.

[I] feel I have need to maintain certain fitness and look to be a fitness instructor. (Instructor 61, aged 31, experience not specified)

Working in [the] fitness industry, I train really hard to maintain adequate physique. (Instructor 50, aged 21, instructor for 3.5 yrs)

Being a part of the fitness industry certainly motivates me to stay healthy and moderate my food intake. (Instructor 14, aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Fashion and television images

Fashion and television images are grouped together as fashion is often portrayed on television. The women reported how fashion and television images influenced their body perception. The women viewed the fashion industry negatively. Some women stated that they were sceptical about the fashion industry as they felt that the images of female bodies were unrealistic and unnatural. Others stated that looking at skinny models made them feel fat and have a poor image of their own bodies. One woman believed that some fashionable clothing did not suit her body shape, and this upset her.

TV feeds us fantasy. Fashion moulds clothes to an unrealistic body shape. (Instructor 28, aged 27, instructor for 2 yrs)

I choose not to expose myself to [the] fashion industry as it presents a totally unnatural look, not something I aspire to. (Instructor 9, aged 34, instructor for 11 yrs)

Pictures of women in the fashion industry are often downright skinny and even though I don't want to look like that it makes me feel hefty. (Instructor 27, aged 38, instructor for 15 yrs)

[I have a] negative image when I look in fitness and fashion magazines. (Instructor 19, aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

Sometimes you rise above all the media and other influences, and it doesn't have much affect. If you're feeling down and unhappy with your body then these influences enhance the negatives and makes you feel worse. (Instructor 8, aged 39, instructor for 8 yrs)

Fashion industry also influences. If [I] can't wear [a] particular item that is fashionable because it makes me feel 'fat', this can make me feel bad about my body image. (Instructor 24, aged 28, instructor for 9 yrs)

Partners

The women reported that their partners also influenced their body perception. Partners positively influenced the body perception of the women. Partners were positive about the women's body shape, giving compliments, being supportive and accepting. Two women stated that their partners assisted them to maintain a lean body shape by providing opinions about their body.

He likes to be uplifting and loves me no matter what! (Instructor 61, aged 31, experience not specified)

My partner has never made any criticism of my body shape, always complimentary. (Instructor 7, aged 45, instructor for 15 yrs)

My partner and family are very supportive of my lifestyle and accept me for the body shapes that I have been and currently am. (Instructor 12, aged 23, instructor for 1 yrs)

My partner helps me to deal with things I need to do and helps me achieve goals-very positive. (Instructor 17, aged 26, instructor for 3 yrs)

I monitor how I look and feel about myself and my partner will give me an honest opinion too. (Instructor 14, aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Peers

Other female instructors were an influence on body perception. The women compared their body shapes with other female instructors. Making comparisons with other leaner instructors made the women feel fat and inadequate.

In the fitness industry I'm constantly comparing myself with other instructors - most are leaner than me and it sometimes makes [me] feel of less value, but not often and not for long. (Instructor 27, aged 38, instructor for 15 yrs)

Peers - sometimes I feel fat compared to the other waifs. (Instructor 53, aged 36, instructor for 3 yrs)

I feel my body needs work on certain areas, as other instructors are looking better than myself. (Instructor 66, aged 18, experience not specified)

Participants

The women indicated their degree of agreement and disagreement to statements 6, 13, 16 and 19 in a Likert-type scale, shown in Table 8. The responses to these statements ranged from neutral responses to agreement. The women strongly believed that participants judged the bodies of the instructors ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.64$), and participants did not wish to see overweight instructors ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 0.94$). The women were generally neutral, but with varying levels of agreement when asked if participants respected them more if they had lean bodies ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.12$). The women also had varying levels of agreement when asked if they believed that participants wanted bodies like the instructors ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.08$). These data indicates that the women believe that participants judge their bodies and prefer to have lean instructors.

Table 8
Influence Of Participants On Body Perception

Statements from Section 1 in Questionnaire	Neutral Disagree		Strongly Agree				M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5			
1. I believe that female participants want to have bodies like the female group fitness instructors (Q.6 in questionnaire)	4	5	17	28	14	3.6	1.08	
2. I believe participants do like seeing overweight female group fitness instructors (Q.13)	11	25	26	4	2	2.4	0.94	
3. I believe that participants judge the bodies of female group fitness instructors (Q.16)	-	-	8	37	23	4.2	0.64	
4. I believe participants respect you more if you are lean (Q.19)	9	11	26	17	5	3.0	1.12	

Note. 1 on the scale denotes strongly disagreed; 5 denotes strongly agreed. Dashes indicate no data was obtained.

When asked to describe how participants influenced their body perception, the women stated that they needed to provide an image of a body to which participants could aspire. This image was a fit and toned body. Some women stated that participants were often envious of their instructors' body shapes and informed them that they wanted to have bodies like them. The women felt that the participants had an expectation for the instructors to maintain a look of fitness and leanness.

[Participants] always comment, and want to look like me, body shape wise. (Instructor 59, aged 55, instructor for 16 yrs)

I want to look as fit and toned as I can when I am on stage, so the participants have something to aspire to. (Instructor 41, aged 35, instructor for 6 yrs)

I feel that as an instructor both the participants and other instructors expect you to look fit and lean always. (Instructor 22, aged 30, instructor for 2 yrs).

Summary of body perception issues

This section reported body perception issues of the female group fitness instructors. Results indicated that the women were generally satisfied with their body shapes and stated they did not wish to lose weight. The women appeared to more accepting of their body shapes as they became older and had children. It was interesting to note that although many women stated they were satisfied, many stated they wished they could change their body shapes by losing weight or changing certain body parts they were not satisfied with.

The women ranked mirror image, the fitness and fashion industries as the most important influences of their body perception. The fitness industry ranked the second highest influence, however the influence of employers was not rated. Participants and other instructors, were rated as moderate influences of body perception. While on face value, the lack of a rating (based on a top three ranking system) for employers may suggest no influence, there may be other factors contributing to this response. As the women are part time employees, they may not have much contact with their employer. They may deal mostly through coordinators who arrange staffing. Therefore, employers may be distant figures, whose influence is indirect, through other staff and

through the policies and practices they instigate. However, in a later section the instructors identified some direct exchanges about body shape and weight exchanges with their employers. The next section deals with the influence of management practices on the body perception of female group fitness instructors.

The influence of management practices on body perception

Introduction

One major area of interest in this study was the management practices in the fitness centres and their influence on the body perception of female instructors. Management practices may indirectly or directly promote ideal body shapes in various ways, for example through recruitment of instructors, compulsory uniforms, and marketing practices such as advertising and products and services at the fitness centre. The first section deals with the recruitment of instructors.

Recruitment of instructors

Two major views were revealed – body shape and appearance is not important at some fitness centres, and very important at others. These are described below.

Body shape and appearance not important

The women were asked: *What recruitment practices are you aware of that specify a particular body shape to be employed as a group fitness instructor?* A majority of the instructors stated that obtaining a position as a group fitness instructor did not require a particular body shape, and they were unaware of any recruitment practices that specified a particular body shape. Rather than body shape, they believed recruitment was based on adequate teaching skills, including motivational and communication skills, a good level of fitness and professionalism. The women stated that appearance was not important as instructors were frequently recruited without the employer seeing them. They were recruited by word of mouth or over the phone.

I have been in the fitness industry for 13 years I can't say that I have come across any [requirements for a particular body shape] at all. There are definitely none in our centre. (Instructor 37, aged 48, instructor for 13 yrs)

None that I'm aware of. (Instructor 34, aged 48, instructor for 9 yrs)

[The requirements are] to be professional, approachable and to look respectable. I've never had any employment place require a specific body shape as a recruitment practice to be an instructor. (Instructor 10, aged 31, experience not specified)

No body shape. It is fitness level and [being a] people person with good technique [and] good performance. Keeping clients happy-while keeping the exercise safe and encouraging - giving an over all body workout. (Instructor 64, aged 38, instructor for 1 yrs)

Never applied for a position as group fitness instructor - always through word of mouth. (Instructor 5, aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

I am mainly employed over the phone! (Instructor 53, aged 36, instructor for 3 yrs)

Body shape/Appearance important

A small number of the women believed that body shape and appearance was important to obtain a position as a group fitness instructor, and relayed their experiences. One woman told of her experience where one employer wanted a certain image for an instructor, although the employer did not specify the image. The instructor was told she did not fit the image, and so was denied a position. This suggests that image affects employment prospects. Another instructor stated that she had seen position vacant advertisements asking for well-presented instructors and requesting a photograph of the applicant. This photographic requirement suggests that appearance is important. One instructor believed that employers in job interviews did not believe she was capable of teaching a class due to her large build. Further, another instructor stated that her employer indirectly suggested she was employed for her physical appearance.

[Fitness centre], ten years ago, the owner at that time[said] that he was looking for a certain 'image' of instructor He indirectly [said] that myself and another instructor did not fit the image, although there was no direct criticism of weight or body shape. I was slim, the other instructor was not. (Instructor 7, Aged 45, instructor for 15 yrs)

The occasional job ad stating 'well presented' and 'fit' or asking to include a photo. (Instructor 19, aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

What I personally find is that in an interview process the employer doubts that as a large person you would be capable of conducting a particular class. (Instructor 54, aged 37, instructor for 16 yrs)

I had a humiliating experience when I only had 8 men in a circuit. It was in a country town and there happened to be a few social events on that night which a few of my participants went to. My boss yelled out during my class for all to hear in the centre "I knew a cute set of tits and ass wouldn't last long". (Survey 10, Aged 31, experience not specified)

Two instructors stated that they, or instructors they knew, were terminated from their employment due to their overweight body shape and age. One instructor was terminated with the reason as not being 'fit' enough, which was taken to mean that the employer thought that she was too fat. Another instructor was terminated as she was considered overweight and did not exhibit the characteristics of a role model. Another instructor was not employed as she was too old.

A past employer sacked me saying I wasn't 'fit' enough. I promptly started with a new gym who said I was a 'godsend'. I was always a larger girl but very fit. (Instructor 19, Aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

One instructor was sacked because she was considered overweight and not a good role model-however she was and is not overweight-its just the natural body shape and she is very fit! Another instructor was not given classes because she was considered too old, 50 plus. (Instructor 62, aged 39, instructor for 16 yrs)

The influence of uniforms and clothing on body perception

There were fifty percent of the women who stated that their employers required them to wear a uniform when teaching classes. The uniforms were described as both baggy clothes and tight fitting clothes. Wearing a uniform was perceived by the instructors as being professional in their employment. Of the women who were not required to wear uniforms by their employer, some chose to wear a uniform that promoted the class they were teaching for example if an instructor was teaching

BodyPump™, clothing with BodyPump™ logos were worn. The women who taught freestyle classes stated they had freedom to wear what they wanted.

When choosing clothing to wear in classes, the women said that they considered the temperature, and wore briefer clothing in hotter weather. They also wore briefer clothing if they felt satisfied about their body and were of a lower weight. Clothing was also chosen to suit the group the instructor was teaching, for example a t-shirt and bike pants were worn when teaching seniors or teenagers. Several women commented that they purposely chose clothing that was not revealing.

A large majority of the women stated they felt comfortable in the clothing they wore when teaching, although a small number stated that the tight fitting clothing made them feel self-conscious about their bodies.

A large number of instructors described their mode of dress when teaching as traditional aerobics wear: tight fitting clothing made of Lycra, including tights (leggings) of varying lengths, including hot pants (very short covering buttocks), ¾ tights, long and knee length. Crop tops that showed the abdomen were common, as well as longer tops that covered the abdomen (also made of Lycra). Other less fitted clothing such as shorts, t-shirts and singlets were also worn.

Description of fitness centre uniform

Fifty percent of the instructors were required to wear a uniform when teaching classes. The uniforms were described by the women as being both baggy clothes, such as singlet and shorts, as well as tighter clothing for example bike pants. The women felt the uniforms made them feel professional in their position.

Centre uniform. T-shirt, tracksuit pants and sports shoes. (Instructor 61, Aged 31, instructor for 6 months)

Company top or bike pants. (Instructor 57, Aged 36, instructor for 3 months)

I like to look the part in what I wear and choose my clothes carefully, like I would in any other job. (Instructor 60, Aged 42, instructor for 14 yrs)

I think you should wear uniform, it looks more professional. (Instructor 6, Aged 30, experience not specified)

It looks professional and gives a full statement about the program that I am teaching. I enjoy wearing the different uniforms and my clothing is very comfortable. (Instructor 55, Aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

Dependant on type of class

Instructors commented that clothing was chosen according to the type of class taught, for example Les Mills classes, freestyle classes or aqua aerobics classes. Les Mills franchised programs have a uniform for each of their different fitness classes. Instructors chose their clothing dependant on which Les Mills class they were instructing. Freestyle classes, however, allowed instructors freedom to choose their clothing:

I only instruct Les Mills programs now. So I wear uniform for each type of class. (Instructor 68, Aged 43, instructor for 17 yrs)

Pump- pump uniform, combat: combat uniform. (Instructor 4, Aged 29, instructor for 11 yrs)

I wear the Les Mills crop tops and black $\frac{3}{4}$ or full length tights when I teach a Les Mills program. If it is a freestyle aerobic class then I wear a pretty crop top full of colour and vibrance. I wear black Nike shoes and white socks. (Instructor 55, Aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

Freestyle: crop top or mid tops and shorts. (Instructor 2, Aged 31, instructor for 2 yrs)

The choice of clothing

The women's choice of clothing was dependant on several factors. Their choice was dependant on seasonal conditions, and briefer clothing was worn when the weather was hotter. In addition, the clothing was chosen according to how they felt about their body shape and weight on the day. If the women felt satisfied about their body shape and were of a lower weight, they tended to wear briefer clothing when teaching. If the women felt fat or had their period, they wore baggier clothing. Clothing, therefore appears to be influenced by and affects mood. The women also chose their clothing according to the type of group they were teaching, where they

covered their body more by wearing t-shirts when teaching groups such as seniors and teenagers. Several women commented that they purposely chose clothing that was not revealing at all times when teaching.

*Winter- Long pants, 3/4 leggings, 3/4 baggy shorts, crop tops, t-shirts.
Summer shorts, crop tops. (Instructor 33, Aged 38, instructor for 6 yrs)*

On fat days - baggy 3/4 length black pants & singlet. On good days - 3/4 or full length tights (boot legs) black and brightly coloured crop top. Sometimes a cap if my hair is being a pain! (Instructor 5, Aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

Depends how I'm feeling - if I'm having a fat day I hate the clothes I wear, and I don't feel happy. When I'm having a 'skinny' day my classes are so much more enjoyable and fun, and I feel happy and I feel like I am nicer to everyone. (Instructor 5, Aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

I change depending on how I feel on the day. If I have my period then I'm into baggys not Lycra. I wear what I believe I am comfortable in and is appropriate to teach in. (Instructor 58, Aged 31, instructor for 7 yrs)

If teaching older adults or teenagers usually a t-shirt and bike pants. If teaching Les Mills programs - crop tops with 3/4 length pants. (Instructor 26, Aged 41, experience not specified)

I feel comfortable, professional, and capable of doing my job without worrying whether participants can see my knicker line/bra line. (Instructor 7, Aged 45, instructor for 15 yrs)

I would never teach a class half naked. I feel what I wear, neck to knee always, I gain respect for not being naked. (Instructor 53, Aged 36, instructor for 3 yrs)

Perceptions of clothing

Some women stated they felt comfortable and confident in the clothing they wore when teaching. While a small number of women stated the tight fitting clothing made them feel self-conscious and aware of the public display of their bodies, they also felt that wearing baggy clothes was inappropriate. The views of the women in the survey reflect that of the women interviewed.

Comfortable and at ease, confident! (Instructor 40, Aged 38, instructor experience not specified)

Sometimes uncomfortable always wearing tight clothes, but I wouldn't feel right wearing baggy pants and a loose shirt. (Instructor 46, Aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Sometimes [I feel] a bit self – conscious. (Instructor 24, Aged 28, instructor for 9 yrs)

Marketing practices

This section reports on the instructors' perceptions of two marketing practices used in fitness centres, advertising and the sale of products and services. Advertising was chosen in this study as it represents a tangible image that the fitness centres want to portray, with fit, slim bodies implying the outcome of exercise. Products and services were chosen as they relate to the improvement of body image. The women reported that there were three methods of advertising used at their fitness centre. The women also discussed the most popular goods and services sold at their fitness centre, and their views of these supplementary goods.

Advertising

The women were asked to rank in order the top three advertising strategies their fitness centre used, or the most emphasis that was placed on these strategies. By totalling the rankings in table 9 the most important method of advertising is shown to be fitness, followed by weight loss then social (meeting new friends).

Table 9**Advertising Strategies of Western Australian Fitness Centres**

Strategy	Number of responses			Total	Rank
	1	2	3		
Fitness	42	11	5	58	1
Weight loss	7	19	10	36	2
Social (meet new friends)	9	6	11	26	3
Strength	-	6	11	17	4
Body building	-	2	8	10	5
Flexibility	-	1	4	5	6
"Sexy" pictures of models	-	-	1	1	7

Note. Dashes indicates no data was obtained.

Goods and services

The women identified the supplementary goods and services sold at their fitness centres, in addition to the fitness classes offered. The most frequent responses were personal training (PT) with 59 responses, followed by exercise performance drinks (Ex Perf Drinks) and then exercise clothing. The darker shaded areas relate to personal services, while others relate to products. Figure 10 shows the responses for all the products and services.

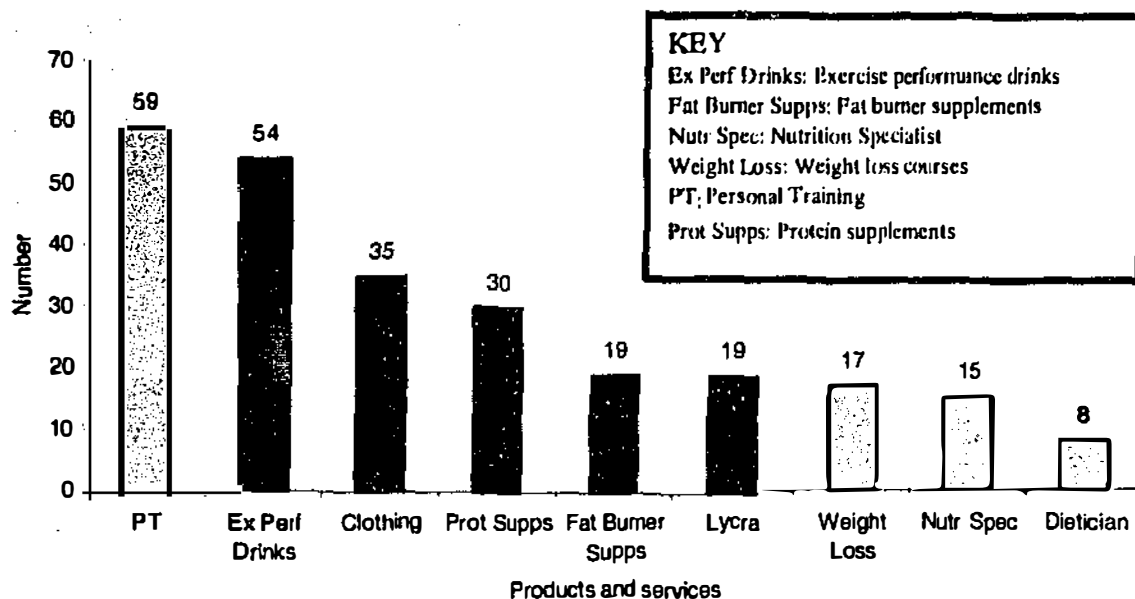


Figure 10. Supplementary goods and services sold at fitness centres.

Perceptions of goods and services sold at fitness centres

The women gave their perceptions of the goods and services sold at the fitness centres they worked. Not surprisingly, many instructors stated that goods and services were sold for profit and because the clients demanded them. They felt that these particular products complemented the nature of a business that promoted health and fitness.

Extra revenue for business. (Instructor 48, Aged 33, instructor for 15 yrs)

Participants request these services. (Instructor 47, Aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

A centre feels it has a certain professional 'image' to maintain, hence healthy food and services as opposed to what is deemed unhealthy. (Instructor 8, Aged 39, instructor for 8 yrs)

They complement the nature of the centre's business (Instructor 12, Aged 23, instructor for 1 yr)

The women also stated that the goods and services focused on the improvement of the appearance. Weight loss, the external image and achieving the 'perfect' body were perceived to be important for clients:

[The goods and services are there to] cater to people's desire to achieve weight loss, "perfect" body. (Instructor 25, Aged 30, instructor for 3 yrs)

Personally, I don't feel many average gym goers purchase the protein/fat burner supplements, only those inspired few who are interested in fitness figure comps. (Instructor 14, Aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

These comments above suggest that these instructors perceived that those who were serious about their athletic bodies, those who were truly dedicated to their outer body image, were more likely to purchase these specialised goods and services. The products were not usually purchased by general clients, but more by those who competed in bodybuilding competitions, such as fitness figure competitions. Some instructors had differing views on the effectiveness of the protein and weight loss supplements. Even though the products were promoted and sold at the fitness centres, some instructors did not believe that they were beneficial to the user, and thought of as gimmicks by the instructors.

There is a demand for these items by the general public-whether the staff agree upon how useful the item is would be another issue. (Instructor 55, Aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

Profit, to promote maximum results, to help people achieve their goals. Whether these supplements work or not is another matter!(Instructor 33, Aged 38, instructor for 6 yrs)

We sell no gimmicky products. We do not endorse the use of supplements or focus on weight. We do offer PT as a part of a balanced program for fitness and well-being. (Instructor 53, Aged 36, instructor for 3 yrs)

Some instructors did not believe that some goods promised the results they were claiming. Some fitness centres, however did not sell these supplements. These products were referred to as gimmicks that were not endorsed by some fitness instructors. The reference to "focus on weight" by Instructor 53 suggests this

instructor believes there is a relationship between the sale of supplements and a focus on weight at some fitness centres.

Summary of the influence of management practices on body perception

The influences of management practices on the body perception of female group fitness instructors were reported in this section. The practices included recruitment, clothing, advertising and other goods and services offered at the fitness centre. Results indicated that the majority of women felt that a particular image of an instructor was not used in the recruitment of instructors. However a small number of women told of their experiences where image was important, and some instructors were denied work or had their position terminated because they were overweight or did not 'fit the image'.

Half of the instructors in this study were required to wear uniforms by their employers while most of the women felt comfortable in their uniforms and other clothing when teaching classes, a small number stated that the close fitting clothing made them feel self-conscious. The women chose their clothing dependant on the weather conditions of the day and how they felt about their bodies. They wore briefer clothing in warm weather and when they felt good. In contrast, the women covered their bodies when they felt fat, had their period, or when they taught different groups such as seniors and adolescents. Clothing was also chosen according to the type of class that was taught, for example Les Mills classes had uniforms according to each class.

The women reported that their fitness centres used fitness and weight loss emphases as their advertising strategies, and that personal training and exercise performance drinks were the most popular services and goods sold. The women believed the goods and services were sold for profit reasons or because the clients requested their existence. They also believed that the goods and services complemented the nature of the fitness business to improve the appearance. However, they were sceptical about the effectiveness of the weight loss and protein supplements sold at their fitness centres. The influence of advertising, goods and services sold appeared to create an environment that the instructors were not influenced by. Instead, they appeared to observe the environment with their own beliefs surrounding it. The

next section reports on the influence of employers on the body perception of female group fitness instructors.

The influence of employers on body perception

Introduction

This section reports on the influence of employers on the body perceptions of female group fitness instructors. The results of three statements from the Likert-type scale are presented and discussed first. The women were also asked to describe any experiences they had where their employer had commented on their body shape or weight. The issues that arose are discussed below.

Table 10 indicates several interesting results. The women marginally agreed that their employers did not mind overweight instructors ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.09$), however there was a varied range of responses. There was a stronger agreement that their employers expected them to maintain a lean body shape ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.92$). Similarly, they marginally agreed that employers preferred lean female group fitness instructors ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.09$). The women felt that employers preferred and expected instructors to be lean, and not overweight. These responses indicate that the instructors have identified their employers as an influence of their body perception. This may place pressure on the instructor to maintain or try to attain a slim body shape. This finding counters the lack of response to the influence of employers on body perception (refer back to Table 7).

Table 10

Influence Of Employers On Body Perception

Statements from Section 1 in Questionnaire	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1. " Employers don't mind overweight female group fitness instructors (Q.5 in questionnaire)	4	11	26	17	10	3.3	1.09
2. I believe that employers expect instructors to maintain a lean body shape (Q.8)	2	6	25	27	8	3.5	0.92
3. I believe that employers prefer female group fitness instructors who are lean (Q.15)	5	8	21	25	9	3.4	1.09

Note. 1 on the scale denotes strongly disagreed; 5 denotes strongly agreed. " was positively worded. For the purpose of analysis, the question was phrased negatively, and the scores were reversed.

Employers' comments on body shape of instructors

The women were asked if employers had commented on their body shape or body weight. Over half of the women stated that employers had not made any comments about their body shape. The remaining women stated that they had received compliments about their body shape, such as they had lost weight and their bodies looked more toned. There were rare occasions when the women had received compliments from their employers on their body shape, for example commenting to instructors that they had lost weight.

No comments on body shape

Over half of the women (57%) stated their employers never commented on their body shape or body weight. Typical responses were:

Never had such an experience. (Instructor 35, Aged 38, instructor for 6 yrs)

No employer has. (Instructor 13, Aged 42, instructor for 20 yrs)

None I can recall. (Insructor 2, Aged 31, instructor for 2 yrs)

Positive comments on body shape

Many women reported that they had received compliments from their employers about their body shapes. The compliments were they had lost weight; that

they looked fit and toned, that they were good role models. Some body parts were complimented such as toned arms and one instructor was complimented on her abdominals:

[They have said] "You look like you've lost weight, your arms are looking more toned". (Instructor 50, Aged 21, instructor for 3.5 yrs)

My boss ... comments on how skinny and good I look, and also the other instructors. (Instructor 65, Aged 20, instructor for 2 yrs)

As a compliment-that I am a good role model for our participants. Feedback-that a lot of women would like to be like me. (Instructor 55, Aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

One manager after my class said to me: "We will have to ask you to wear [a] longer shirt to cover your abdominals" When I asked why, his answer was; "Because all participants want to have abs like your 6 packs" I do not know (if) it (was a) joke or not! (Instructor 6, Aged 30, experience not specified)

Negative comments on body shape

Some of the women stated their employers had made negative comments about their body weight. These negative comments, were not common. One employer reportedly suggested the instructor should lose weight or the participants would not treat her well, while another instructor was told she was not a good role model, and participants could not aspire to her body shape. In this case, the instructor described herself as having a large build, but tall and athletic. The employer, however, perceived that the body of this instructor was not what participants wanted to see:

I was told to lose some weight by my supervisor or the participants will "persecute" me. (Instructor 20, Aged 35, instructor for 9 yrs)

The comment was made that "participants could not aspire to the shape they require with a large instructor". You can imagine how this felt when I had been teaching for a number of years in 3 states and various facilities. To a degree this action still is a bother to me considering I have been 5ft 11 inches and 70kg since I was 14 years of age. Swam for 10 years and played netball and softball at state level. My parents are tall and my sporting activities promoted a strong athletic look. (Instructor 54, Aged 37, instructor for 16 yrs)

Summary of influence of employers on body perception

Instructors believe their employers want them to have slim body shapes. This could place pressure on the instructors to maintain or gain a better body shape. The women reported that they felt their employers required them to maintain a lean body shape as they felt their employers favoured lean instructors. However, over half of the women reported that their employers did not make comments about their body shape. If they did make comments, these were received as complimentary, which flattered the women. There were a few responses that indicated that some women had experienced negative and offensive comments about their body shape from their employer. These comments were hurtful to the instructor.

Employers not only influence the instructors directly, they create an environment in the fitness centre. Their policies and practices for recruitment and maintenance of their staff will convey their preferred body shapes and weights. They also create the physical setting through the décor. The physical workplace is discussed in the next section.

Physical environment influences of workplace on body perception

Introduction

One major area of interest in this study was the physical environment of the workplace and its influence on the body perception of the female group fitness instructors. For this study, the physical environment was defined as the décor. The structural design features of the centres are not considered. Décor can include many different aspects (for example furniture, notice boards, colour scheme). This study focused on the use of mirrors in the aerobics room and pictures displayed on the walls as two visible components of décor that portray the image of the body.

Mirrors are a standard fixture in fitness centres, purportedly to allow the viewing of body positions during exercise. The advantages and disadvantages of mirrors are discussed. Mirrors were reported useful as a teaching resource for instructors, and the women felt mirrors made the room more attractive. On the

negative side, the women said they felt self-conscious about their bodies displayed in the mirrors. They also found that the mirrors distracted their participants.

The women reflected on the pictures displayed on the walls of the fitness centres in which they worked. The pictures of women were generally described as lean body shapes wearing brief clothing, sometimes sexual in nature, with women in seductive poses. The instructors generally perceived the pictures as inspiring, but some women stated that some pictures of the slim body shapes made them feel inadequate, and some were degrading to women.

Mirrors

Sixty-two instructors (91%) reported that there were mirrors in the aerobics/group fitness room in which they worked, while five instructors (7%) stated there were none. Typically, wall to ceiling mirrors were located at the front of an aerobics room, behind a stage. Instructors reported that they taught with their backs to the mirrors for the majority of their classes. In this position, instructors faced the class, and the participants faced the instructor and mirrors. Sometimes instructors said they would face different directions while instructing. A small number of instructors stated that the mirrors in their aerobic rooms were located at the sides of the room.

Advantages of mirrors

The instructors were very positive about mirrors in the group fitness room. They reported that mirrors were a helpful teaching resource, providing visual feedback to participants on their exercise technique. They believed that mirrors also assisted the instructors to check their own technique when teaching classes.

I think mirrors are a good thing, because you are able to check and correct technique. (Instructor 22, aged 30, instructor for 2 yrs)

I like the mirrors particularly for pump classes, weight work, fitball etc as participants can check form. Often people think their body is in alignment for example when realistically it is not. (Instructor 33, aged 38, instructor for 6 yrs)

Good idea as it lets me see my form when teaching (Instructor 5, aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

The women also stated the mirrors were helpful when teaching classes as they allowed the instructor to view the participants when facing different directions. They also allowed the participants to view the instructors from different angles.

They are necessary for the instructor to be able to view the class when facing different directions. (Instructor 15, aged 39, instructor for 16 yrs)

The mirrors allow [participants] to see the stage better and every angle the instructor is performing. (Instructor 14, aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

Mirrors in aerobics rooms were seen to make a contribution to the décor and atmosphere of the aerobics setting. Mirrors in the aerobics room opened up the room, creating an illusion that the room was larger and brighter:

They open up the room, making it brighter and look bigger. (Instructor 27, aged 38, instructor for 15 yrs)

In the aerobics room [mirrors] create more space. (Instructor 63, aged 48, instructor for 5 yrs)

Disadvantages of mirrors

The instructors reported a number of disadvantages of mirrors in the group fitness room. Mirrors at times made the women feel self-conscious about their body shapes. They said that mirrors were a distraction. They did not like them and disliked watching themselves exercise. Interestingly, mirrors made some instructors feel fat. The women described these mirrors as 'fat mirrors'. Like amusement park mirrors that distort body shapes, the women felt that some mirrors seem to distort the body shape to make it appear bigger than it was. While the physical attributes of the mirror may distort the image, the instructors suggested the perception was more psychological than physical.

[Mirrors] do make you feel self conscious - particularly of your body shape. (Instructor 25, aged 30, instructor for 3 yrs)

I personally don't like watching myself doing a workout. (Instructor 61, aged 31, instructor for yrs)

I find them insulting and humiliating at times because they are all fat mirrors. (Instructor 10, aged 31, years of experience not specified)

I don't like them because they make people fatter than what they are. (Instructor 59, aged 55, instructor for 16 yrs)

Most [participants] claim that there are 'fat' and 'skinny' mirrors but I always convince them that the mirror may be on an angle. (Instructor 55, aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

The comment above suggests one intervention by an instructor to distract the women and dismiss their concerns with mirrors. For one instructor, the mirrors provided a distraction from her own body shape, and placed the emphasis on the participant:

The class are probably concerned with how they look in the mirror rather than what I look like. (Instructor 19, aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

The women stated that a disadvantage of mirrors was that they distracted participants from the class, which was frustrating for the instructor. Participants did not focus on the exercises they were doing, as they were transfixed on their own mirror image. Participants did not appear to 'take in' anything else happening in the room. While some instructors were frustrated with participants who stare at themselves in the mirrors, it was interesting that other instructors encouraged participants to gaze at themselves during class to check their technique, as a training strategy.

[Participants] just stare at themselves in the mirror and don't take in anything else. (Instructor 42, aged 34, instructor for 8 yrs)

Participants keep looking at themselves and do not focus on what they are doing. (Instructor 6, aged 30, years of experience not specified)

I encourage them to look at themselves to see if they are doing the exercise correctly. (Instructor 37, aged 48, instructor for 13 yrs)

[I] tell participants "Ok look in the mirror and check your form [for example] tummy in, chest high". (Instructor 53, aged 36, instructor for 3 yrs)

A small number of women reported that mirrors were they invited the viewers invited the viewers to criticise their body shapes during class.

[Mirrors are] not there to tell [people] how good or bad they look. (Instructor 43, aged 40, instructor for 7 yrs)

[Participants] should use the mirror as a tool to improve their form and not be so critical [or] hard on themselves!!! (Instructor 55, aged 46, instructor for 22 yrs)

Pictures

The women described the body shapes depicted in the picture as generally lean, athletic and muscular. Some pictures were described as showing people with different body shapes of different ages. The clothing worn by people in the pictures was brief. At times the pictures had a sexual theme with women in seductive poses. Other pictures were described as people exercising, or promotions of types of fitness classes offered at their fitness centre. The women also described their reactions to the pictures. The women had both positive and negative feelings about the pictures.

Lean body shapes

Men and women were depicted in pictures as lean and athletic body shapes, with some muscularity. Bodies of different shapes and ages were also depicted.

Lean, athletic. (Instructor 13, Aged 42, instructor for 20 yrs)

Lean tanned bodies male and female, muscular. (Instructor 18, Aged 37, instructor for 6 months)

An old lady on a poster with a dumbbell to promote seniors. (Instructor 2, Aged 31, instructor for 2 yrs)

People of all sizes, all ages. (Instructor 3, Aged 47, instructor for 14 yrs)

Brief clothing

Apart from various body shapes, clothing on the bodies in the pictures was also described as being brief. Some of these pictures were described as having a sexual theme with women especially in seductive poses.

Bare chests for the men; skimpy clothing for the women. (Instructor 7, Aged 45, instructor for 15 yrs)

Men [with] bare torso rippling muscles. Women, bodybuilder, feminine skimpy clothes. (Instructor 62, Aged 39, instructor for 16 yrs)

Very athletic. Often in little clothing. Not always sporty-more sexual and suggestive poses. (Instructor 15, Aged 39, instructor for 16 yrs)

[There is a picture of a] woman standing near [a] treadmill and stepper in Lycra all sweaty, boobs are pulled up with a cleavage shot. (Instructor 50, Aged 21, instructor for 3.5 yrs)

[They wear] very little in semi-provocative poses, mostly women. (Instructor 40, Aged 38, experience as an instructor not specified)

Pictures of people exercising

Instructors also described pictures of people exercising on specialised equipment or posing near equipment:

In the gym: black and white pictures, framed. One man running [on a] treadmill, one man on [a] cross trainer, both very tasteful. One woman [doing a] lat pulldown, one woman on [a] cycle, both very tasteful. (Instructor 59, Aged 55, instructor for 16 yrs)

Men on rowing machines, bench pressing and cycling. (Instructor 36, Aged 19, experience as an instructor not specified)

A few pictures of females and males with exercise equipment, mostly of females, black and white stylish pictures with gym clothing on, posing over equipment. (Instructor 19, Aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

Promotional pictures

Pictures also advertised the programmes that were offered at the fitness centre such as Les Mills fitness classes and boxing classes:

The posters are promoting the specific style of classes offered at the club. (Instructor 27, Aged 38, instructor for 15 yrs)

We only have the Les Mills posters up- the ones promoting all the different classes. (Instructor 42, Aged 34, instructor for 8 yrs)

Men with a rippled body, standing next to a heavy bag looking athletic- advertising aero boxing classes. (Instructor 58, Aged 31, instructor for 7 yrs)

Perceptions of pictures

The women said they had both positive and negative reactions towards the pictures. Of the positive reactions, the women stated that they liked the pictures as they portrayed fit healthy people and were inspiring. Of the negative reactions, the women stated that the pictures were unrealistic and they made them feel inferior.

Positive perceptions

There were many favourable comments about the pictures on the walls. The women liked the pictures of the women and thought they looked fit, healthy and toned. The pictures were inspirational, and provided a visual incentive for people to improve their bodies. Some women said they were envious of the pictures, and wished their body shapes matched the pictures.

No problems- they portray fit health people. (Instructor 34, Aged 48, instructor for 9 yrs)

Very good - they look fit and toned. (Instructor 11, Aged 28, instructor for 4 yrs)

I like looking at the posters-inspiration. (Instructor 49, Aged 26, instructor for 8 yrs)

They're very fit, lean and active. Makes you want to be like them. (Instructor 65, Aged 20, instructor for 2 yrs)

I want to look like them! (Instructor 5, Aged 24, instructor for 5 yrs)

Negative perceptions of pictures

While there were many favourable comments towards the pictures, some women said the bodies were unrealistic, hard to achieve body shapes. They believed that clients could be intimidated by the pictures, by making them feel self-conscious and inadequate. It was common that the women made comments on the perceptions of their clients, however one instructor stated that the pictures made her feel inferior and under pressure to maintain a certain body shape and fitness level.

I feel they are a positive and a negative. Positive-to motivate clients to achieve their goals/body. Negative-superior body types, hard to achieve and intimidating. Might make clients self-conscious. (Instructor 46, Aged 23, instructor for 5 yrs)

A little unrealistic for the average person to achieve. (Instructor 25, Aged 30, instructor for 3 yrs)

They give an added incentive to pursue my goals, which are relevant to my body shape and no one else's. I do feel however, that they can be harmful to many...and set up people to feel inadequate and incapable of attaining such perfection! (Instructor 40, Aged 38, experience not specified)

They look fantastic and make me personally feel inferior and not professional enough. Lots of pressure to try and reach and maintain a certain level of fitness and leanness. (Instructor 8, Aged 39, instructor for 8 yrs)

Another disadvantage of the pictures was that some women felt that the pictures of the women were degrading to women. The women in the pictures wore brief clothing and there was a focus on their breasts:

Some of them are a bit degrading i.e. wearing skimpy outfits and very busty models. (Instructor 24, Aged 28, instructor for 9 yrs)

Hate the big boob no muscle blonde posters. (Instructor 17, Aged 26, instructor for 3 yrs)

Their bodies are beautiful but of course are showing enough bosom to make it seem they are using this to advertise the equipment in the picture. (Instructor 19, Aged 31, instructor for 14 yrs)

Summary of physical environment influences of workplace on body perception

This section reported two aspects (mirrors and pictures) of the workplace environment of the workplace on the body perception of female group fitness instructors. The results indicate that the women had different views about mirrors in the group fitness room. Many believed mirrors were a useful teaching resource to allow participants and instructors to check their exercise technique. The women also commented that the mirrors made them feel self-conscious about their bodies, making them feel fat. Mirrors also distracted the participants from the class.

There were also varying views about the pictures that were on the walls of fitness centres. The pictures were generally described as being ideal body shapes of women who wore skimpy clothing in seductive poses. The women both liked and disliked the pictures. They said the pictures portrayed healthy fit images to which people could aspire. On the other hand, they felt that images were unrealistic to achieve and some were degrading to women. The pictures therefore were both motivating and demotivating depending on the individual's reaction, possibly their general confidence in their own body image.

Chapter summary

This chapter reported the results of the survey. It reported the characteristics of the instructors and their perceptions of their bodies, the influence of management practices on their body perception; the influence of employers on their body perception and lastly the physical environment influences on their body perception. The final chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings and draws conclusions from the study. It re-states the purpose and approach to the study, and methods used to gather and analyse data. The research questions are re-stated with a discussion of the findings and a comparison with the relevant literature. The conclusions from the study are reported, followed by recommendations for future research and recommendations to the fitness industry.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the workplace influences on body perception issues of female group fitness instructors.

Approach to the study

This study was a mixed method study that combined two paradigms. The interpretative (naturalistic) paradigm used a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews followed by the positivist (experimental) paradigm that used a quantitative method of mailed questionnaires. The methods used in the study were successful to reach the findings.

Interviews provided opportunities to gain a personal insight into the perceptions of a small group of female group fitness instructors. Themes that arose from the interviews became the basis for the design of the questionnaire. The questionnaires allowed a wider population to be involved in the study. Using two methods allowed both a depth and breadth of data collection.

Research questions

There were five research questions to be answered in achieving the purpose of the study:

1. What are the personal characteristics of the female group fitness instructors?
2. What are the body perception issues for female group fitness instructors?
3. What are the influences on body image perceptions as reported by female group fitness instructors?
4. To what extent do management practices, including recruitment practices, uniforms and marketing practices influence body perceptions of female group fitness instructors?
5. To what extent does the physical décor (including mirrors and pictures) of fitness centres influence the body perception of female group fitness instructors?

Research Question One: What are the personal characteristics of the female group fitness instructors?

The women provided data on their age, years in the fitness industry, classes taught per week, exercise (not including classes taught) each week, qualifications, training provider, and the number of fitness centres they worked.

The profile of the women in this study had several characteristics. First, the mean age of women was 35 years, indicating an older group of instructors. They were very experienced as they had been in the fitness industry for a mean of 9.6 years, indicating longevity in the industry in which they were employed. The women engaged in large amounts of exercise, teaching an average of 7.6 classes per week, and also pursued 6-7 extra hours of exercise per week, in addition to their teaching. The training providers at which the instructors obtained their qualifications were predominantly private aerobic organisations and academies, the Australian Institute of Fitness or Colleen Kluwen's Aerobic Academy. The women also were very mobile in their employment, with most instructors working at more than two fitness centres on average (with a range of 1 to 7).

Clayton (2000) in a study on 148 instructors found that they had an average age of 35 and typically exercised 13 hours a week (this amount was classes and extra exercise combined, of unknown amounts). Thompson and Sargent (2000) in a study of 377 female fitness instructors, reported they had a mean age of 43.37, had been teaching for an average of 15.4 years, taught of average of 4.68 classes per week and averaged an additional 4.25 hours of exercise per week outside of their teaching. The American Fitness 1994 instructor survey found that the average age for female instructors was 33, compared to their 1987 study where the average age was 29. These instructors averaged 4.2 classes per week and the majority exercised five times per week, in addition to their teaching. Nardini's (1998) survey of 148 female instructors found that they taught 6.1 classes per week, and exercised 3.3 times per week in addition to their teaching.

The present findings support the literature findings that instructors are older than might be expected. A past popular perception of a female aerobics instructor is of young women (under or early twenties). However this study and the literature suggest that instructors are more mature. Instructors in this study did a large amount of exercise, approximately fourteen hours per week, including their classes and additional exercise. This amount was more than was reported in the literature. The amount of additional exercise exceeded Australian recommended guidelines for physical activity, suggesting that the instructors are over-exercising. This study, however, did not identify the type of exercise the instructors pursued in addition to their classes. The additional exercise may have been passive activities such as stretching or slow walking. Regardless of this, it may be assumed that the women may be engaging in large amounts of exercise to maintain or attain an ideal body shape that they believe is required to be an instructor.

Research Question Two: What are the body perception issues for female group fitness instructors?

The women described their body perception, describing their level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their body shape; the body parts they wished to change and how they felt the ideal female instructor should look.

The first body perception issue identified in this study was the satisfaction the women had with their body shapes. They were generally satisfied with their bodies

and did not wish to lose weight. They appeared to be more accepting of their body shapes as they got older and had children.

The second issue identified was that some women wished they could lose weight or change body parts with which they were not satisfied. It is interesting that the women clearly stated they were satisfied with their body shapes and did not wish to lose weight. However, they still wished they could lose weight or change specific body parts. They wished for a flatter abdominal area, longer legs, and a smaller, firmer bottom. These different thoughts showed a contradiction, where the instructors stated they were satisfied, but they still wanted to change their bodies. Perhaps they did not wish to seem insecure about their body shapes.

The third issue was the dissatisfaction the women had about their body shapes when their body weight increased. The dissatisfaction with their bodies made them unhappy. On the other hand, the women felt happy when they had lost weight. This suggests the mood of the women changed according to the status of their weight fluctuations, with perceived improvement or deterioration of body image.

The fourth issue was the women believed that it was more important that instructors have effective teaching skills than have a lean body. When describing the ideal group fitness instructor, the women believed it was more important that the instructor look athletic and to be fit, and to a lesser extent, have a lean body. These statements were a contradiction, where the instructors reported an instructor need not have a lean body, but they reported also they needed to be fit, athletic and lean.

The literature suggested that instructors were dissatisfied with their body shapes and wanted to lose weight. Several studies between 1994 and 2000, reported that instructors want to be thinner and were concerned about their body shapes. The Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (1994) reported that 62 percent of instructors (male and female) were overly concerned about their weight; Markula (1995) suggested that instructors have a fear of becoming fat and had a distorted self-perception of their body shape. Nardini (1998) found that 64 percent of female instructors perceived an ideal body was thinner than their current body. A more recent study found that 43 percent of instructors wanted to be thinner (Thompson & Sargent, 2000). The literature also reported that body dissatisfaction occurred across all age

groups of women (Stevens & Tiggemann, 1998). However, the present study found that the women accepted their body shapes more as they became older.

Huntly (2000) reported the most admired qualities of fitness instructors. The most important quality was reported as their ability to teach, followed by their approachability, their ability to motivate, their health and fitness knowledge and lastly their physical appearance. This study found that the physical appearance had little importance when evaluating a group fitness instructor.

The findings in the present study on body perception issues both support and do not support the literature. The findings in the present study that do not support some of the more extremes reported in the literature, relate to body satisfaction. The women in this study were generally satisfied with their body shapes. Although the women reported satisfaction, they also wanted to lose weight, and wished they could change their body shape. They stated they felt satisfied with their bodies when they lost weight and dissatisfied when they gained weight.

The finding in the present study that the women accepted their body shapes as they became older, does not support the literature. The literature suggests that body dissatisfaction occurs across the life of a woman, however the present study suggests body satisfaction increases with age.

The finding in the present study that effective teaching skills were more important than the physical appearance of the instructor supported the findings of Huntly (2000) who reported that teaching ability and other related teaching aspects were more important than the physical appearance of the instructor.

There were contradictions that arose from the instructors' perceptions. They were generally satisfied with their body shape, but they still wanted to change some of their body parts. There were variations in satisfaction with variations in body weight. There was a reported importance on teaching ability over appearance, but the instructors believed an instructor should look fit, athletic and lean.

Research Question Three: What are the influences on body image perceptions as reported by female group fitness instructors?

The women described the influences on their body perception and described how they felt about these influences. There were three main influences on body perception that the women listed: mirror image, fitness industry and fashion industry.

The women ranked their mirror image as the most important influence on their body perception. They used mirrors for self-awareness of their body shape, a tool to monitor their external image, and a motivation to improve the body shape. For some women, however, the mirror image produced negative reactions such as disappointment about their body shape. It appeared that the women were the largest critics of their own body shapes.

The women stated the second most important influence on their body perception was the fitness industry. The women believed there were several expectations upon them from the fitness industry to maintain or attain a lean body shape. They believed that as instructors, they were expected to be fit and lean, and only eat moderate amounts of healthy food. They also believed that participants judged their bodies and liked instructors with lean bodies. Other female instructors were also an influence on body perception. The women compared their body shapes with other female instructors. Making comparisons with other leaner instructors made the women feel fat and inadequate. The women believed their employers favoured lean instructors and required them to maintain a lean body shape. This data indicates that the women believed the fitness industry, including participants, peer instructors and employers influenced their body perception by expecting them to maintain a lean body shape.

The women stated the third most important influence on their body perception was the fashion industry. The women described how fashion and television images influenced their body perception. The women viewed the fashion industry negatively. Some women stated they were sceptical about the fashion industry as they felt that the images of female bodies were unrealistic and unnatural. Others stated that looking at skinny models made them feel fat and have a poor image of their own bodies.

The literature reports numerous influences on body image and body perception. Studies show that women are dissatisfied with their body shapes (Garner, 1997, p. 1,3,4; Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood & Dwyer, 1997, p. 5). Several studies indicated that being a role model in the fitness industry can make instructors feel under pressure to lose weight, maintain their weight or to build a better body (Smeaton, 1993; Thompson & Sargent, 2000, p. 38; p.4). Further, some literature states that participants wanted to have bodies like their instructors (Markula, 1995). The fashion industry was also identified in several studies as an influence on body

perception. Thin body images are constantly promoted in the media (Loland 2000), and influence women readers by sending subtle messages on how to act, look and feel (Redican & Hadley, 1988). Looking at thin fashion models was linked to poor body image, including a dissatisfaction and preoccupation with the body, being thin and frustrated with body weight (Garner, 1997; Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood & Dwyer, 1997, p. 5).

The findings of this study supported the influences of body perception reported in the literature. The influences are identified as mirror image, the fitness industry and the fashion industry. Not only do the women critique their own body shapes, but their satisfaction with their body shape can be affected by the industry in which they work, and also the body images seen as desirable in the culture in which they live.

Research Question Four: To what extent do management practices, including recruitment practices, uniforms and marketing practices influence body perceptions of female group fitness instructors?

Most of the women described their experiences with recruitment, their uniforms and clothing worn while teaching and the marketing practices (including advertising and products and services sold) at their fitness centres.

In the present study, the women believed that obtaining a position as a group fitness instructor did not require a particular body shape, and they were unaware of any recruitment practices that supported this. Rather than body shape, they believed that recruitment should be based on adequate teaching skills, including motivational and communication skills, a good level of fitness and professionalism. The women believed that body shape was not important as it was common to be recruited without the employer seeing the instructor, where they were recruited by word of mouth or over the phone.

A small number of the women, believed that image was important to obtain a position as a group fitness instructor. Some of the women were told by employers they did not fit the image that the employer wanted, even though this image was not specified. This influenced their body perception by implying that the instructors' body image was not good enough for reasons that were not explained, which confused and offended them. It appears that some employers use, either consciously or unconsciously, a particular body image and appearance as a mental template against

which new recruits are assessed. Further research is necessary to explore the validity of this assertion.

The women were generally comfortable in compulsory uniforms and clothing they chose when teaching fitness classes. The most common items of clothing worn were close fitting Lycra-type material of tights and Lycra tops. The women chose their clothing dependant on several factors such as the temperature, the type of class, and the group they were teaching. It was interesting that instructors chose briefer clothing when they felt satisfied with their body shapes and were lower in weight. It appears that the instructors were more confident to show off their body because they were closer to the thin ideal body shape. Instructors who felt dissatisfied with their body shapes or had their period tended to wear baggier clothing that disguised the body. Only a small number of instructors reported they felt uncomfortable in the clothing they wore when they taught classes as they felt self-conscious about their body shapes. It appears that clothing worn by instructors has a minor influence. The dress strategies of the women suggest the reverse – body image perception on the day determines the attire of the day.

The women also described the methods of advertising and goods and services at their fitness centres. Fitness centres used an emphasis on fitness, weight loss and social benefits when advertising. The most popular goods and services at fitness centres were personal training, exercise performance drinks and exercise clothing. The women felt that goods and services sold at fitness centres were sold for profit and because the clients demanded them. However these products reinforced the purpose of the fitness centres, and clients used the goods and services as resources to assist them to get closer to the ideal body shape. The instructors reported that these products focused on the improvement of the external image through changed appearance and weight loss. In this study, advertising methods and goods and services do not have a direct bearing on the body perception of the women. However, these practices contribute to the environment that the instructors work, an environment that focuses on obtaining an often unattainable ideal body shape.

There was no literature found that reported the recruitment practices in employing female group fitness instructors, only anecdotal evidence that suggested that thin instructors were favoured for employment. There were studies critical of the typical aerobics clothing worn by instructors. Their clothing was found to be

intimidating to participants, and recommendations were made to instructors to change their attire from close fitting clothing to baggier clothing, to make participants feel better about their bodies (Frederick & Shaw, 1995; Martin & Hausenblas, 1998). The present study found that the majority of instructors wore close fitting clothing when they taught. They believed that the clothing was comfortable and it allowed participants to view the instructor's body positions during exercise. The instructors in the present study were generally positive about the benefits of the clothing they wore, as they believed it assisted the participants in classes.

Coghlan (1999) found that fitness centres used advertising of thin body shapes as their main emphasis in advertising. The present study did not produce in-depth information, but found that fitness was reported as the main method for advertising, followed by weight loss, then social benefits. It also found that thin body shapes were used as promotional materials (in advertising, posters and pictures).

The present study did not support the literature on the management practices examined. Most instructors believed that recruitment was not based on appearance, however there is no literature available that comments on this. The study did not support the literature about aerobics clothing. The present study found that most of the instructors felt that the uniforms and clothing were professional and beneficial to show exercise movements. The selling of body improvement product at fitness centres did not appear to concern the women, and most accepted their existence as a normal practice.

●Overall, the management practices included in the present study did not largely influence the body perception of the instructors. The majority of the women in the study believed that recruitment was not based on appearance, and that wearing uniforms of tight Lycra was beneficial to show their body movements efficiently. Only a small number of women had negative feelings towards recruitment practices and clothing. The selling of body improvement products at fitness centres did not appear to concern the women, and most accepted their existence as a normal practice.

Research Question Five: To what extent does the physical décor (including mirrors and pictures) of fitness centres influence the body perception of female group fitness instructors?

The women described the physical décor of the fitness centres where they worked. The décor included the mirrors in the group fitness room and the pictures on the walls of slim body shapes.

The women in this study believed that the mirrors had advantages and disadvantages. The instructors described the advantages of the mirrors. They believed the mirrors were a teaching resource as they assisted the instructor by providing visual feedback to participants on their body positions during exercise. In addition, the mirrors appeared to make the room look larger and more attractive. As a disadvantage, a small number of instructors believed the mirrors made them feel self-conscious about their bodies and made them feel fat. They further distracted the participants during the class. The influence of the mirrors did not have a large bearing on the way the women felt about their bodies. Only a small number of instructors were influenced by the mirrors. This was a contradiction as instructors also stated that their mirror image was the most important influence on their body perception.

In the present study, instructors had varying views about pictures of slim body shapes in fitness centres. The majority of the instructors believed the pictures were positive and inspiring. The pictures were a positive influence on the instructor's body perception, providing an image to admire and aspire to. A small number of women, however, stated that the pictures of the slim body shapes made them feel inadequate. When viewing images of women with slim body shapes, these women felt as though their body shapes were inferior to those depicted in the pictures. A small number of instructors also stated they felt some of the pictures of the women depicted a sexual theme, and were perceived as being degrading to women.

The literature is critical of mirrors in the aerobics room. Loland (2001) stated that mirrors in aerobic rooms placed an emphasis on the body shape of participants. Maguire and Mansfield (1998) found that participants used the mirrors to privately criticise their body shapes, and some participants distanced themselves away from the mirrors to avoid their reflection. Loland (2001) also stated the mirrors were used for vanity, that participants enjoyed looking at themselves and enjoyed others looking at

them. There is no reference in the literature to instructors views of mirrors as a teaching aid or as a means of self criticism.

There is no literature available that relate specifically to the perceptions of instructors towards pictures. A study by Brooks and Lindenfield (1994) found that pictures of thin ideal body shapes in fitness centres were intimidating to participants or aspiring new members. Similarly, Wigg (1998) stated that pictures of thin females on the walls made female participants feel insecure about their body shapes, further they reinforced and encouraged a negative weight loss culture. It could be expected that instructors would have similar reactions to these types of pictures.

The findings of the present study do not largely support the findings of the literature. The majority of the instructors had positive feelings towards the mirrors and pictures. The mirrors were an essential teaching tool, and the pictures inspired them.

The mirrors and pictures had some influence on the body perception of the instructors. In a positive sense, most of the women appeared to feel good about their body shapes when they looked at the pictures. They felt the pictures inspired them to have a better body in a positive way. In a negative sense, only a small number of instructors felt the pictures were unrealistic and degrading to women. Their body perception was influenced by making them feel inferior to the displayed images. Only a small number of instructors were influenced by the mirrors, making them feel self-conscious about their body shapes and fat.

Conceptual framework revisited

The original conceptual framework in Figure 2 outlined several influences upon the body perception of female group fitness instructors. The workplace (including management practices and the physical environment) was considered to be a major influence on body perception. Other aspects, such as the media, peers and family were also listed as influences.

The conceptual framework is revised in Figure 11. The present study suggests that the workplace of the instructor does perpetuate thin body shapes through various means such as management practices, the physical environment and the people who frequent the fitness centre (including employers, participants and peers). These

aspects influence the body perception of the instructor by unconsciously expecting the instructor will conform to the promotion of an ideal body shape, using their bodies. Apart from the environment that influences the body perception of instructors, the instructors themselves use their mirror image to give themselves personal feedback about their appearance. The media and fashion industry influence the body perception of the instructors by providing a benchmark of the type of clothing to be worn, and the thin body shapes to fit into the clothing. All of these influences impact on the body perception of the instructor in their presentation to the participants in an aerobics class. The relationship between the instructors and the participants shows a two-way influence on issues in body perception. Participants influence the body perception of instructors, and instructors influence the body perception of the participants.

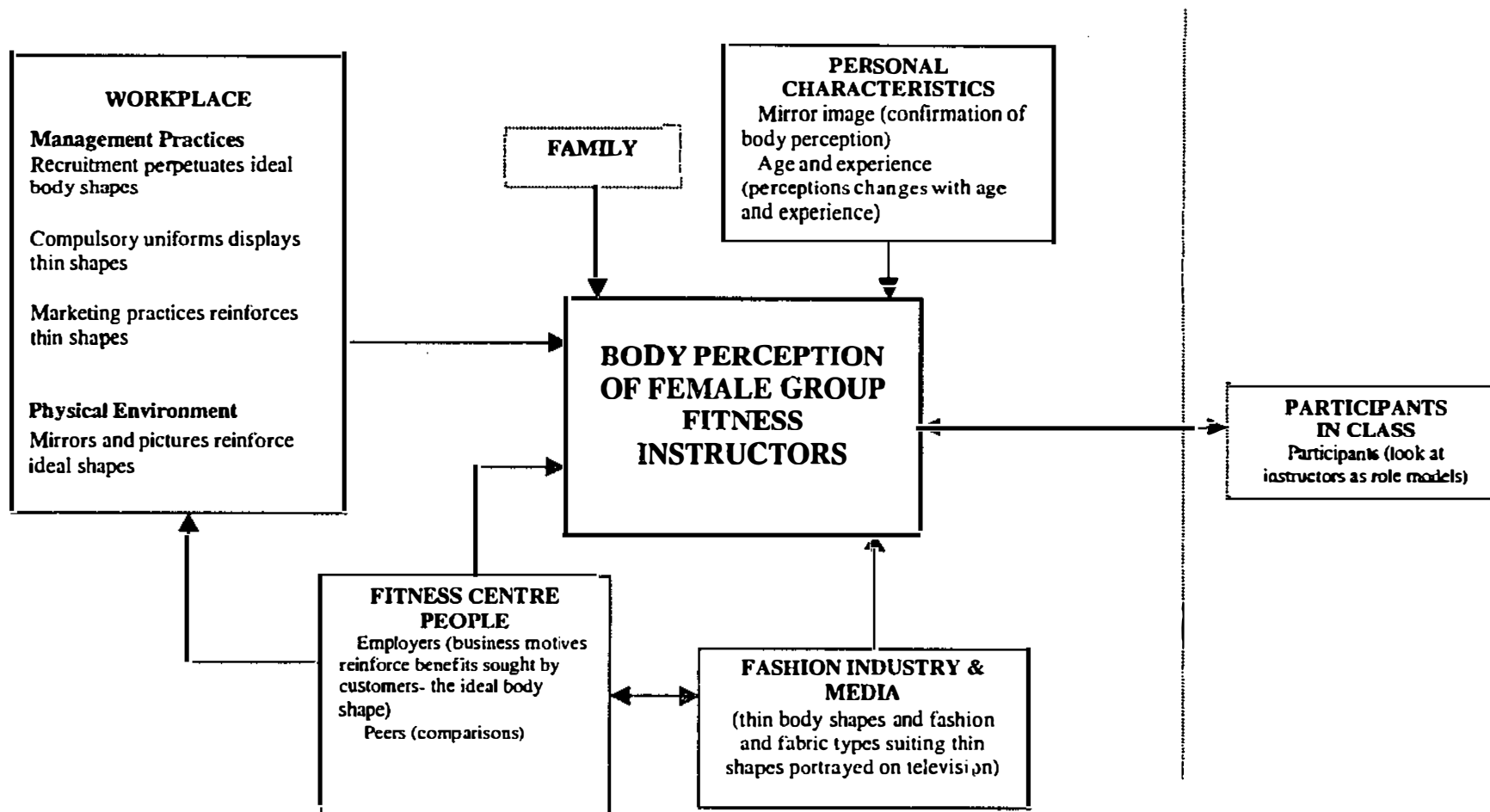


Figure 11. Revised conceptual framework suggesting that the fitness industry, media and fashion industry, personal characteristics and workplace influences the body perception of the female group fitness instructor.

Overview of study

The purpose of this study was to explore workplace influences on the body perceptions of female group fitness instructors. This exploration gathered perceptions held by female group fitness instructors of their body perception and their work settings. Data were collected from female group fitness instructors working in and around Perth, Western Australia, using two methods. First, interviews with six female instructors explored body perception issues and workplace influence. Second, a survey based on interview results was conducted, to confirm the extent of instructors' views on workplace influences. Two hundred and nine questionnaires were distributed, with sixty-eight replies, a response rate of 32.5 percent.

The purpose of the study was addressed by first exploring body perception issues of the instructors. Most of the women were satisfied with their body shapes and weight. Although satisfied, many stated they wished they could change certain body parts if they could, such as have a flatter abdominal area.

Three major influences of body perception were found to be the instructor's mirror image, the fitness industry and the fashion industry. The most interesting was the influence of the fitness industry. The women believed that their participants and their employers expected them to maintain a slim body shape in their role as an instructor. Although they felt that their employers did not mind overweight instructors, interestingly they also believed their employers favoured lean instructors. Some of the women stated that looking at and comparing themselves to other instructors also influenced their body perception by making them feel fat.

There was little workplace influence on the body perception of the instructors. Most of the women believed that recruitment was not based on appearance, and that wearing uniforms of tight Lycra was beneficial to show their body movements during class. The selling of body improvement products at fitness centres did not appear to influence the women, and most accepted their existence as a normal practice. Similarly, the physical environment (large mirrors and pictures of slim body shapes) did not largely influence the body perception of the instructors. The majority of instructors liked the mirrors, as they were a teaching resource. The pictures of slim

body shapes also inspired the instructors to improve their body shapes. Only a small number of instructors were negative towards the mirrors and pictures.

This study suggests that the physical environment and management practices does not largely influence the body perception of female group fitness instructors. This study does suggest, however, that the body perceptions of the instructors are largely affected by the fitness industry, including participants, employers and other instructors. These women believed they needed to maintain or attain a lean ideal body shape, to live up to expectations from these influences. They did this by engaging in large amounts of exercise.

Recommendations for further research

These recommendations relate to recommendations for the fitness industry and for future studies.

Recommendations to fitness industry

The recommendations to the fitness industry are divided into three areas: recommendations for instructors, employers, and to aerobics training providers.

Recommendations to instructors

Instructors need to be aware of the many issues relating to role modelling and the associated pressures that can arise from this. Education is the only way to create this awareness. Instructors could attend courses on body image and role modelling to increase their awareness and education on these very important issues.

Recommendations to employers

Employers do not always have control over the design of their fitness centre, however they do have control over pictures that hang within the fitness centre walls. Employers need to be informed how pictures can influence the body perception of both female instructors and participants. Employers also need to recognise that instructors can be any shape or build and still be competent as a group fitness instructor. Recruitment strategies, as an example could include an audition where the

potential employee shows her skills in a practical setting rather than being rejected on the basis of her appearance.

Recommendations to aerobic training providers

During the review of literature the content of several training modules was examined to determine if any courses had body image or body perception content. This included examining the course content of the Australian Institute of Fitness, the Health and Fitness Certificate at TAFE (Technical and Further Education) and speaking to the Director of Colleen Kluwen's aerobic academy. There was no content that covered the pressures of role modelling, or body image course content in relation to participants or for instructors. It is recommended that training providers include course content that focuses on the body image of instructors, and the pressures they may have within the fitness industry, and ways to deal with these pressures. Courses could also include the ways in which instructors influence their participants in the way they dress, speak and act.

A representative from TAFE was asked why courses on body image were not offered. The representative stated that, due to budget restrictions, an additional unit could not be included. Training providers need to recognise the importance of this subject. If budget restrictions are a problem, the content could be implemented within modules rather than a separate module.

Future studies

- Future research could concentrate on a more specific study on role modelling and fitness instructors. A qualitative study could gain an in-depth understanding on the pressures of role modelling in the fitness industry.
- This study found that the instructors were over-exercising when compared to the Australian exercise recommendations. A further study could delve into exercise habits and reasons for high levels of exercise of group fitness instructors.
- As employers, participants and peers were influences on the body perception of the instructors in this study, a future study could

investigate these influences more closely to explore the direct and indirect nature of these influences.

- Studies of male fitness instructors are non-existent. During the literature review, references to male instructors were rare. This study could be replicated using male group fitness instructors, as male instructors take fitness classes for female participants.
- There is also little research on the influences of the physical décor of fitness centres. A future study could focus on participants or members of fitness centres, and their perceptions on the physical décor of the fitness centre, and how this décor influences their body perception.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

Hi name and thanks for talking to me today. I need to go through a few things before we get started.

- I would like to tape record the interview – do I have your permission to do this? Thank you.
- The results of the interview are confidential. Your real name will not be used in any part of my study. You can choose a name _____, Thanks for that.
- Have a read of the statement of informed consent. You should already have a copy. Sign it if you agree. If you have any questions don't be afraid to ask. (get them to sign).
- I will outline for you what we are going to talk about. The **first part** I want to find out about you and how you got started in the fitness industry and how you became an instructor.
- The **second part** is about the type of classes you instruct.
- **The third part** will be about where you teach.
- **The fourth part** will be about how you feel about yourself.
- The **last part** will be about your training and diet regime. There are no wrong answers, your opinions are important, so just feel free to talk comfortably. If you don't understand any question, please let me know.

Section 1

Tell me about how you started in the fitness industry

Prompts:

How long? ☒

Casual? ☒

What do u enjoy about being a fi? ☒

What do u dislike about being a fi? ☒

Section 2

Tell me about the classes you teach

Prompts:

How many per week ☒Types ☒Exercises within ☒Why do u choose those exercises? (fitness, weight loss, strength, spot reducing) ☒Do u have control or does the gym specify the types of activities or routines you do? ☒How do you prepare yourself for your classes? (clothing, hygiene, make up, tattoos, jewellery, tan) ☒Who comes to your classes? ☒Why do they come to the classes? ☒What do u think participants want in an instructor? (appearance, role model, teaching skills, technique, encouragement) ☒What type of advice do u give participants? ☒How do u motivate participants in your classes? ☒

Section 3

Tell me about the places u work at

Prompts:

How many? ☒How does one place differ from the other? (atmosphere, participants) ☒What does it feel like to work there? ☒What sorts of **posters** are used to promote the gyms where u work? ☒How well do these posters represent the people who come to the classes? (Why/Why not?) ☒What sort of **advertisements** does your gym use to attract new members? (focus on weight loss as a gimmick, pictures of slim women) ☒How well do u think these advertisements work to draw people in? ☒What sorts of **signs** are used to motivate people in your gyms where u work? ☒How well do u think these signs motivate people? ☒What does your gym **sell**, other than memberships? (weight loss, bodybuilding supplements, clothes, sports, drinks) ☒How are **instructors recruited** at the places you work? (qualifications, a certain look?, is body shape a requirement?) ☒

What demands are placed on you at the gyms u work at? (do u feel under pressure to maintain a certain look to work at your centre?, if so, how do u feel about that pressure?) ☒

Uniform? ☒

Section 4

Describe to me the what you believe a group fitness instructor should look like

Prompts:

Do u believe you look like that? ☒

Is there anything you would change? (What?) ☒

How do u feel about your body? ☒

Section 5

Tell me about your diet and exercise regime

Prompts:

Do you maintain certain eating habits for your position as a gfi? ☒

If you were not an instructor, what would you eat differently? ☒

Describe your exercise habits ☒

What exercise do u do apart from teaching classes, why? (event?, maintenance for teaching?) ☒

Why do u exercise? ☒

APPENDIX B. LETTER TO INTERVIEWEES

Lana Leslie
PO Box 323
Osborne Park WA 6017
Phone: 0402 066 964 (mobile)
Email: elle@primus.com.au

Dear x,

You are invited to participate in a study to explore the body image of female group fitness (aerobics) instructors.

As you know, I am a Masters student, studying at Edith Cowan University. I am interested to hear about and explore the perceptions of other group fitness instructors working in the fitness industry. The purpose of the study is to determine how the workplace (in this case, the gym/s where you work) influences the body image of female group fitness instructors.

Your interview is set for: **Sunday, 15 April at 9am at your home.**

We will talk about the following topics:

1. **How you got started in the fitness industry**
2. **The classes you teach, the participant's expectations**
3. **Policies and practices of the gym/s where you work**
4. **The 'look' of a group fitness instructor**
5. **Your exercise and diet regime**

Attached is a 'statement of informed consent'. This is a document that sets out your involvement in the study. Please read this prior to the interview. I will ask you to sign it in my presence prior to the interview taking place.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Kind regards

Lana Leslie
B.S.Sci

6 April 2001

APPENDIX C. LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

AN EXPLORATION OF BODY IMAGE ISSUES FOR FEMALE GROUP FITNESS
(AEROBIC) INSTRUCTORS

Letter of Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study that explores the body perception of female group fitness instructors working within the fitness industry in Western Australia. Your perceptions will form the basis of my Master's thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University.

My name is Lana Leslie and I have been a group fitness instructor for fifteen years. I am very interested to hear about and explore the perceptions of other group fitness instructors working in the fitness industry. The project aims to explore how the workplace influences the body image of female group fitness instructors. It is envisaged that the results of my study will be of interest to many others working in the industry, as well as those contemplating entering the industry.

Should you volunteer to participate, you will be asked about your views and attitudes towards a range of issues including your workplace, your classes and your views of your fitness training and other body perception issues. You will need to be available for one interview, at a time and place of your choice in Perth or within comfortable travelling distance (up to two hours drive). Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour, and with your permission, the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. If at any time you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and any information you have provided to that point will not be used in the study.

We will discuss issues of confidentiality and protection of your identity prior to any interviews taking place. All tape recordings and transcripts will be coded and securely held. You will not be identifiable from the tapes, and alias names will be used. You will receive a copy of your tape so that you can check if it is correct. If there is something on the tape you wish to delete, that can be done.

Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on phone 0402 066964.

If you are willing to participate in the study described above, please sign below:

	You sign below:	Researcher signs below:
Name	(Print)	(Print)
Signature		
Date		

APPENDIX D. THEMES AND CONTENT

Themes and content from interviews showing development of questions in questionnaire.

Theme	Content	Question(s)
Body perception	Satisfaction with body shape	How do you feel about your body shape? I am satisfied with the way my body looks
	Body weight	I am naturally lean I feel better when I weigh less
	Changing some body parts	What would you change about your body shape? I need to lose weight
	Ideal body shape for instructors	I believe a female group fitness instructor should look athletic Female group fitness instructors don't have to be lean I believe that female group fitness instructors can be any shape or size As an instructor, I feel pressure to be have a lean body I feel that an overweight female group fitness instructor doesn't look right I believe that female group fitness instructors are role models of health and fitness: Describe any expectations that you feel are placed upon you to maintain a lean body shape as an instructor
	Fitness of instructors	I feel that a female group fitness instructor should be fit enough to teach classes
Exercise and nutrition regime	Eat anything without gaining weight	I am naturally lean
	Choosing low fat foods	I watch what I eat to maintain my body shape as an instructor
	Exercise routines	How many hours of exercise per week (not counting classes you teach) do you do
The influence of management practices on body perception	Recruitment	Question 32: What recruitment practices are you aware of that specify a particular body shape to be employed as a group fitness instructor?
	Uniforms	Describe what you wear when you teach a class Is this a uniform that your employer expects you to wear? How do you feel about what you wear when you teach classes?
	Marketing practices-: Body revealing/concealing	What does your fitness centre (s) sell? (Apart from memberships) Why are these items are sold at your fitness centre?
	Body improvement products	As above

	Advertising body improvement	Please rank from 1 to 3 the top three strategies your fitness centre uses when advertising. For example, if you think that your centre advertises body building the most to attract new members, place 1 next to Body Building.
	Advertising extra services	As above
The influence of employers	Image	I believe that employers expect instructors to maintain a lean body shape I believe that employers prefer female group fitness instructors who are lean Employers don't mind overweight female group fitness instructors Describe any experiences you have had where your employer has commented on your body shape or weight.
The influence of participants	A slimrole model	I believe that female participants want to have bodies like the female group fitness instructors I believe participants don't like seeing overweight female group fitness instructors I believe participants respect you more if you are lean
	Judgment of instructor's bodies	I believe that participants judge the bodies of female group fitness instructors
Physical influences from workplace	Pictures of slim, attractive bodies	Describe any pictures or posters of people displayed on the walls at your fitness centre(s) body shape, what they are wearing, position of body, more men than women etc) How do you feel about the pictures of the women?
	Inspirational signs	As above
	Sexual emphasis	As above
	Unrealistic	As above
	*Note: mirrors not mentioned in interviews	Are there mirrors in the aerobics room? How do you feel about having the mirrors in the aerobics room?
Demographic Profile		What are your qualifications? Where did you train to be a group fitness instructor? How long have you been working as a group fitness instructor? What is your age? How many classes do you teach each week? How many hours of exercise per week (not counting classes you teach) do you do? At how many locations north of Perth do you teach? At how many locations south of Perth do you teach?

APPENDIX E. QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK SHEET

The questions below relate to how you felt about completing this questionnaire.

Was the questionnaire easy to complete?_____ (yes or no)

If no, please state reasons below, and suggestions for improvement

How do you feel about the use of the words in the questionnaire ‘thin’, ‘slim’ and ‘trim?’ (in sections 1 & 2)

Thin?

Slim?

Trim?

How could the layout of the questionnaire (or the way the questionnaire looks) be improved?

☺Thank you for completing the feedback sheet.

APPENDIX F. LETTER TO PILOT PARTICIPANTS

Lana Leslie
P.O. Box 323
OSBORNE PARK WA 6017

Dear Group Fitness Instructor,

You are invited to participate in a pilot study that explores the body perception of female group fitness instructors working within the fitness industry in Western Australia. Your perceptions will form the basis of my Masters thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University.

My name is Lana Leslie and I have been a group fitness instructor for fifteen years. I am very interested to hear about and explore the perceptions of other group fitness instructors working in the fitness industry. The project aims to explore how the workplace influences the body image of female group fitness instructors. It is envisaged that the results of my study will be of interest to many others working in the industry, as well as those contemplating entering the industry.

The attached questionnaire forms the 'pilot study' of the project. This means that the questionnaire is in a testing stage to check if it is suitable before being distributed to a wider audience. Your involvement will be to firstly complete the questionnaire then to critique it, by completing a 'Questionnaire Feedback Sheet' (attached to be back of the questionnaire). After completing both the questionnaire and the feedback sheet, you can return them to me, using the stamped envelope provided. *All the information gathered from this questionnaire will not be used in the main study. I also request that you do not discuss the questionnaire with any other people as such discussion may affect the results.*

Things to note:

- Please note that *return* the questionnaire and feedback sheet must be returned to me by Tuesday 19th June 2001, using the stamped envelope supplied.
- Your name is not required for the study. This is an anonymous questionnaire. and The name of your gymnasium where you work will also not be identified in any way.
- In the next stage of the study, questionnaires will be distributed through many gymnasiums across the Perth area. You are not required to complete another questionnaire in the next stage.

If you have any questions about the study, please call me on 0402 066 964 (mobile).

Kind regards

Lana Leslie

9 June 2001

APPENDIX G. QUESTIONNAIRE

An Exploration Of Body Image Issues For Female Group Fitness (Aerobic)
Instructors.

This questionnaire contains statements and questions that allow you to give your perceptions on a variety of aspects relating to your work as a Group Fitness Instructor.

IMPORTANT

These questionnaires have been distributed to many fitness centres in the Perth area. If you have already completed this questionnaire, please do not complete another.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The instructions for filling in the questions vary. One type of response required is for you to circle one number opposite a statement. For example:

Strongly Strongly
Disagree Agree

I enjoy my work as a Group Fitness Instructor

1 2 3 4 5

Other questions ask you to tick the most appropriate answer or fill in a response. Please read carefully the instructions before answering each question.

This is an anonymous questionnaire. You do not need to identify yourself in any way. Please ensure that you do not write your name, or any other comments that will identify you, on the attached questionnaire. By completing the questionnaire you are consenting to take part in this research. Before you start, you should read the attached covering letter carefully as it explains fully the intention of this project.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Lana Leslie
PO Box 323
Osborne Park 6021 WA
Phone: 0402 066 964
Email: elle@primus.com.au

Section 1 - On Being an Instructor

Listed below is a series of statements on how you feel about a range of different issues about being an instructor. You are asked to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement as it applies to you. Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number on the scale opposite each statement. If you agree strongly with a statement you should circle a number at the upper end of the scale (4 or 5). If you disagree strongly with the statement you should circle a number at the lower end of the scale (1 or 2). If your feelings are somewhere in between you should circle the middle of the scale (3).

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
1) I believe a female group fitness instructor should look athletic	1	2	3	4	5
2) I feel that a female group fitness instructor should be fit enough to teach classes	1	2	3	4	5
3) Female group fitness instructors don't have to be lean	1	2	3	4	5
4) I believe that female group fitness instructors are role models of health and fitness	1	2	3	4	5
5) Employers don't mind overweight female group fitness instructors	1	2	3	4	5
6) I believe that female participants want to have bodies like the female group fitness instructors	1	2	3	4	5
7) I feel better when I weigh less	1	2	3	4	5
8) I believe that employers expect instructors to maintain a lean body shape	1	2	3	4	5
9) I am satisfied with the way my body looks	1	2	3	4	5
10) I believe that female group fitness instructors can be any shape or size	1	2	3	4	5
11) As an instructor, I feel pressure to have a lean body	1	2	3	4	5
12) I need to lose weight	1	2	3	4	5
13) I believe participants don't like seeing overweight female group fitness instructors	1	2	3	4	5
14) I watch what I eat to maintain my body shape as an instructor	1	2	3	4	5
15) I believe that employers prefer female group fitness instructors who are lean	1	2	3	4	5
16) I believe that participants judge the bodies of female group fitness instructors	1	2	3	4	5
17) I feel that an overweight female group fitness instructor doesn't look right	1	2	3	4	5
18) I am naturally lean	1	2	3	4	5
19) I believe participants respect you more if you are lean	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2 –Your Workplace

The questions below require you to comment upon your workplace, including retail, décor, what you wear when instructing and the classes in your timetable.

20) What does your fitness centre (s) sell? (Apart from memberships) Please tick the box or boxes that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Performance Drinks	<input type="checkbox"/> Fat Burner Supplements	<input type="checkbox"/> Nutritionist Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Clothing & Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight Loss Courses	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Training
<input type="checkbox"/> Protein Supplements	<input type="checkbox"/> Dietician Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Lycra Clothing

21) Why are these items sold at your fitness centre?

22) Describe any pictures or posters of people displayed on the walls at your fitness centre(s) body shape, what they are wearing, position of body, more men than women etc)

23) How do you feel about the pictures of the women?

24) Are there mirrors in the aerobics room? Please tick the box

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
------------------------------	-----------------------------

25) How do you feel about having the mirrors in the aerobics room?

26) Describe what you wear when you teach a class

27) Is this a uniform that your employer expects you to wear?

☐ Yes

☐ No

28) How do you feel about what you wear when you teach classes?

29) List the names of the classes on your centre's timetable that are typically targeted towards women participants (for example Tummies, Butts and Thighs or similar types of classes)

30) How do you feel about these types of classes?

31) Describe any experiences you have had where your employer has commented on your body shape or weight.

[The page contains faint horizontal lines, likely representing a blank sheet of paper or a very faded scan.]

32) What recruitment practices are you aware of that specify a particular body shape to be employed as a group fitness instructor? For example a specification in a job description

[illegible]

33) Please rank from 1 to 3 the top three strategies your fitness centre uses when advertising. For example, if you think that your centre advertises body building the most to attract new members, place 1 next to Body Building.

<input type="checkbox"/> Body Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight Loss	<input type="checkbox"/> "Sexy" pictures of models
<input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social (meet new friends)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fitness	

Section 3 – Yourself.

This section requires you to comment on how you feel about yourself, and what influences your feelings.

34) Please rank from 1 to 3 your top three influences over the way you feel about your body shape. For example, if you think that your partner influences the way you feel about your body the most, place 1 next to partner.

<input type="checkbox"/> Partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Fashion Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Mirror Image
<input type="checkbox"/> Television Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Fitness Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Participants
<input type="checkbox"/> Peers (other instructors)	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Employer	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Family

35) How do these influences (as you chose above) make you feel about yourself?

[illegible]

36) How do you feel about your body shape?

[illegible]

37) What would you change about your body shape?

38) Describe any expectations that you feel are placed upon you to maintain a lean body shape as an instructor

[illegible]

Section 4 – Your Profile

Listed below is a series of questions that will form a profile of the instructors completing the survey. Please either tick or write the answers as they apply to you.

39) What are your qualifications? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Exercise to Music Instructor (also known as Fitness Leader or Aerobics Instructor)

☐ Les Mills Instructor

☐ University Undergraduate degree (Please state degree name on the line below)

☐ University Postgraduate degree (Please state degree name on the line below)

☐ Aqua Instructor

☐ Other (Please indicate on the line below)

☐ Unqualified

40) Where did you train to be a group fitness instructor? (Please tick the appropriate box)

☐ TAFE (Technical and Further Education)

☐ AIF (Australian Institute of Fitness)

☐ Private Aerobics Academy

☐ Network Correspondence Course

☐ Other (please specify) _____

41) How long have you been working as a group fitness instructor?

months

years

42) What is your age? _____

43) How many classes do you teach each week? _____

44) How many hours of exercise per week (not counting classes you teach) do you do? _____

45) At how many locations north of Perth do you teach? _____

46) At how many locations south of Perth do you teach? _____

47) Do you have any comments about being a group fitness instructor and maintaining a particular body shape? Or any other comments?

[illegible]

**Please return the questionnaire by Monday, 6 August 2001
(using the stamped envelope supplied)**

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

APPENDIX H. LETTER TO AEROBIC COORDINATORS

Lana Leslie
P.O. Box 323
OSBORNE PARK WA 6017

Dear x,

Your female instructors are invited to participate in a study that explores the body perception of female group fitness instructors working within the fitness industry in Western Australia. Their perceptions will form the basis of my Masters thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University.

My name is Lana Leslie and I have been a group fitness instructor for fifteen years. I am very interested to hear about and explore the perceptions of other group fitness instructors working in the fitness industry. The project aims to explore how the workplace influences the body perception of female group fitness instructors. It is envisaged that the results of my study will be of interest to many others working in the industry, as well as those contemplating entering the industry.

Your involvement in this study is to distribute the questionnaires (and later reminder letters – see below) to your instructors. You are not required to assist in any other way. After completing the questionnaire, instructors can return them to me individually, using the stamped envelope provided. They do not have to return them to you.

Things to note:

Please distribute the questionnaires to your female instructors by Thursday, 26th July 2001

Numerous fitness centres are participating in this study. As questionnaires are anonymous, individual fitness centre results cannot be given

To encourage questionnaires to be returned, reminder letters will be sent to your female instructors approximately 6 August 2001. Please distribute. Attached to the reminder letters will be the questionnaire (in case they misplace the original questionnaire)

A summary of results of the study will be forwarded to you in November 2001

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you have any questions, please call me on 0402 066 964 (mobile), or my Supervisor, Dr Sue Colyer on 9400 5429

Kind regards

Lana Leslie
23 July 2001

APPENDIX I. REMINDER LETTER

Lana Leslie

P.O. Box 323
OSBORNE PARK WA 6917

Opportunity to Participate in Study on Female Group Fitness Instructors Reminder to send back questionnaires

Hello Again Group Fitness Instructor!

Firstly, big thank you to those that sent back the questionnaires. Your opinions are highly valued. For those that returned questionnaires, please disregard this letter.

Secondly, this letter is to remind those that did not complete questionnaires, to please return them. If you have misplaced your questionnaire, please see attached a copy of the questionnaire and feedback sheet for you to complete. It will take 5 minutes to complete. A self addressed, reply paid envelope is attached.

Very few studies (worldwide) have been conducted upon the attitudes and opinions of female group fitness instructors. If you decide to participate, you will be part of a local study that will have great benefit to other instructors working in the industry, as well as those contemplating entering the industry.

Please return the questionnaire and feedback sheet by 13th August 2001, using the reply paid envelope supplied.

This is an anonymous questionnaire. I am unaware of your identity.

If you have any questions about the study, please call me on 0402 066 964 (mobile) or my Supervisor Dr Sue Colyer on 9400 5429.

Lana Leslie
3rd August 2001

APPENDIX J. ETHICS APPROVAL FORM



EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA
CHURCHLANDS CAMPUS

Pearson Street, Churchlands
Western Australia 6018
Telephone (08) 9273 8333
Facsimile (08) 9387 7095

ADP454 261 485361

8th February 2001

Human Research Ethics Committee

Ms Lana Leslie
PO Box 323
Osborne Park WA 6021

Dear Ms Leslie

Code: 01-10
Project Title: *An exploration of body image issues for female group fitness (aerobic) instructors*

This proposal was reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at its meeting on the 2nd February 2001.

I am pleased to advise that the proposal complies with the provisions contained in the University's policy for the conduct of ethical research, and your application for ethics clearance has been approved.

Please note that your research proposal must be approved by the Research Students and Scholarships Committee before you commence any data collection. The Graduate School will inform you in writing as soon as your research proposal has been accepted.

Period of approval: From 5th February 2001 To 30th June 2001

With best wishes for success in your work.

Yours sincerely



ROD CROTHERS
Executive Officer

Attachment: Conditions of Approval

cc. Dr S Colyer, Supervisor
Mrs Karen Leckie, Executive Officer, Graduate School
Mrs T Lampard, Administrative Officer, HDC

Student No. 0969753

JOONDALUP CAMPUS
100 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup
Western Australia 6027
Telephone (08) 9400 5555

MOUNT LAWLEY CAMPUS
2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley
Western Australia 6050
Telephone (08) 9370 6111

CHURCHLANDS CAMPUS
Pearson Street, Churchlands
Western Australia 6018
Telephone (08) 9273 8333

CLAREMONT CAMPUS
Goldsworthy Road, Claremont
Western Australia 6010
Telephone (08) 9442 1333

ECU SOUTH WEST CAMPUS (BUNBURY)
Robertson Drive, Bunbury
Western Australia
Telephone (08) 9780 7777

APPENDIX K. LETTER ACCOMPANYING QUESTIONNAIRE

Lana Leslie
P.O. Box 323
OSBORNE PARK WA 6017

Dear Group Fitness Instructor,

You are invited to participate in a study that explores the body perception of female group fitness instructors working within the fitness industry in Western Australia. Your perceptions will form the basis of my Masters thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University.

My name is Lana Leslie and I have been a group fitness instructor for fifteen years. I am very interested to hear about and explore the perceptions of other group fitness instructors working in the fitness industry. The project aims to explore how the workplace influences the body perception of female group fitness instructors. It is envisaged that the results of my study will be of interest to many others working in the industry, as well as those contemplating entering the industry.

Your involvement in this study is voluntary. After completing both the questionnaire you can return it to me, using the stamped envelope provided.

Things to note:

Please return the questionnaire to me by Monday, 6th August 2001 using the stamped envelope supplied.

Your name is not required for the study. This is an anonymous questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the study, please call me on 0402 066 964 (mobile), or my Supervisor, Dr Sue Colyer on 9400 5429

Kind regards

Lana Leslie
26 July 2001