

From Meaning to Breathing:

**~ Rationalization, Translation, Embodiment, and Cultural Meaning:
Four Method Assemblages, Four Realities of Prechoreographed Group
Exercise Instructing ~**

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Abstract

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Group exercise-to-music classes have long been a popular keep-fit activity and long criticized for their so-called alienating and objectifying aspects. Today there is an ongoing trend from the “freestyle” type where instructors chose their own music and moves, to the “prechoreographed” type produced by corporations like Les Mills International (LMI). LMI prepares standardized, class-in-a-box music and choreography kits which local instructors deliver in licensed clubs—a practice critics claim leads to deskilling, and further alienation and loss of meaning for instructors. Yet, not all instructors feel alienated. In cases where instructors really like the prechoreographed system, what processes underlie their experiencing it as meaningful and worthwhile?

Through John Law’s method assemblage approach, I argue, it is possible to use different, sometimes contradictory theoretical perspectives to capture these instructors’ realities. The approach was used in the analysis of empirical material collected through qualitative interviews with LMI instructors and participants, participant observations, and examination of LMI texts. Material was analyzed from a Grounded Theory approach and resultant categories were used to build four method assemblages from existing theoretical perspectives. The assemblages shed light on processes of rationalization, translation, embodiment, and cultural meaning which make instructing through LMI worthwhile from interviewees’ points of view. The paper also demonstrates the utility of the multi-method assemblage approach.

Keywords: prechoreographed, group exercise instructor, Les Mills, ANT, body-subject, ritual, method assemblage

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Empirical Background.....	1
<i>“Freestyle” Versus Prechoreographed Group Exercise-to-Music Classes</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Les Mills International: A Prechoreographed Group Exercise Industry Leader.....</i>	<i>3</i>
Prior Research on “Aerobics”, “Freestyle” and Prechoreographed Group Exercise Classes	4
Prechoreographed Instructor Experiences: The Positive as Problematic	6
Methods and Empirical Material.....	7
<i>Fieldwork sites.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Participant Observations.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Qualitative Interviews.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Les Mills International Textual Materials</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	<i>11</i>
Theoretical Approaches to Meaning: What is going on?	11
<i>A Conundrum Posed by Theoretical Approaches from Prior Literature</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Mess, Ordering, and Science</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>The “Method Assemblage”.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Four Goings-on, Four Method Assemblages, Four Locations for Meaning: Initial Sketches</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Caveats and Delimitations.....</i>	<i>20</i>
Clear Cut Promises of Clear Cut Means to Clear Cut Ends: Les Mills and Rationalization	21
It Takes a Network: Les Mills and Translation	29
“They teach in the essence of who they are”; “It’s not planned, it’s just coming”: Les Mills and Embodiment	38
“I call it the goosebump feeling... that’s fitness magic”: Les Mills and Cultural Meaning..	47
Conclusion, Reflections, and Areas for Further Research	54
References	57
Appendix A: Samples of Transcription and Coding.....	i
Sample 1 – Original Transcript.....	i
Sample 2 – Coded Transcript.....	iii
Sample 3 – Memos/Preliminary Analyses After Coding.....	iv
Appendix B: Tables and Figures.....	vi
Table 1: LMI's Internationally Available Programs	vi
Table 2: Instructors Interviewed for the Study	vii
Table 3: Summary of Concepts in Latour’s Model of Circulating Reference.....	viii
Figure 1: An Element of Representation	ix
Figure 2: Processes of Reduction of Detail and Amplification of Meaning	x
Figure 3: Latour’s Chain of Meaning and Law’s Method Assemblage	xi
Figure 4: Summary of Four Method Assemblages	xii
Figure 5: Freestyle Network	xiv

Introduction

Rather than following a rising curve of cumulative findings, cultural analysis breaks up into a disconnected yet coherent sequence of bolder and bolder sorties.¹

Theoretical formulations hover so low over the interpretations they govern that they don't make much sense or hold much interest apart from them. This is so, not because they are not general... but because, stated independently of their applications, they seem either commonplace or vacant.²

This paper is a series of four sorties into the study of meanings: *meanings lived through* by prechoreographed exercise-to-music instructors, and *meanings thought through* by cultural sociological researchers like myself. Empirically, it is an investigation of how instructors take a rationalized, commodified cultural form, the prechoreographed group exercise class, and make it meaningful for themselves and their class participants. Theoretically, it is an exploration of how *four different* approaches—a rationalization approach, an actor-network approach, an embodiment approach, and a cultural meaning approach—construct and locate meaning, and detect and amplify *four complimentary* empirical realities. As each approach or “method assemblage” is put into conversation with the same empirical material from the complex, messy sociological phenomenon that is pre-choreographed exercise instructing, a different reality emerges. The cumulative purpose of the four sorties is to add to the scholarly understanding of prechoreographed exercise instructing, while simultaneously showing the value of a multi-method assemblage approach to analysis in cultural, everyday life sociology.

Empirical Background

“Freestyle” Versus Prechoreographed Group Exercise-to-Music Classes

The group exercise-to-music class (“group exercise” class) is a common cultural phenomenon, and has been a popular keep-fit activity in rich countries since “aerobics” classes became widely available in the 1980s. In the group exercise class, the instructor models physical movements in time to music for the participants to mirror with their own bodies. Instructors also use verbal, visual, and other cues to motivate and guide the participants in executing the moves correctly and with a proper level of effort. Since the first high/low impact “aerobics” classes,

¹ Clifford Geertz. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Chap. 1 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by Clifford Geertz, 3-30. New York: Basic Books, 1973, 25

² Ibid

different class genres have developed as elements of other cultural forms have been introduced into group exercise classes. Common genres include: “step” (involving the stepping on and off a platform); “pump” (endurance and body shaping moves incorporating free weights); aero-box and other martial arts inspired forms; “latin”, “hip hop” and other dance-inspired forms; and mind-body classes involving yoga, tai chi and Pilates fusion, to name only a few.

Today there are two common models of for instructors to follow when teaching group exercise classes: the “freestyle” model, and the prechoreographed model. Instructors following the “freestyle” model design their own classes by personally selecting the music and sequencing (choreographing) moves in time to it. This “craft” model was the most common when “aerobics” first became popular, and even today many widely accepted instructor education and certification courses train instructors in the skills needed for this “craft” model.³

Instructors working in the prechoreographed model receive their class designs as standardized, branded, proprietary “class-in-a-box” packages prepared by companies such as Jazzercise,⁴ Body Training Systems,⁵ and Les Mills International (LMI). Such companies design separate programs or class series based on different popular class genres. As a genre, each program is given its own purpose, training approach, musical style, signature moves, and flavor or atmosphere. At regular intervals, instructors who have been trained and certified for the proprietary programs through the company receive a new release package. Each release package is a “class-in-a-box”: it contains expertly selected and sequenced moves set in time to professionally selected and mixed music, with strongly recommended scripted verbal and visual cues. The prechoreographed instructor’s role is to memorize the package through practice, and then and bring the class-in-a-box to life through her performance of it with her own participants.⁶

³ Alan Felstead, Alison Fuller, Nick Jewson, Konstantinos Kakavelakis, and Lorna Unwin. "Grooving to the same tunes? Learning, training and productive systems in the aerobics studio." *Work, Employment and Society* 21, no. 2 (2007): 189-208.

⁴Jazzercise, Inc. Jazzercise Dance Exercise Programs. 2001-2011. <http://www.jazzercise.com/> (accessed August 18, 2012).

⁵Body Training Systems. Body Training Systems. n.d. <http://www.bodytrainingsystems.com/> (accessed August 18, 2012).

⁶ See Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?”, 2007; Tara Brabazon. "Time for a change or more of the same? Les Mills and the masculinisation of aerobics." *Sporting Traditions* 17, no. 1 (2000): 97-112.; Jaana Parviainen."The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry: The experience design of Les Mills choreographies." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 5 (2011): 526-541. Other internationally branded group exercise classes including Zumba, Spinning, and Sweden’s Afropowerdance are “preformatted” rather than prechoreographed in a strict sense. While instructors of these programs must stick to the same overall format and maintain the branded standards, they have more freedom to select music and put together their own movement sequences in classes. See Zumba Fitness, LLC. Become a Zumba Fitness Instructor. 2012. <http://www.zumba.com/en-US/trainings/overview/> (accessed August 29, 2012); Mad Dog Athletics, Inc. Spinning® Instructor Orientation from the Industry Leaders. 2012. http://www.spinning.com/en/become_an_instructor (accessed August 29, 2012), and afropowerdance - Holistic Training. n.d. <http://www.holistictraining.se/show/object.asp?oid=3&lng=> (accessed August 18, 2012).

There has been hot debate among practicing instructors, and scholars alike over which model, “freestyle” or prechoreographed, produces the best quality instructors and most authentic workout experiences. Some see prechoreographed programming as stifling instructor creativity and causing instructing skills to atrophy, while others see it as a way to provide higher quality classes more consistently.⁷ In any case, there is a strong trend towards switching to the prechoreographed model in health clubs around the world. This has led Rebecca Small, one longtime presenter at professional conferences on group exercise, to conclude that in some markets such as Australia there are very few freestyle job openings or competent instructors left to fill them.⁸

Les Mills International: A Prechoreographed Group Exercise Industry Leader

Les Mills International (LMI) is a leading force behind this trend. With its 90,000 certified instructors leading 10 formats of group exercise-to-music classes in 14,000 fitness facilities in 80 countries, Les Mills International (LMI) is the largest provider of prechoreographed group exercise-to-music classes in the world.⁹ Though founded as a single gym in Auckland, New Zealand in 1968, Les Mills created its first prechoreographed class format, Pump (today’s “BodyPump” free weights class), in 1990, trialled it in Australia in 1995, and showcased it internationally in 1997. The company has developed and released nine other programs internationally since, as summarized in Table 1, Appendix B.

LMI Program Directors design new programs or class formats by adapting existing group exercise genres to the LMI branded format. Drawing on exercise science, the Directors adapt physical training techniques from existing sports, dance, and mind/body disciplines into new class moves for quarterly releases. They work with music and entertainment industry professionals who mix the music and help with performance cues for instructors. Every three

⁷ See for example, scholarly articles, Brabazon. “Time for a change or more of the same?”, 2000; Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?”, 2007; and Parviainen, “The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry”, 2011. See also articles by group exercise instructors and presenters: Alexandra Williams, “The ‘perform or create’ continuum.” *Ideafit.com*. April 2006. <http://www.ideafit.com/fitness-library/perform-or-create-continuum-0> (accessed October 5, 2010), Shannon Fable. “A formula for fitness & fun.” *www.ideafit.com*. January 2008. <http://www.ideafit.com/fitness-library/formula-fitness-fun> (accessed October 5, 2010); Small, Rebecca. “The best of both worlds: Instructing freestyle and pre-chore group.” *Australian Fitness Network*. Edited by Ryan Hogan. July 3, 2009. <http://www.fitnessnetwork.com.au/BlogRetrieve.aspx?BlogID=182&PostID=41922> (accessed October 5, 2010); Jill S. Brown. “McFitness: Are fitness classes going the way of fast food?” *Huffington Post*. October 29, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jill-s-brown/pre-choreographed-fitness-classes_b_1033965.html (accessed August 12, 2012).

⁸ Small, The best of both worlds: Instructing freestyle and pre-chore group 2009

⁹ Les Mills International Ltd. Les Mills: For a fitter planet. 2012. <http://www.lesmills.com/global/about-les-mills/about-les-mills.aspx> (accessed August 2, 2012).

months the Directors work with the Program Training Coordinators and Master Trainers to “test run” and tweak a new set of music-and-moves in the Auckland club. At the end of a week, they film a tested and tweaked Master Class for LMI instructors to learn and present in clubs around the world.

LMI licensed instructors receive the Master Class DVD in the Quarterly Release Package. The Package also includes a CD with the class music, and a booklet of choreography notes with explanations of the class theme, goals, focus, moves, etc. as well as suggested verbal and visual cues for leading participants. Every beat of the music has a corresponding move, and instructors must memorize the music, moves and cues on their own time. LMI arranges quarterly training sessions for instructors, and some health club chains provide group practice sessions. Clubs often encourage instructors to create buzz around the switchover to a new release, and schedule two or more instructors per class during “Launch Week”. LMI sells posters and other promotional materials to clubs to help promote new releases.

LMI’s business rests on a club-based system, i.e. fitness venues must pay a flat monthly fee to license each program (type of class) no matter how many actual classes are scheduled. To take part in program training, instructors must be affiliated with a licensed venue which agrees to provide them with employment after they are certified and licensed. Only licensed LMI instructors may instruct the programs, and only licensed LMI fitness facilities may host the classes.¹⁰ In addition to providing separate programs, quarterly class packages, and instructor training, LMI provides marketing materials and other club management services to licensed clubs. Once health club chains introduce LMI programs, it is common for freestyle slots in group exercise timetables to be sharply reduced or eliminated. For the freestyle instructors employed there, it can mean a choice between converting to LMI or losing their jobs.¹¹ This has lent a certain urgency to the ongoing freestyle/prechoreographed debate.

Prior Research on “Aerobics”, “Freestyle” and Prechoreographed Group Exercise Classes

Group exercise itself has long been controversial, something reflected in past scholarly literature on the subject. Many prior studies have examined the various meanings of group

¹⁰ Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?”, 2007,192ff

¹¹ Small, “The best of both worlds: Instructing freestyle and pre-chore group”, 2009; empirical material collected for this study

exercise from a gender perspective. During the 1980s and '90s feminist scholars found the practice “alienating” and “oppressive” for the mostly female “aerobics” participants, arguing that while *purposeful* movement is related to an empowering state of “being-in-the-world,”¹² the stylized, mirrored movements of aerobics were designed solely to reshape sectionalized body parts, and were thus patriarchally oppressive. In the words of Kagan & Morse:

[r]ather than mastering the environment around her, the [aerobics] participant... changes herself to fit the shape of the world's expectations...The aerobics industry is like a factory in which motion becomes an instrument for dominating and shaping the body as an object.¹³

Later, following a discourse analytical approach, Lloyd concludes that aerobics is about creating and imposing “the dominant feminine (white) aesthetic.”¹⁴ From a Foucauldian approach, Markula examines “the panoptic power arrangement” producing the young, slim, toned, sexy “aerobicizing body” of group fitness classes.¹⁵ Following the process sociology of Elias, Maguire and Mansfield examine how insider-outsider relations, social constraints, and self-control support dominant ideals of femininity in group exercise classes.¹⁶

Taking a slightly less negative view, Collins looks at the agency of group exercise participants through their “strategies of resistance”.¹⁷ Interestingly Gimlin argues that aerobics practice enables participants to disassociate their sense of identity from changes in their bodies, instead associating characteristics such as the willpower and perseverance with the practice.¹⁸ Loland examines gender differences in participants' perceptions of body appearance and empowerment.¹⁹ Markula, and Martin explore the potential of certain forms (“mindful” fitness, Markula; “hip hop” aerobics, Martin) for changing dominant discourses of femininity and race,

¹² Iris Marion Young. "Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality." *Human Studies* 3 (1980): 137-156

¹³ Elizabeth Kagan, and Margaret Morse. "The body electronic: Aerobic exercise on video: Women's search for empowerment and self-transformation." *TDR* 32, no. 4 (1988): 164-180, 177

¹⁴ Moya Lloyd. "Feminism, aerobics and the politics of the body." *Body & Society* 2, no. 2 (1997): 79-98, 95

¹⁵ Markula does refer to other works she has authored which elaborate on the “resistant” reasons for group exercise class participation, including enjoyment, a source of enjoyment, increased energy for work, needed “me-time”, and an opportunity to socialize and make friends. Pirkko Markula. "Firm but shapely, fit but sexy, strong but thin: The postmodern aerobicizing bodies." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12 (1995): 424-453, 450

¹⁶ Joseph Maguire, and Louise Mansfield. "The material body, social processes and emotion: 'Techniques of the body' revisited." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 15 (1998): 109-137.

¹⁷ Leslea Havaron Collins. "Working out the contradictions: Feminism and aerobics." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 26, no. 1 (2002): 85-109.

¹⁸ Debra L. Gimlin. *Body Work: Beauty and Self Image-in American Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

¹⁹ Nina Waaler Loland. "The art of concealment in a culture of display: Aerobicizing women's and men's experience and use of their own bodies." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17, no. 2 (2000): 111-129.

respectively.²⁰ Brabazon points out the irony of feminist participation in the normalization of predominantly male fitness practices (competitive “sport”) as “meaningful” and the pathologization of predominantly female fitness practices (the “happy collectivity of aerobics”) as alienating and meaningless.²¹ Finally, McIntyre looks at negotiation, play, and empowerment with dominant gender constructions in a relatively new group exercise genre, “striptease aerobics”.²²

Existing scholarly literature on prechoreographed group exercise specifically is presently limited. Brabazon provides an interesting account and analysis of member reception of Les Mills BodyCombat when it was introduced at their health club in Western Australia.²³ Felstead, et al., in a paper upon which my preunderstanding for this study was largely based, conducted a multi-sited team ethnography on Les Mills instructor training systems in the UK.²⁴ The paper is theoretically informed by Ritzer’s McDonaldization thesis and Braverman’s Marxist distinction between premodern “craft mastery” and the degraded skill level of the industrial worker.²⁵ Thus, the “freestyle” system of training and employing group exercise instructors is depicted as primarily beneficial for instructors themselves, while highly prechoreographed systems benefit employers but are alienating and dehumanizing. Finally and most recently Parviainen is highly critical of Les Mills choreography because, she argues, the standardization of body movements it entails emphasizes *Körper* (roughly the body understood as object and subject to objectivizing scientific knowledges) at the expense of *Lieb* (the phenomenologically lived body).²⁶

Prechoreographed Instructor Experiences: The Positive as Problematic

Much of the literature reviewed above is highly critical of group exercise classes, both freestyle and prechoreographed. Group exercise is said to section the body into parts, subjecting them to rationalized exercise regimes which shape the body and by extension the group exercise

²⁰ Pirkko Markula. "Turning into one's self: Foucault's technologies of the self and mindful fitness." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 21 (2004): 302-321; Randy Martin. "The composite body: Hip-hop aerobics and the multicultural nation." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 21, no. 2 (1997): 120-133.

²¹ Brabazon. "Time for a change or more of the same?" 2000

²² Magdalena Petersson McIntyre. "Keep your clothes on! Fit and sexy through striptease aerobics." In *Women and Exercise: The Body, Health and Consumerism*, edited by Eileen Kennedy and Pirkko Markula, 247-265. New York: Routledge, 2011.

²³ Brabazon. "Time for a change or more of the same?", 2000

²⁴ Felstead, et al. "Grooving to the same tunes?", 2007

²⁵ See Harry Braverman. *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, 443ff for a fuller account.

²⁶ Parviainen, "The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry", 2011

participant as an object. Through its strict division of labour between class designers and instructors, the prechoreographed form is said to take dehumanization a step further. It is viewed as a rationalized, commodified, mass-reproduced cultural form, which leaves instructors so de-skilled and robbed of spontaneity and creativity that they appear “robotic” during classes:

I hate seeing ... robotic scripting. So, for example, at a certain point in the music they'll go, 'hoo-ha!' ... they'll do bicep curl, the music will go, 'bang, bang, bang' and they'll all go 'hoo-ha!', or they'll say things like, 'let's power up!' and they all use the very same words and I just find it very, very depressing because it takes away the skill of being a teacher.²⁷

Yet, as I was later to find during my own study, many instructors report positive experiences teaching prechoreographed classes, those from LMI in particular:

*I wouldn't even teach fitness if I didn't do Les Mills program anymore. I taught years of freestyle fitness and I will teach yoga but I wouldn't teach fitness programs any more if I didn't have Les Mills, so this has put, added years to my career and I love it.*²⁸

General literature on prechoreographed group exercise is scarce, and scholarly literature on positive prechoreographed instructor experiences, such as those expressed by my interviewee Sara above, is non-existent. Clearly, there is a gap to be filled.

This paper addresses this gap from two angles: first empirically, through the careful analysis of interview material collected from LMI instructors who like the programs, and secondly, through the application of four different theoretical perspectives, each of which locate meaning differently. The next section will present how the empirical material was collected, and the one following will introduce the theoretical problem posed by LMI instructors like Sara, and how taking a four-perspective view can illuminate where and how these instructors find meaning in the LMI system.

Methods and Empirical Material

This study began in the summer of 2009 as a qualitative, exploratory investigation of how instructors and participants of prechoreographed systems found the programs and classes particularly motivating and meaningful. I originally planned the project as a kandidat thesis and did the fieldwork during a one month long summer vacation in 2009 in Canada and spare time

²⁷ A group exercise instructor-trainer discussing Les Mills instructors' presentation, quotation taken from Felstead, et al. "Grooving to the same tunes?", 2007, 203. See also Brown, "McFitness: Are fitness classes going the way of fast food?", 2011, for a more recent expression of this general opinion.

²⁸ Sara, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Sara Ontario, Canada, (2009).

here in Sweden. The main methods used in the collection of empirical material were participant observation, the qualitative interview, and examination of documents on LMI websites and websites about group exercise more generally. I have over 20 years of group fitness experience as a participant in Canada, Japan, and Sweden, and have had about 5 years' experience as an instructor and instructor-trainer for aquatic group fitness 15 years ago. This, along with background reading on group fitness formed the basis of my preunderstanding before entering the field.

Fieldwork sites

As prechoreographed classes are a global phenomenon—the same formats with the same music, moves and scripts are released in various countries simultaneously—I selected field sites in two countries to provide a wider variety of sites and individual viewpoints. I chose Canada and Sweden because of my cultural and language competence. I chose Les Mills classes because LMC is the world's largest provider of prechoreographed classes. “Canadian Health Clubs”²⁹ or CHC is the only health club chain licensed to provide LMC classes in Canada and has both “co-ed” and “women only” clubs, so I made observations at one “co-ed” and one “women only” location in a suburban community near Toronto, Canada. In Sweden, I conducted participant observations of LMC classes at a co-ed club near my home. Both health club chains and specific locations were chosen for reasons of practicality in light of my limited time and financial resources.

Participant Observations

I embodied the role of class participant as fully as possible as a fee-paying member of the health clubs involved. This was partly to achieve an “embodied competence” in the performance of the phenomenon. It also helped me develop empathy necessary to understand the observations and to interpret interview subjects' responses. As Goffman has explained, “taking the same crap they've been taking” is very important in developing this type of empathy.³⁰ Similar participant

²⁹ “Canadian Health Clubs” (CHC) is a pseudonym.

³⁰ Erving Goffman "On fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18, no. 2 (1989): 123-132, 125f

observation as a LMC instructor or instructor-trainee would have been invaluable; however, it was impossible since I did not have the necessary “bodily capital”³¹ or the time to acquire it.

LMC produces 10 types of class³² which are briefly described in Table 1 in Appendix B. I spent four weeks participant observing three BodyPump (freeweights) classes and three cardiovascular training classes per week as recommended by “Canadian Health Clubs”. In line with my physical abilities and preferences, I observed BodyAttack (traditional “athletic”-style aerobics and calisthenics) and BodyStep (step aerobics). I observed various instructors with different levels of experience, and later interviewed some of them. I also participant observed one BodyFlow. At my local club in Sweden I have observed BodyPump, BodyStep, BodyCombat, BodyBalance, and RPM (Body Attack is unavailable). I have also made periodic observations of many classes over the past two years. My observations covered one quarterly release cycle in Canada and several in Sweden.

Qualitative Interviews

I conducted 10 interviews in total, all in Canada, six with Les Mills instructors and four with participants, however only the instructor material is analyzed here. Participant interviews were used to give context and contribute to my own understanding of the instructor interviews. I selected interviewees with varying positionality to gather a variety of views and information. Instructor interviewees are presented in Table 2 in Appendix B. I either approached the instructors to ask for interviews after participating in their classes, or was referred to them by other interviewees who thought they would be valuable as interviewees for the study (snowball method). There was only one male instructor at the two locations and I was unable to contact him, so all the instructors were female. Two instructors were members of visible minorities. Interview lengths ranged from 50 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes.

Interview guides were prepared loosely in accordance with the guidelines provided by Kvale & Brinkmann before each interview.³³ Each guide consisted of sample questions created on the basis of research themes. Questions were designed to elicit both descriptions of the subjects’ lived worlds and to elicit narratives as “narratives are one of the natural cognitive and

³¹ Loic J.D. Wacquant. "Pugs at work: Bodily capital and bodily labour among professional boxers." *Body & Society* 1, no. 1 (1995): 65-93.

³² summarized from personal knowledge and <http://w3.lesmills.com/sweden/en/classes/> (last accessed 15 July 2012)

³³ Steinar Kvale, and Svend Brinkmann. *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 2nd. London: Sage, 2009, 132

linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to organize and express meaning and knowledge".³⁴ I hoped communicating narrative in the context of an interview conversation would help individuals recall and express past embodied experiences and emotional states. Lupton recommends this method.³⁵ Even so, due attention was paid to the fact that interview knowledge is a joint construction of the interviewer and interviewee during the specific language event that is the research interview.³⁶ Separate interview guides were prepared for each interview to reflect the subject's particular role and experience *vis à vis* LMC group fitness classes. This also allowed me to take up themes from earlier interviews with later interviewees.

During interviews with instructors I paid particular attention to how they spoke about how they were trained, how they prepared for new releases, what they did in classes and why, as well as where things went right (e.g. "great classes", "good days") and where they went wrong (e.g. "tough crowds", "bad days", or more specific problems such as "felt sick", "made a mistake", etc.). I used my participant observation experiences to generate questions for interviews, as well as a context within which to understand what my interviewees told me. Participant interviews were at times a useful counterpoint, as individual participants' understandings of particular instructors' performances sometimes varied considerably from the instructors' points of view.

With the permission of interviewees, all interviews were recorded by digital voice recorder and transcribed, resulting in more than 100 pages like the ones shown in Sample 1 in Appendix A. Following Charmaz's Grounded Theory approach,³⁷ the transcripts were then coded line-by-line using OpenCode coding software,³⁸ (see Sample 2). Collections of lines were analyzed more deeply in memos (see Sample 3). The purpose of a Grounded Theory approach is to create a new theory through analysis grounded in the empirical material under investigation. However, the categories which emerged from my interviews came to suggest the existing theoretical perspectives presented in this paper. The Grounded approach proved useful as it forced me to remain very open to patterns in the empirical material itself. However, by

³⁴ Ibid., 153

³⁵ Deborah Lupton. "Going with the flow: Some central discourses in the conceptualising and articulating the embodiment of emotional states." In *The Body in Everyday Life*, edited by Sarah Nettleton and Jonathan Watson, 83-99. London: Routledge, 1998.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2006.

³⁸ Health, ICT Services and System Development and Division of Epidemiology and Global. *OpenCode 3.6*. University of Umeå, 2009. OpenCode is a free downloadable software for the analysis of qualitative data in text form from interviews, observations, and fieldnotes. OpenCode software is available here: <http://www.phmed.umu.se/english/divisions/epidemiology/research/open-code/> (last accessed 16 July 2012).

suggesting conflicting theoretical perspectives (and very different realities), the patterns I discovered through Grounded analysis also required the method assemblage approach (explained below) upon which this paper is based.

Finally, I had intended to interview instructors who felt negatively towards the Les Mills system, as my background reading and my own interviewees told me there were many but was unfortunately unable to meet with any within the time constraints.

Les Mills International Textual Materials

Textual materials available to the public, such as promotional pamphlets for participants, Les Mills International's web pages, and video material on sites such as YouTube, were also consulted. These materials provided background information on LMI, as well as some sense of how the corporation frames its products for potential class participants, potential instructors, and health clubs which licence its programs.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose and general methods of the study was explained to the club managers who gave their permission for my participant observations and interviews. I did not to formally announce my participant observer role to others in the classes, although I had decided to be honest if anyone asked. Nobody did.

When I arranged interviews I explained the purpose of the project. I gave a very brief written summary of the project as well as contact information for me and for a professor at the department who had kindly agreed to vouch for my student-researcher status at the beginning of the interview, as well as a consent form signed by the interviewee. Confidentiality and anonymity was promised to interviewees. I have also agreed to send interviewees a copy of the finished report.

Theoretical Approaches to Meaning: What is going on?

A Conundrum Posed by Theoretical Approaches from Prior Literature

The original question grounding the research design in the summer of 2009 was simply "How do instructors and participants make prechoreographed classes motivating and meaningful?" Yet, as collection and analysis of empirical material proceeded, it became quite clear that my

focus was heavily shaped by the modernist narrative in the existing group exercise literature. The narrative draws a strict dichotomy between the rationalized, objectified practices of group exercise, and more “genuine” lifeworld-friendly sporting activities where enjoyment is taken as the primary purpose. Literature on prechoreographed group exercise draws a second strict dichotomy: freestyle is constructed as “authentic”, “creative”, “skilled”, “craft-like”, and “liberating”, while prechoreographed is “commercialized”, “routine”, “deskilled”, “oppressive” and indeed “robotising”.

I realized slowly as I did more interviews that my dependence on my own freestyle background and Felstead et al. for my preunderstanding had given me a somewhat negative view of prechoreographed instructing. As well, I found myself becoming increasingly irritated by the constant hype about the superiority of the Les Mills system as well as certain distinct, jargon-like phrases which came up again and again as instructors explained what they did and why. Some seemed pretentious, e.g. “disciplines” for the various types of classes; others, e.g. “coaching” were words common in sports, fitness, and gym culture but seemed to take on specific meanings in the Les Mills context, and others, e.g. “being in the essence of the program” seemed to take on a quasi-religious tone, explainable but still incomprehensible to the uninitiated. I was asking, listening, and probing, but I was not understanding. How could standardized, textbook phrases be expressing “authentic” phenomenological experiences?

The situation came to a head when one annoyed interviewee accused me of having the covert motive of finding fault with the Les Mills system. The conflict situation was unintentional, but later reflection led to a “click experience”: “something of a sudden, though minor epiphany as to the emotional depth or importance of an event or phenomenon”.³⁹ I realized that my standpoint, rooted in the literature, was hindering my understanding and negatively affecting my view of the trustworthiness of my interviewee and presenting me with ethical problems.⁴⁰ It had led me, like Geertz’s unfortunate anthropologist, to miss that “much of what... informants are saying is, however strange it may sound to educated ears, meant literally”.⁴¹ It is “conceived to be just

³⁹ Scott W Renshaw. "Postmodern swing dance and the presentation of the unique self." In *Postmodern Existential Sociology*, edited by Josepha A. Kotarba and John M. Johnson, 63-85. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002, 63, citing Brooks

⁴⁰ Anne Ryen. "Trust in cross-cultural research: the puzzle of epistemology, research ethics and context." *Qualitative Social Work* 7, no. 4 (2008): 448-465.

⁴¹ Clifford Geertz. "Common sense as a cultural system". in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, by Clifford Geertz, 73-93. New York: Basic Books, 1983, 89. Geertz is discussing academic anthropologists who study non-modernized “tribal” communities of the non-West, hence the word “educated”. I contend that Geertz’s insight is applicable to researchers studying occupational subcultures within their own societies. “Educated” in this sense can be taken to mean educated in the extremely narrow sense of being an academic sociologist or anthropologist doing a study. “Educated” researchers, as

there... invisible only to the clever” and that it makes sense as part of the informant’s cultural system of common and practical sense which underpins the achievement of the everyday.⁴² In short, my interviewees and their experiences were not particularly problematic, they just failed to fit into the tidy categories of the “method assemblages” I had picked up from prior literature. After analysis grounded in the empirical material opened my eyes to the experiences, other method assemblages, reality-formulators, would be necessary to learn more from them.

Mess, Ordering, and Science

The field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) is grounded on the premise that the production of scientific knowledge is cultural. Science does not provide a uniquely “objective” view of the world in contrast to all other types of human knowledge. While scientific meaning systems do differ significantly from others, according to STS they are still human meaning systems and therefore cultural. The material-semiotic branch of STS, including Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT), After-ANT,⁴³ and Donna Haraway’s work among others, has quite distinct ontological and epistemological foundations.⁴⁴ As sociologist and after-ANT scholar John Law explains:

it is not possible to separate out (a) the making of particular *realities*, (b) the making of particular *statements* about those realities, and (c) the creation of *instrumental, technical and human configurations and practices*... that produce these realities and statements [because] *all are produced together*.⁴⁵

ANT pioneer Bruno Latour argues that while the world “out there” facing researchers is a mess, the one they present in their research papers is remarkable for its order. As shown in Table 3 in Appendix B, the messy world is characterized by its “locality, particularity, materiality,

Bourdieu has explained, even when studying their own culture, have a very different practical sense than the people under study (2003). In terms of academic credentials and life experience my interviewees were often more “educated” than myself, and of course in terms of the Les Mills system of prechoreographed exercise classes, I was the ignoramus.

⁴² Ibid., 89

⁴³ STS stands for Science and Technology Studies, a broad field which, generally speaking, is based on the study of the relations between culture, and scientific practice and knowledge production. ANT or the Actor-Network Theory is a material-semiotic strand most clearly associated with Bruno Latour. It is a relational approach in which the roles and meanings (indeed ontologies) of different actors in a network are determined by their place in the flow of action through the network itself. After-ANT scholars such as Law and Annemarie Mol tend to focus on how particular elements, e.g. “atherosclerosis” in Annemarie Mol. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002., and “Cumbrian sheep” in John Law, and Annemarie Mol. “The actor-enacted: Cumbrian sheep in 2001.” In *Material Agency: Towards a Non-anthropocentric approach*, edited by C. Knappett and L. Malafouris, 57-77. Springer Science + Business Media, LLC, 2008 are enacted differently by different networks simultaneously.

⁴⁴ John Law. “Actor Network Theory and material semiotics.” In *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, edited by Bryan S. Turner, 141-158. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009.

⁴⁵ John Law. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. New York: Routledge, 2004., 31, emphasis in original

multiplicity, and continuity”, while the ordered knowledge science gives us is characterized by “compatibility, standardization, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality.”⁴⁶

How does the mess become orderly? Following careful observation of the practice of natural scientists, Latour has argued that scientists produce scientific knowledge through a series of small, distinct steps in which they transform the more-material into the more-semiotic. It is important to emphasize that social scientists as well as natural scientists engage in this process.

Latour explains his argument with reference to an empirical example of a multidisciplinary team trying to determine whether the border of the Amazon rain forest is advancing or retreating.⁴⁷ The soil scientists select and scoop up soil and the plant scientist picks leaves. Then, step-by-step, they classify and arrange these “samples” according to standardized meaning systems from their respective fields, extracting meanings, and meanings from meanings, and rearranging them until a scientific paper takes shape. Latour illustrates how during each step two processes are at work: 1) reduction, through which something is lost i.e. detailed aspects of the complex and messy field material, and simultaneously 2) amplification, through which something is gained i.e. a meaning which is more generalizable, calculable, mobile, and useful for arranging knowledge and therefore action in new ways.⁴⁸

Figure 1 in Appendix B is a sketch of an element of representation, a material-semiotic link which Latour argues results from each step in scientific practice. I argue that qualitative social-scientific empirical material undergoes transformations similar to those of the more concrete empirical material encountered by the natural sciences, and have included an example from my own research practice.

Figure 2 in Appendix B is a sketch illustrating how the two simultaneous processes of reduction of detail and amplification of meaning during research practice work to turn the messy world of the field into the tidy one depicted in scientific research papers. In Figure 2, the messy world of the field is shown on the left. Here the researcher is faced with a complex situation where the meaning of it all is yet to be determined. There is forest; there is savannah. There are a bunch of group exercise instructors, some of whom love prechoreography, some of whom hate it, and many who see both advantages and disadvantages along different dimensions. The researcher makes sense of it through a gradual process of extracting meaning by emphasizing some aspects

⁴⁶ Bruno Latour. *Pandora's Hope*, 24-79. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999, 71

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68ff

of the situation, ignoring others, and sorting meanings into new patterns until some generalizable conclusion can be drawn. Latour argues that this happens as researchers convert messy empirical material into the standardized meaning systems of a particular scientific field. In the formulation above, meaning systems are left as “black boxes”—we know what goes in as mess and comes out as order, but the workings of exactly how it happens are still hidden. A closer look at these “standardized meaning systems” using Law’s concept of the “method assemblage” is useful in understanding how realities emerge and disappear with different theoretical perspectives.

The “Method Assemblage”

Law argues that the researcher’s method assemblage determines which details in the mess of the field are “interesting” and which are “insignificant”. According to Law, a “method assemblage” is “a combination of reality detector and reality amplifier.”⁴⁹ More specifically it is

the crafting, bundling, or gathering of relations in three parts: (a) whatever is in-here or *present* (for instance a representation or an object); (b) whatever is absent but also *manifest* (it can be seen, is described, is manifestly relevant to presence); and (c) whatever is absent but is *Other* because, while necessary to presence, it is also hidden, repressed or uninteresting.⁵⁰

Let us briefly consider Felstead et al.’s, and then Parviainen’s method assemblages as examples. Following Ritzer, and Braverman, Felstead et. al. “detect” the reality or tendency of instructors/instructor trainers with prior experience in freestyle to judge musical literacy and the ability to set moves to music as prior to, and more valuable than abilities to relate to class participants in the moment and provide effective cues. They also note that freestyle instructors are paid more per class than prechoreographed ones. These factors are “present”. Manifest absence includes the “rationalization” and “deskilling” processes going on behind the scenes which “explain” or contribute to this presence. Othered are instructor/trainer views which differ or are more complex than the ones “present” and presented by Felstead et al.⁵¹ Since they do not

⁴⁹ Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* 2004, 14

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 144, emphasis in original

⁵¹ This is not to say Felstead et al. ignored such views in their empirical material. It is quite possible none of their interviewees expressed such views, or that there were relatively few who did. A key difference between their investigation and mine was timing. They were investigating employee training methods at a time when LMI was relatively new and expanding rapidly in the UK. so many freestyle classes were being replaced by the new prechoreographed ones. When my field investigation took place, CHC had already made the transition to LMI classes some 10 years before. Freestyle instructors who disliked LMI classes had already quit. As well, approximately 25% of CHC’s class timetables are still made up of freestyle classes. There are timeslots available for freestyle instructors who can maintain attendance rates. One of my informants taught mostly LMI classes, but had her own freestyle yoga class as well.

share the viewpoints presented in Felstead et al., instructors and instructor trainers like my interviewees are left as cultural dupes, or more charitably “beyond the scope of the study”.

According to Parviainen, who has herself long trained in dance, ballet, Pilates, and yoga,

one of the main questions addressed in [her] article is what kind of tangible and intangible touchpoints are hidden in fitness services to make them more attractive to clients and to conceal calculative standardization.⁵²

Her method assemblage relies on late/high/post-modern theories of experience design and spectacle coupled with the phenomenological distinction between *Körper* (body as object) and *Leib* (body as subject). Through the features of impersonal co-motion (primitive bodily mirroring), interpassivity (instructors and participants strictly adhering to the scripted experience as designed), and imitating entertainers (i.e. instructors imitating stage performers and participants imitating their fans), LMI choreographies are designed to engage *Körper* and suppress *Leib*.⁵³ Again, it is the standardized and rationalized character of prechoreographed classes and instructor performances which are made present. Absent manifest is the colonization of the lifeworld, or *Leib* rather, by the logic of contemporary capitalism. Absent othered are, among other things, the phenomenological experiences of anyone other than Parviainen and her research assistant themselves.

The point is not that Felstead et al. or Parviainen have authored flawed studies. On the contrary, they have successfully used method assemblages to make sense of complex and shifting situations. The point is that there are always other realities lurking and shifting “out there” in the same field sites, and what one method assemblage enacts, another will stifle.

Law’s approach is “enactist” rather than constructivist because realities and their method assemblages are not constructed once and for all, but are in flux, resonating, supporting, influencing, undoing each other. Phenomena like poverty or the prechoreographed exercise class are not due to a single coherent system or structure, but a composite of many diverse material-semiotic processes that apprehend and create/recreate the situation in question.⁵⁴ Figure 3 in Appendix B shows Law’s method assemblage in Latour’s chain of meaning. At each step the method assemblage indicates which meanings should be amplified and which ignored as

⁵² Parviainen, “The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry”, 2011, 528

⁵³ Or at least the “Leibs” of the highly bodily aware Parviainen and her athletic research assistant. In one diary entry the question appears: “Do fitness clients learn to fake joy as part of their performance, or are they really thrilled to repeat these routines?” Parviainen, “The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry”, 2011, 536. Interestingly, despite 60 hours of participant observation she and her partner seem not to have explored this question by asking any of them.

⁵⁴ Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* 2004, 31, 55, 121, 140ff

irrelevant. It is within these processes that some realities happen while others disappear because, Law argues, method assemblage “works by *detecting and creating periodicities in the world*”⁵⁵ by affecting practice and thus trajectories of events. For example, my original research design was heavily influenced by Felstead et al. and Parviainen; however, other realities I encountered in the field quickly destabilized the neat picture I had started from. Thus, I put my empirical material and its analytical categories in dialogue with four very different theoretical perspectives or method assemblages as traces of these realities emerged during Grounded analysis.

Four Goings-on, Four Method Assemblages, Four Locations for Meaning: Initial Sketches

As stated above, method assemblages detect and amplify realities—certain patterns of “*goings on*”— by *locating* meaning and lack or loss of meaning. The four “goings on” I examine in prechoreographed exercise instructing as a sociological phenomenon are: rationalization, translation, embodiment, and cultural meaning. Each of the method assemblages associated with the four realities will be discussed more fully in dedicated chapters, but here are some brief introductory sketches to indicate why they are needed and how they overlap.

Rationalization was developed as a concept by classical sociologist Max Weber, but what is used in the present paper is the rough interpretation provided by Ritzer.⁵⁶ As Felstead et al. have made the assemblage an important part of their groundbreaking study, I have put it in conversation with my material despite its flaws as an account of Weber’s original formulation.⁵⁷ Following Weber, Ritzer argues that in premodern societies, action is governed by rationalities based on values, emotions, human relationships, and the common sense of daily life. Modern societies, however, are characterized by complex divisions of labour and bureaucratized social institutions which promote instrumental or goal rationalities above all others. Eventually this most-efficient-means-to-ends *rationalization* traps people in dehumanizing Iron Cages because other important human rationalities, for example value-rationality, are suppressed. Individuals must stick to standardized procedures, and ensure efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control so the system keeps humming along, even if it makes no sense to the human participants

⁵⁵ Ibid., 144, emphasis in original

⁵⁶ George Ritzer. *The McDonaldization of Society* 5. 5. Thousand Oaks, PA: Pine Forge (Sage), 2008, 23ff.

⁵⁷ Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* 5 2008. Ritzer’s McDonaldization thesis has been subject to numerous criticisms as “McDonaldized” social theory, see Barry Smart, ed. *Resisting McDonaldization*. London: Sage, 1999; Mark Alfino, John S. Caputo, and Robin Wynyard., *McDonaldization Revisited: Critical Essays on Consumer Culture*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998, for examples.

at all. Thus, according to the rationalization method assemblage, the fullness of human meaning is lost in instrumental-rationalized bureaucratic systems as instrumental rationalization displaces the many other forms of human rationality present in *the premodern or as yet uncolonized areas of the lifeworld* (the reality individuals live in in the everyday). As rich lifeworld meaning systems governed by value rationality are bureaucratized, people are dehumanized, their practice becomes alienating, and they suffer “loss of meaning” and “loss of freedom”.⁵⁸ By extending his interpretation of Weber’s thesis into the realm of consumption, George Ritzer extends this “loss of meaning” to the consumer products produced by rationalized systems. As will be discussed in the Rationalization chapter, the LMI prechoreographed exercise system depends on ongoing instrumental rationalization, yet for my instructor-interviewees, meaning is enhanced, not diminished—hence the need for other method assemblages.

Translation is a “going on” which comes to the fore when the LMI instructors are considered as actors (actants) in the larger Actor-Network Theory (ANT) network of LMI. ANT and After-ANT approaches can be deeply counterintuitive because meaning is located primarily in the flows of action through *chains of translation*, chains of human and non-human intermediaries (which pass on action flows) and mediators which translate them (change them from one form to another) so the actors’ interests become congruent within the network. Since human and non-human actors are symmetrical, meaning cannot exist primarily in the minds or uncolonized lifeworlds of human beings, but in the actor’s part in the overall “going concern” of the network. Actors become interested by a network when performing activities as part of that network becomes an obligatory passage point in their own trajectories of action (their “interests”). As will be seen in the Translation chapter, the LMI network enacts its prechoreographed instructors differently from how freestyle instructors are enacted by their own networks. Through the network, LMI instructors are given access to more expertly designed (and rationalized) resources than freestyle instructors. It is in transforming these rationally produced, textual inscriptions (music, choreography, scripted comments, atmosphere, etc.) into moment-by-moment embodied experiences with participants during live classes that instructors extend network meaning. This action translates their own and their participants’ interests so that taking

⁵⁸ Following Habermas, participation in bureaucratically controlled practices damages or replaces value rationality as an important source of meaning to human life, see Omid A. Payrow Shabani. *Democracy, Power, and Legitimacy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 89.

up the *roles* the LMI network configures—those of instructor and participant—keeps everyone coming to class, according to the translation method assemblage.

For instructors to transform textual, in-a-box exercise classes into live, in-the-flesh exercise classes, *embodiment* processes are a *sine qua non*. Based on concepts from Mauss, Merleau-Ponty, Leder, Young, and Bourdieu, the embodiment method assemblage locates meaning in the human being's ongoing embodied existence in its world.⁵⁹ Embodied knowledge is practical knowledge, unthematized in consciousness, which is expressed and often only expressible through physical feelings, emotions, and actions. It is laid down through past experience of the world, becoming the “crystallized experience” upon which current perception, the basis for current action, is founded. Successful LMI instructors do not simply memorize the texts—the choreography and scripted cues in quarterly release packages—to deliver them robotically. In order not to come across as incompetent or inauthentic, they must *live through* the texts by embodying the perceptions, knowledge, movements, meanings and values contained within. The embodiment method assemblage is covered more fully in the Embodiment chapter.

Finally, rationalized, translated, and embodied though it may be, the phenomenon of LMI prechoreographed instructing cannot be captured without a method assemblage which brings out its profoundly ritualistic and intersubjective nature. LMI classes are experiences in which an instructor and other participants weave sociocultural meanings through embodied, moment-by-moment, communal practice. Classes are about “doing meaning” together, and if meaning, understood as meaning-making, is not going on, neither is the class in question. The *cultural meaning* method assemblage draws on ideas such as the concept of effervescence from Durkheim's later anthropological work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, as well as ideas from Geertz, and the concept of “regular social occasion” from Goffman. It is the final assemblage to be discussed.

A summary of the four method assemblages introduced above appears in the tables of Appendix B, Figure 4. Following a brief word on delimitations, the four method assemblages are applied to empirical material in the next four chapters. The final chapter of the paper presents conclusions, reflections and areas for further research.

⁵⁹ I have considered these more at length in my kandidatuppsats on “embodied sociology”, see Mary Fraser Berndtsson. “Towards a theoretical perspective of “vibrant physicality”: From “sociology of the body” to an “embodied sociology” and beyond.” Unpublished Bachelor Thesis, Department of Sociology, Lund University, Fall 2009.

Caveats and Delimitations

This is an ambitious project in a paper of this length, and precludes extensive analysis and use of each assemblage. Furthermore, although I am aware that the four approaches I take are based on different ontological and epistemological foundations, I am asking for a certain tolerance of my agnosticism on these issues. The aim of the paper is to consider *different realities* in the on-going phenomenon of prechoreographed group exercise instructing, rather than providing a definitive statement on one while closing down the rest. While the latter approach can prove fruitful, it is not the one I am taking here. The challenge and the point of working with multiple “method assemblages” is in “trying to make sure they overlap in productive ways”.⁶⁰ I am taking up the challenge.

As stated above, the purpose of the paper is twofold. First, it is to analyze four “goings on” in LMI prechoreographed exercise instructing, and to experiment with subjecting the same empirical material to different method assemblages, seeing what realities emerge and how they may overlap in different ways. These method assemblages were constructed using categories arising from the empirical material combined with perspectives from four distinct existing theoretical approaches. In keeping with this purpose, the method assemblages are necessarily painted here with very broad strokes. Although significant differences exist *between* the approaches of theorists I have included together within single assemblages, analysis of these is beyond the scope of the paper. My second purpose with this paper is as an exercise in exploring possibilities for understanding which open up when researchers revisit empirical material, subjecting it to different theoretical gazes from the one used when the material was originally collected. Due to the refiguring of theoretical gazes as method assemblages, their accepted ontologies and epistemologies (which have often been debated at length elsewhere) have been replaced by the “enactment” position presented by Law.

Empirically, the six instructor interviewees are all female, “suburban”, Anglophone Canadians, with middle class backgrounds and post-secondary education. Instructor positioning within larger social structures and cultures is an important facet of prechoreographed group exercise instructing. In the case of an international prechoreography company like LMI it would be especially interesting to analyze such aspects using material from a wider selection of

⁶⁰ Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, 2004, 55

interviewees. However, due to time, resource, and space constraints, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Clear Cut Promises of Clear Cut Means to Clear Cut Ends: Les Mills and Rationalization

What do people most want when they attend a gym or a rec center?.. The first thing that people say when you research this is weight loss, getting in shape, getting fitter, improving their health. I think we can put that whole group of answers under the headline of “*results*”. But people know that they can get results from any type of exercise. They can get them from running around the block or working out in their living room, so why come to us? The answer is motivation... [We offer] choreographic formulas that we’ve developed for these classes over decades, the world’s most popular music, unique instructor training, and coaching and stage techniques combined to create an *experience* members say they find addictive.⁶¹

*It’s like McDonald’s, if you want to get that hamburger out to more places in more countries you’ve got to duplicate the Big Macs so they [customers] could taste the same Big Mac in every McDonald’s you go into. So sometimes Les Mills is given the name it’s like the McDonald’s of fitness. Whether that’s a bad or good reputation, I don’t know.*⁶²

At its simplest, LMI’s prechoreographed group exercise class business is the development, packaging, and selling of standardized exercise-to-music classes which deliver *both* “results” and “motivation” with the same consistent quality as the mass-produced, rationalized McDonald’s hamburgers. Felstead et al. and Parviainen are quite right to point out that rationalization is an important element for LMI.

As a concept, rationalization was originally developed by classical sociologist Max Weber. He argues that as modernity progresses, instrumental rationality or means-to-ends, materialist logic, subordinates and destroys more traditional rationalities such as value-rationality based in religious ethics and ultimate beliefs.⁶³ Rationalization is intimately connected with efficiency, predictability, calculability, and the technological control of human beings. The bureaucratic institutional form is founded on these qualities, and its formal structure brings them about through its operations. Bureaucracy is composed of a hierarchy of offices and an institutional division of labour. Complex tasks are divided into more basic tasks which form a series of quantifiable steps, each the preserve of a particular office. Past institutional experience

⁶¹ Words spoken by Phillip Mills, CEO of Les Mills International in a promotional video presentation on LesMills.com to potential health club customers. See Les Mills International Ltd. *Secrets of the world's most successful fitness facilities*. YouTube video. 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YCJoA5gMVuQ, (accessed December 12, 2012). Transcribed by author.

⁶² Jill program director for chain of commercial health clubs which use LM systems in Canada. Interviewed by author.

⁶³ Nicholas Gane. *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory*. New York : Palgrave, 2002, 2

and rationalized forms of knowledge such as that produced by science result in the designation of “one best way” for going about each task. This way is then solidified in rules, regulations, and practices. The system is premised on calculability in the measure of effectiveness, and predictability because without it the division of labour fails to work. It also requires the technological control of people to counteract the human tendency to find many, varied, individual best ways which are of course unpredictable and not sure to be efficient or effective.

Yet, as individual human judgements are replaced with standard operating procedures, two problems arise: 1) “one best ways” sometimes fail to work in a world of complex, unforeseen circumstances, and 2) humans feel “dehumanized” or alienated from their own actions and the consequences thereof.⁶⁴ Ritzer’s “McDonaldization” thesis, cited by Felstead et al.⁶⁵ extends Ritzer’s interpretation of Weber’s theories of rationalization and bureaucratization into the realm of consumption, arguing that corporate measures to achieve high degrees of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control in the production and marketing of consumer products *empties meaning* from the products themselves and the experiences of producing and using them.⁶⁶ What follows is brief examination of LMI’s version of prechoreography through the this rationalization lens.

In the carrying out of its business, LMI does these things: i) it designs and packages class programs and quarterly releases; ii) it trains and certifies instructors, and iii) it licenses fitness facilities such as gyms and health clubs to use their classes. Rationalization—efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control—based on instrumental rationality is evident in each. Each promises effective, efficient clear cut means to clear cut ends.

LMI currently offers 10 packaged programs or “disciplines” based on common exercise-to-music genres and trends in the fitness industry. Some examples include the ones I observed: BodyPump, a high repetition, low weight barbell class; BodyStep, LMI’s version of step aerobics; BodyAttack, LMI’s version of athletic-based high/low impact aerobics, and BodyBalance/Flow,

⁶⁴ George Ritzer. *The McDonaldization of Society* 5. 23ff.

⁶⁵ Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?” 2007

⁶⁶ Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* 5 2008. Ritzer’s McDonaldization thesis has been subject to numerous criticisms as “McDonaldized” social theory, see Barry Smart, ed. *Resisting McDonaldization*. London: Sage, 1999; Mark Alfino, John S. Caputo, and Robin Wynyard, . *McDonaldization Revisited: Critical Essays on Consumer Culture*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998. for examples. Moreover, he oversimplifies and even contradicts the authors of the empirical studies he draws upon to illustrate his arguments about loss of meaning. See for example Robin Leidner. *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993., and papers in the edited collection James L. Watson, ed. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997., many of which trace how local communities weave their own meanings and social practices around franchises, and how franchisees have adapted to their demands. However, as Felstead et al., and Parviainen 2011 draw on this perspective quite extensively, I have found it useful to examine it more closely in conversation with my empirical material.

LMI's version of a tai chi-yoga-pilates fusion mind-body class. Each discipline is defined by its own "essence of the program"—a shorthand definition of the "results" and "experiences" its quarterly releases must achieve, and as well as an indication of how they are to be achieved. The "essence" of BodyPump is "The real weights workout where I feel strong and get challenged"; the "essence" of BodyAttack is "The cardio conditioning workout inspired by sports training", while the "essence" of BodyBalance/Flow is "The yoga, tai chi, pilates workout where I feel strong and centre [sic], long and strong".⁶⁷ Predictability is ensured—for instructors, employers, and participants—through these genre standards.

The production of programs and releases is achieved through hierarchy, an institutional division of labour, and the division of complex tasks into a series of simpler steps. At the head office in Auckland, New Zealand, professional program designers use expert knowledge and help from colleagues from many fields to select moves and set them to music in optimal configurations to give ultimate consumers, the class participants "what they want". What they want is also determined through expert knowledges and procedures. It consists of "results" or perceivable bodily changes, and "motivation" or the type of meaningful experience and environment which will keep them coming back.

The choreography-to-music is performed by master instructor-trainers and the program developers themselves at Les Mills headquarters in New Zealand, filmed, and presented as a Master Class on the Quarterly Release DVD to be emulated by instructors of the release around the world. The Quarterly Release package also includes detailed choreography notes explaining the focus and experiential theme of the release, the nature and purpose of the moves, scripted phrases to use as verbal cues to elicit proper technique and enthusiasm among participants, and "options" or modifications to present to members so they can reduce or increase difficulty in accordance with their abilities.⁶⁸ Thus, what is presented is a class-in-a-box, literally a kit with "all you need" to recreate the class.

"One best way" logic and control of human activity is built into every release. Every beat of the music is choreographed. Instructors are not permitted to deviate—either from the prescribed choreography or the "essence of the program" as a whole. They must communicate the

⁶⁷ Les Mills International Ltd. "Recruit World Class Instructors." Fitpro.com. n.d. http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CE8QFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fitpro.com%2Fpdf%2FKey_Element_3_Recruitment.pdf&ei=X_8fUNSCIMrNswbdwoG4Cw&usg=AFQjCNGiCATHda9Ct7AWyX8Uqv3O3OUE_w&sig2=CMjZ0X-4MVF6yD04ADnsfA (accessed August 6, 2012).

⁶⁸ Interview material and Felstead, et al. "Grooving to the same tunes?" 2007, 194

essence through appearance (from physique to the wearing of brand-coloured clothing) and performance (including exercise technique, voice, demeanor, charisma, etc.).⁶⁹ Participants are not supposed to deviate either—“options” listed in the choreography notes are encouraged while personal modifications are generally viewed as “wrong” or even dangerous.⁷⁰ The promise is in line with instrumental rationality: our classes incorporate “state of the art” scientific knowledge, so if performed as intended, they will bring the predictable “results” as promised.

Instructor training and certification is also marked by rationalization. LMI has defined effective instructing as the mastery of “5 Key Elements”: choreography, technique, coaching, connecting, and “fitness magic”. “Choreography”⁷¹ (performance of the prescribed movements with the music) and “technique” (performance of the prescribed execution) must be learned by rote, and deviations result in denial of certification or poor performance reports. “Coaching” (the use of verbal and visual cues to elicit proper participant performance) and “connecting” (the establishment of rapport and social bonds between instructor and participants) are less amenable to standardization; however, techniques drawn from expert fields such as psychology are taught and their effective use evaluated. “Fitness magic” is as ephemeral as the name suggests, but is a measure of the overall quality of the experience created in a particular class, and is based on an instructor’s mastery of the other Elements.⁷² Video-recordings of instructor performances are used in the training and certification process—both during initial training modules as the basis for detailed feedback, and as part of the certification process where they must be submitted to head office in New Zealand.⁷³ Thus, evaluation is based on the “rationalized” analysis of texts, separate in time and place from the actual performance. Again the promise is that strict adherence

⁶⁹ Interview material and Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?” 2007, 201ff

⁷⁰ Personal experience during participant observation. The point here is not to argue that this is wrong or bad, but that it’s rationalized and rigid. Knowledge participants have gained about their bodies through lived experience is judged less valid than what is presented in instructor training materials. A participant response of “my body can’t do it that way, so I prefer...” is sometimes received negatively. One interviewee told me that all the modifications are presented as “options” in the choreography notes. Deviations were “doing your own thing” and “why bother to come to the class if that’s what you want to do?”

⁷¹ The term “choreography” is defined as “the creation of dances or compositions of bodily movements, including military parades or demonstrations” Parviainen, “The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry”, 2011, 530. Parviainen has described LMI choreographies as “the compositions of simple movements that most people can learn easily after attending the classes a couple of times” (ibid.). In LMI releases, there is a movement assigned to every beat of the music. Choreography mistakes occur when instructors fail to perform the proper movement. Failing to “recover” or return to the prescribed choreography quickly and smoothly is a serious error and instructors who do it must “resubmit” their evaluation videos (Interview material).

⁷² Interview material and Les Mills. “Assessing Your Programs.” www.fitpro.com. n.d. http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CGYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fitpro.com%2Fpdf%2FKey_Element_4-Training_Part2.pdf&ei=G7AcULqCB4LWtAaH8oHICw&usg=AFQjCNEiaFc0QXHoxs4HHf7kVFVS5RIA-Q&sig2=PCQ--Hjh392cjJ-dnJxBTQ (accessed August 4, 2012).

⁷³ Interview material and Parviainen, “The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry”, 2011, 532

to the letter (or spirit) of the program by an instructor guarantees predictable (high quality) results in every class. Control mechanisms such as video examination in the training and evaluation process ensure strict adherence.

Efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control based on instrumental rationality are also LMI's main selling points *vis à vis* licensee fitness facilities. Analysis of these facilities is beyond the scope of the paper, so suffice it to note that among other things, the variety of predictable LMI programs and releases and the standardized, interchangeable nature of instructor performances facilitate scheduling and quality control. It is also highly effective in increasing participation and member recruitment and retention rates.⁷⁴ The promise is that the efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control of LMI programs are the “one best way” to attract and retain customers.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, LMI's range of predictable, standardized classes—with their goal-rationalized physical exercise and instructor performance and interaction styles—offers participants the possibility of rationalizing their own workout programs. They can mix-and-match different classes from the weekly timetable, choosing from the standardized genres according to their own schedules and “results”- and “experience”- related priorities.⁷⁵ The promise is optimized “fitness and fun”.

Although this rationalization is going on in the instructor training and class delivery I investigated, contrary to critics' predictions, alienation and loss of meaning are not much in evidence in my empirical material. On the whole, the instructors see rationalized elements as the tools enabling them to achieve what they themselves view as successful classes. For the former freestylers, the switch to LMI saved them the time and money they had been spending developing classes on their own.

*[As a freestyler] you have to go and buy CDs that would cost you 40 bucks, to order tapes and stuff like that, and you have to go out and pay for conferences, all that was on your own.*⁷⁶

*[Freestyle instructors] spend hours, and hours, and hours downloading music... and then they spend hours and hours trying to get a program together, when someone else is just doing it for us [LMI instructors]*⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Interview material and Felstead, et al. “Grooving to the same tunes?”, 2007, 200

⁷⁵ Interview material

⁷⁶ Jennifer, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Jennifer (2009). lines 194-198

⁷⁷ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 144-149

*In a nutshell to make the transition from the freestyle was for me a piece of cake because someone was giving me all the tools and it'd come to your doorstep four times a year, you get this package, notes, DVD, a CD... and then they offer you the training, it's local, you can go for like the quarterly training, sort of some updates and we get together as a team and we practice regularly before a new release comes out so it couldn't be more convenient...*⁷⁸

Perhaps because of lack of time, many freestylers use the same music and moves for extended periods. Christina believes they lack the time and resources to provide variety by changing their music and choreography regularly. She likes the regular changes of each quarterly release.

*I remember at [university] when I was going to a step class she... ended up staying with the same choreography forever because you would have to put in the time to make up something new and I guess she didn't have as much time. So I do enjoy the prechoreographed.*⁷⁹

Interestingly, she likes the predictability too.

*You also know that each time a new release comes in it's going to be similar yet different because there will always a new challenge, whether it's in the shoulder track, or it's in the cardio track. They keep things current... but still a BodyAttack class here is the same as a BodyAttack in Sweden. So you know that you're getting this kind of workout.*⁸⁰

Interviewees also found LMI's standardized scripted phrases empowering rather than alienating or stifling, because they are seen to be the product of expert knowledge and hence highly effective. Thus, instrumental rationality is evident in the instructor's thinking:

*There [are] at least four styles of learners, the people that learn because they can see and they watch and they mimic you. There's people that listen to what you say, right? Then there are people who have to feel it... and then there's the people that are a combination... People go 'Oh, I can't believe you get handed all the words you say,' but the words we say captivate the visual learner. 'I want you to visualize a tree blowing in the wind' [for yoga tree pose]...then it's the kinesthetic, 'Can you feel the strength in your legs and your core... So they teach us the words so we can actually captivate all those types of learners.'*⁸¹

Standardized exercise “options”, approved modifications to adjust the difficulty or intensity of the prechoreographed movements to suit the needs of beginner or advanced participants, were also seen as helpful rather than evidence of “deskilling”.

⁷⁸ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 170-178

⁷⁹ Christina, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Christina Ontario, Canada, (2009), lines 767-772

⁸⁰ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 773-779

⁸¹ Jill, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Jill Ontario, Canada, (June 25, 2009) lines 1241-1263

[As a freestyler] I could probably only offer them 'you can do this low impact instead of high' ... but I never would have gotten into the detail of the arm lines... I would say Les Mills [gives] me a better range and ways to increase [intensity] and do it safely and effectively...⁸²

Finally, even the rote memorization of choreography and technique is seen as liberating rather than dehumanizing, because it allows the instructors mental space to focus on the participants and their particular in-the-moment needs.

It [the ability to interact with participants] comes when you're so comfortable with the choreography and the music that you have that space in your mind, because there's very little while you're teaching to praise people or have a little conversation with them.⁸³

One rationalized aspect instructors were perhaps less fond of was control of their own performance. While videoing themselves for rationalized evaluation at head office, part of their focus shifted to “passing the test” making it more difficult to be themselves “in the moment” and focused on the participants right in front of them.

It's hard because you're also trying to bring out your personality because the one thing they want you to do is be yourself... but it is a little difficult with this camera there and you're nervous and you know you want to pass.⁸⁴

But they also considered the feedback they received and the learning opportunity as valuable, even in cases where the process was emotionally painful. Christina was required to resubmit her evaluation video before she could be fully certified. She explains what went wrong, and what she learned:

I think it was the members had gotten so used to the release that I wasn't cuing enough of what I needed to, but that's made me personally a better instructor since then. Some people think maybe I talk too much, but members, from what I collect from them, they love it...⁸⁵

The point is, instead of producing loss of meaning, rationalized aspects of the LMI prechoreographed system are infused with meaning by the instructors who like the system enough to incorporate it into their own projects and lives. During interviews they often explained what they did and why using terms from their training, naming for example one of the 5 Key Elements—“choreography”, “technique”, “coaching”, “connecting”, and “fitness magic”. Although incomprehensible to the uninitiated (me), the terms seemed integral to their common

⁸² Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 870-879

⁸³ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 888-893

⁸⁴ Maria, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Maria Ontario, Canada, (2009). lines 865-873

⁸⁵ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 1387- 1394

sense understanding of what they did and why, which Bourdieu terms *doxa*⁸⁶—things which are so common sense they go without saying. From another perspective, this could be viewed as a “colonization of the lifeworld” by instrumental rationality and the commodification of human relationships.⁸⁷ Yet, the instructors I spoke with are very *invested* in the system in the sense that *they really care*. They care enough to express anger in response to what they view as (my) criticism of the LMI system:

Interviewee: *My gut instinct here is that you're kind of cutting down Les Mills, like you're trying to find a way to... you're trying to find a way to take away from the programs or trying to find something wrong.*

Mary: *No, I'm not trying to do that, I'm definitely not trying to do that.*

Interviewee: *That's what it feels like to me. And you're, you're, if you are, you're talking to the wrong person because I love, I am all about Les Mills!*⁸⁸

They also care enough to become upset when other LMI instructors fail to uphold the high standards of performance they associate with the programs.

*I was so unimpressed [by an evaluatee] that I asked my regional, how did this girl pass training? [Mary asks why.] Just the technique was not there. The arm lines were just horrible. She was tired and she expressed that to the members at the beginning of the class and in my head it was why are you do[ing that], like that's so wrong!... It just, it was, I still, I still cringe about it.*⁸⁹

People tend not to invest emotion in things which have no meaning for them in their lives in terms of their values. Efficiency, predictability, calculability, and technological control are central to LMI's operations. The problem I see with applying the rationalization/"McDonaldization" thesis is the way *meaning* is constructed in the theory—it is located on a basic dichotomy shown below.

⁸⁶ According to Bourdieu, *doxa* is “the undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field” Pierre Bourdieu. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, 68. The idea is that to do anything well (prechoreographed instructing, for example) a person has to have a preconscious idea of what doing it involves so conscious thinking is not required in the execution. Such knowledge is often difficult to articulate, because it only needs to be said to the uninitiated to the field (of practice), again prechoreographed exercise instructing in this case. One might say the knowledge is embodied, an issue I will take up in a later section.

⁸⁷ Following Habermas, one might argue that exposure to/participation in the rationalized, commodified cultural forms of LMI exercise classes and training systems has corrupted the lifeworld rationalities of the instructors bringing “loss of freedom” and “loss of meaning” to such an extent that their own value rationality has been damaged/replaced, see Omid A. Payrow Shabani. *Democracy, Power, and Legitimacy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 89.

⁸⁸ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 1038-1049

⁸⁹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 1369-1383

Rationalized Cultural Form

- Standardized, mass production
- Expert knowledges/discursive
- Instrumental rationality excludes other human rationalities => loss of meaning, loss of freedom

Traditional Cultural Form

- Unique, production by craftspersons
- Lifeworld knowledges/embodied
- Instrumental rationality remains one rationality among many => fullness of human meaning, freedom maintained

In other words, by virtue of being instrumentally rationalized and made available as standardized products on the world market, LMI classes and training programs are emptied of a fuller lifeworld meaning by definition. Instructors and participants like my interviewees who enjoy LMI products are left as cultural dupes for not realizing how impoverished their lifeworlds are as a result of LMI.

Rationalization is an important part of the story. At the same time, there are other important “goings on” in prechoreographed exercise classes and instructor training programs that contribute to “lived meaning” expressed by the interviewees. And there are other method assemblages which help them to emerge from the empirical material. The next section engages the empirical material with a material-semiotic translation method assemblage.

It Takes a Network: Les Mills and Translation

*This was handed to me on a plate. I just have to memorize this and there I go and I've got the package, I've got the intensity because they directed the build. So what else is there to do? Just deliver it.*⁹⁰

Become a star performer, packing classes with your passion, skill and the support of the world's leading group fitness exponents. Our instructor training is not just informative, it's inspirational. You'll cover the 5 key elements of training - choreography, technique, coaching, connecting, and fitness magic. It's the only training out there to transform your raw talent into a world-class performance, every time.⁹¹

Being a LMI instructor is so simple. A former freestyle interviewee describes it as “getting it handed to [her] on a plate”. And according to LMI in the quote above, the 5 Key Elements are enough “to transform your raw talent into a world class performance, every time.”

Yet working as a LMI instructor is also hard:

⁹⁰ Interview with Jennifer, lines 159-162

⁹¹ Les Mills International Ltd. *Become an Instructor*. 2012. <http://www.lesmills.com/global/instructors/become-an-instructor.aspx> (accessed August 5, 2012).

*You struggle because not everybody's doing it just right, so that's the challenge to me, how can I get them to do it, what is [it?] The challenge is not theirs, the challenge is mine. How can I get these people to want, not only want to be here, but to do better.*⁹²

Instructing as a “robot” is not an option—“robots” do not motivate, and as Maria explains above, instructors must get people to *want* to work hard enough to do better, which is a struggle. What is going on here? In this section, I argue that the answer is “translation”, a concept taken from the material-semiotic Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach.

While meaning is located in traditional, craft-based cultural forms in the Rationalization perspective, with ANT and After-ANT approaches it is located somewhere else entirely. Here, meaning is located in the flow of action through “actors” or pieces of a particular network engaged together in some going concern.⁹³ Things “out there”—trees, soil, (potential) group exercise instructors—are nebulous and undefined until they are enacted by networks engaged in some activity⁹⁴—e.g. farming, dry cleaning, or earthworm activities (soil), or freestyle training programs or LMI in the case of group exercise instructors. In ANT, things in the world have no stable essence and it is not possible to pin down what they “actually” are. Rather, they are as many different things as there are networks that enact them—that make them continue or change a flow of happenings. From this perspective, normatively comparing freestyle instructors with prechoreographed instructors is quite pointless. As parts of different network configurations they *do* different things, so they *are* different things.⁹⁵ What one needs to compare is what they do in the context of their Freestyle and LMI networks respectively. And what they do is translate, reconfigure their own and other actants’ interests, although in different ways.

Figure 5 in Appendix B shows the Freestyle Network with instructors as focal actors in their networks. To bring about the going concerns of their individually choreographed classes, they must harness the activities of many other actors, e.g. fitness certifying bodies, the music industry, a health club facility, the class participants, many of which are themselves “black boxed” networks. In a sense, freestyle instructors set up their own mini-networks through the four

⁹² Interview with Maria 2009, lines 574-578

⁹³ The clearest introductory text I have found on ANT approaches is Yearley, Steven. *Making Sense of Science: Understanding the Social Study of Science*. Sage: London, 2005, 55-68.

⁹⁴ Bruno Latour. *Reassembling the social: An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 46.

⁹⁵ Latour, *Reassembling the social*, 2005, 34f

moments of translation as first laid out by Callon: problematization, intressement, enrolment, and mobilization.⁹⁶

Problematization is setting up the relationships through which selected actors play specific roles so that the network's going concern keeps going. Very simply, for a class to happen there needs to be appropriate movement patterns, knowledge of what is appropriate, music, participants, a location with a stereo, space and equipment, etc., *and* of course an instructor to turn on the stereo and enact participants so they do the class. The freestyle instructor has to intresse, enroll, and mobilize each of these things (actants) so together they make the class a success. Take music, for example. As defined in the problematization, the music must a) keep participants' bodies moving in tandem, and b) affect them emotionally so they feel motivated to do the proper movements. Through intressement, the instructor must find music which will do these things—which styles, which tempos, which builds—and through enrollment, e.g. purchasing, recording, sequencing, etc. stabilize their action so they fulfill the appropriate role. Through mobilization, instructors must be able to locate and channel other songs that will do the job as well the next time, since participants get bored and over time the same music loses its effect. Musical tracks must be made to behave as “actor-mediators”, things which “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” and “make others do unexpected things”.⁹⁷ Properly intressed, enrolled, and mobilized, music makes class participants enjoy their exertions. Assuming it is functioning properly, the stereo system is an actor-intermediary, something which “transports meaning or force without transformation”.⁹⁸ In the context of this particular network, the complex workings inside are “black boxed”; the complex electronic workings are bracketed and all that is important is that music plays when the instructor operates the switch.

Class participants are also actor-mediators which must be intressed, enrolled, and mobilized. Though ANT holds that human and non-human actors must be treated symmetrically, the translation process is less counterintuitive in the case of participants. Freestyle instructors must configure the action of all the other actors so they will produce a class as an “obligatory passage point” for participants pursuing their interests—in fitness, fun, whatever. An “obligatory

⁹⁶ Here, I am following Callon in a rather early paper first published in 1986. See Michel Callon. “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of Saint Brieuc Bay”. Vol. 32, in *Power, Action and Belief: a new Sociology of Knowledge?* Sociological Review Monograph, edited by John Law, 1986, 196-233., which provides explanations of the four moments.

⁹⁷ Latour, *Reassembling the social*, 2005, 39, 106

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 39

passage point” occurs when network interests and potential actors’ interests converge to the degree that in order to continue in accordance with their interests, “new” actors must continue within the roles defined for them within the configuration of relations enacted in the network. In other words, people are enacted as class participants when coming to class serves their ends. In a sense, music, moves, stereos, the smell of the exercise room, the projected mood of the instructor all become devices of intressement which must be configured correctly (enrolled) to enact people as participants in the class who mobilize others such as friends to come too. As focal actors configuring the complex networks whose “going concern” is their classes, freestyle instructors must be highly skilled in many different areas and have extensive resources, especially time and money. Furthermore, since they must personally configure much of the network producing the class and keep the actors acting appropriately, there are many, many places where things can go wrong because of insufficient knowledge or resources.

Translation occurs quite differently in the case of LMI instructors because the international, corporate network (LMI) enacting them is so much more complex and solidified. Most of the translation work as conceptualized by Callon needed to produce LMI classes is done by network members *other* than the instructor. As will be seen, this is a key way joining the LMI network in the role of instructor originally became an “obligatory passage point” for my interviewees. Yet as conceptualized by Latour in his later work, “translation”

[i]n its linguistic and material connotations,... refers to all the displacements through other actors whose mediation is indispensable for any action to occur... [C]hains of translation refer to the work through which actors modify, displace, and translate their various and contradictory interests.⁹⁹

Due to the LMI instructors’ activities in and around classes (partly configured by their role within the LMI network) translation occurs so that coming to class is accordance with the participants’ interests.

As a multinational corporation, LMI is too large and complex a network to map here. Figure 6, Appendix B, shows a simple map of a segment of one of the chains of translation the LMI network makes happen. Again, translation here is “a connection that transports, so to speak, transformations... [It is] a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators

99

Latour, Bruno. *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999., 311

into coexisting”.¹⁰⁰ The chain of translation in Figure 6 shows transformations between more-semiotic and more-material actants similar to those in the chain of meaning shown in Appendix B, Figure 3. Chains of meaning produce “cascades” so that local knowledge, which is implicit, highly complex and tied to experience in specific times, places and contexts, is converted into abstract network knowledge which becomes “inscribed” or written down in more generalizable and standardized terms, “circulating references”.¹⁰¹ Knowledge contained in the inscriptions of circulating references can be “cumulated, aggregated, or shuffled like a pack of cards” in faraway “centers of calculation”.¹⁰² The combining and shuffling brings about new configurations which allow new trajectories of action in accordance with the interests of the network—and the enactment of new actants whose interests are also served by the new configurations. Yet it is important to remember that within a chain of translation, shifts in frame of reference often occur. These include “shifts out” of one frame of reference to another, as when scientifically constructed knowledge is used to develop new technological devices, and “shifts down” between frames of reference more-material-to-more-semiotic or more-semiotic-to-more-material as when, for example, traffic engineers convert their interest in slowing traffic into concrete speed bumps to enact slower drivers.¹⁰³ Such shifts are often key in translating the interests of new actants and the network.

At the beginning of Figure 6, more-material scientific and technical practice has produced more-semiotic generalized “facts” inscribed (written down). They arrive in LMI head office, a center of calculation. There a Program Director and his or her assistants “reshuffle” them to create a class format e.g BodyPump, and, at regular intervals, a new Quarterly Release. Experts in musicology and entertainment industries are enacted who translate (problematize, intress, enroll, and mobilize) the music. The Director puts together a series of moves and cues, which are embodied, tested, and altered by Master Instructors with the help of participants in the Auckland flagship club. Then the ideal configuration is filmed, and the choreography notes are prepared and converted by many other human and non-human actors into an immutable mobile,¹⁰⁴ the Quarterly Release Package of texts. The texts leave the center of calculation and are sent to LMI instructors around the world. The LMI instructors are the actor-mediators that must convert the

¹⁰⁰ Latour, *Reassembling the social* 2005, 108

¹⁰¹ Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 1999, 24-79

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 216ff

¹⁰³ See Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 1999, 187-189,

¹⁰⁴ Immutable mobiles are solidified configurations of network knowledge, easy to transport through time and space, which can be applied by actors distant from the ones who produced them. *Ibid.*, 227ff

more-semiotic patterns frozen in the Release texts (inscriptions) into more-material, embodied practice together with living, breathing participants in the realtime events of live classes. This is how translation occurs so that instructors and participants can share a mutual interest in playing their respective roles in live classes. To understand more specifically how instructors achieve the shift down and translation vis à vis participant interests requires the Embodiment, and Cultural Meaning method assemblages as shown in Figure 6, and explained in the relevant chapters.

How does the Translation method assemblage relate to what my instructor-interviewees say? First, the instructor role into which LMI instructors are enacted is one that often particularly suits their preferences as individuals. Rather than being enthusiastic about doing all the work of translation—problematization, intressement, enrollment, and mobilization—needed to build a small actor-network to develop classes themselves, as some of Felstead. et al.’s interviewees were,¹⁰⁵ my interviewees are happy to let other actors in the LMI network do it, leaving them to concentrate on the transformation of the Release texts into a live class, and enacting participants in that way.

Mary: Would you ever like to try to design your own class?

Diane: The answer right now is no... For somebody like me who has a busy schedule, I don't want to think about the choreography, I don't want to have to worry about changing it up... So yes, somebody doing that for you takes away the thinking, you can focus on so much more in your class. I think it's so much easier for me personally, so ... I love it”¹⁰⁶

The LMI instructor role they are enacted into is one they approve of—leading the class by example, modelling the appropriate level of effort to participants, etc.

[Prior to LMI] instructors would teach four, five classes a day, but never really do the program. They would stand in front of the group, show the moves, stop, walk around, and really they would just teach the class like a dance instructor. But now Les Mills programs, we stay on the stage and are the visual for the people in the class, so we work hard too.¹⁰⁷

Moreover all of the interviewees emphasized how much they appreciate the resources the network’s chains of translation bring them: expert knowledges from many other fields shifted out,

¹⁰⁵ One of my interviewees had developed her own “preformatted” functional fitness program for Canadian Health Clubs 20 years ago and has designed new releases for it every quarter. She and another interviewee have also seen some of the quarterly release development process for LMI in New Zealand as they had both appeared in Master Class videos.

¹⁰⁶ Diane, interview by Mary Fraser Berndtsson (author). Interview with Diane Ontario, Canada, (2009). lines 1439-1453

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 84-91

reconfigured, and repackaged in ways they can understand and enact. Their faith in the prechoreographed classes depends on it:

That script and those moves and that music has been researched for four months or longer, and so experts in that field, whether it's in BodyFlow, whether it's in the Combat or the Pump, experts that create those programs have done all that background to make sure it's safe, it's results oriented, it's going to deliver what it says it's going to deliver, it's going to be set up to have the right type of instruction that goes with the music and with the moves for that particular program... so we can focus on adding our personality to it¹⁰⁸.

Something as simple as LMI's professionally mixed and licensed music is an attraction:

Les Mills is really good with staying current with music... so picking Top 40 pop and rock and dance stuff and they'll always go back to the classics for a different mix.¹⁰⁹

But instructors also appreciate that other parts of the network were continuously shifting out “the latest research” and shuffling it in accordance with their interests, i.e. into things they could present in class:

When you freestyle... you may do your education and not keep up on your education. You may know that a tricep dip looked like this or a squat looked like this when [you] did your training ten years ago, but now? ... At Les Mills for instance the BodyPump set position was one way but now they've slightly altered it... It's changed a little bit from when I did my training because they continued to educate themselves and the continued to do research on what is the best way to carry out this position.¹¹⁰

For instance, in the BodyFlow program, I could not go out and research all of the yoga that Jackie the program director puts together. I let her go do all the research. She goes and studies tai chi, she goes and studies yoga, she goes and studies Pilates. She puts it to beautiful music. We get to deliver the program and I just feel, like thank you, because I don't have time to go and research all that.¹¹¹

We don't get the same stuff every three months. We get the same routines technically, the same moves, but such a greater education from these people that have spent the time and it educates us more, and we are able to bring that to the members. Members have said to me a lot 'I love when you say do this because...' 'Tummy in, why? Protects the lower back gives you a better posture'... The education from New Zealand is phenomenal and that's why we go through so much.¹¹²

The 5 Key Elements of effective instructing, i.e. choreography, technique, coaching, connecting, and “fitness magic”, “facts” due to the shifting out and reshuffling, the translation work of others in the network, were also seen as *the* one best way to approach their instructor

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 142-154

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 420-424

¹¹⁰ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 800-814

¹¹¹ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 133-140

¹¹² Interview with Christina 2009, lines 1584-1604

role.¹¹³ No interviewee questioned the need to memorize the choreography or master technique, although they had different ways of achieving it. This mastery, they explained, was the first step and the very foundation on which a LMI instructor does the job—something to be “gotten out of the way” so they can focus on other aspects of their own transformation work:

once [the instructors] learned their choreography and the program, they could then work on relating to the people in the class and performing it and delivering it. So it was less about them being in their head and more about knowing the program before you came in and then delivering it and being able to connect and work hard.¹¹⁴

Practical strategies for coaching and connecting were also appreciated. Several instructors mentioned the “CRC”¹¹⁵ approach to correcting members’ technique.

They’re really big on CRC, so you connect with the participants, you recorrect their form if they’re doing something wrong and then you, you congratulate them kind of thing... So you catch someone that’s doing something wrong, you make eye contact, but then you talk to them as if you’re talking to the whole class¹¹⁶.

“CRC” is jargon and a mnemonic, a way to refigure the conclusions of applied research into a formula instructors can easily understand, remember, and use to further their interests as they go about coaching participants in their classes. The point, another explained, is not to create a psychological “disconnect” with a participant by making them lose face in a Goffmanian sense.

So if you see somebody doing something incorrectly, you need to be able to coach the entire group, so not singling someone out... it’s called CRC, that’s what they use. Ah coach, recommend, commend. This is, this is their thing, this is their big schpeil, or shtick that they got when they’re teaching instructors.¹¹⁷

The instructors might not be able to remember the actual words of the acronym, but they do understand what it means and consider it the best way to “coach people through doing it right”.

Connecting is to be achieved through simple techniques such as calling out to participants by name during class, and being available and approachable before and after class. Although Felstead et. al’s interviewees found such advice alienating, my interviewees saw it as helpful in achieving what they wanted to express in class, and thus as forwarding their own interests.

¹¹³ Although it should be noted that the master trainer interviewee explained that each individual instructor would be better at some of the elements than others according to their personal styles and personalities and that this did not make them better or worse, necessarily, but strong in their different areas of strength.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 71-81

¹¹⁵ CRC stands for “connect, recommend, commend” and is designed so instructors can correct incorrect movement patterns without causing embarrassment to the participant or moving from the front of the class.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 574-585

¹¹⁷ Interview with Maria 2009, lines 892-898

It would, if anything, enhance my personality and character in the teaching and performance. Not that I was flat before, but... these programs give me more guidance in where to go than if I was freestyle.¹¹⁸

The instructors believe the training programs provided through the LMI network are superior to anything available to freestylers in the area:

The quality of instructor that comes from the Les Mills and the certification process, even though it feels like it's fast tracked, it's much more involved than a freestyler... I think the quality of instructors that you get from a Les Mills modular training and certification program is much more reliable, qualified.¹¹⁹

In sum, in many ways the LMI network has become an obligatory passage point for my interviewees to reach their goals. Yet even for instructors who are recruited as participants with a good command of technique and understanding of the “essence” of their particular program, becoming confident, and a really good instructor following the initial modular training is a long and demanding process.

Ah, it takes time. The first time when they come out of a training it takes time to learn it, to put it all together. We give them all the Key Elements when we're there. Then they come out, they practice, they practice, they practice. They're given lots of opportunity to get on stage with another instructor and shadow... Eventually they get the microphone... and they might teach one or two of the tracks and from there they build. It's a long process. It does take a lot of determination and commitment.¹²⁰

In Latour's terms, they also have to become effective *mediators*. They must first take the *abstract principles*, bodily movements, script cues, enthusiasm, and all the rest of the “essence of the program” contained in the more-semiotic *inscriptions* of the Quarterly Release Package and “shift them down” *making them into a living reality* for themselves and their participants in the class.

Bringing the essence of the program is being able to experience, almost take what they give out to us from New Zealand and experiencing it with my members... I look at the DVD and she's [instructor on DVD] having so much fun, she knows these people by their first names... and for me it's bringing that to my class, bringing the same thrill and excitement.¹²¹

“Bringing the essence of the program” to participants is translation because it makes instructor and participant interests congruent so that both will continue to come to classes. Even in developing ability to “bring the essence”, instructors gain help from the network in the form of

¹¹⁸ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 370-373

¹¹⁹ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 852-860

¹²⁰ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 210-223

¹²¹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 186-169

quarterly continuing education sessions, opportunities to practice new releases in groups before presenting them to participants, and team teaching the classes during the first week (“release week”).¹²² However, in the end, as one interviewee put it,

It’s a self-learning job. It’s a self-learning discipline... We get a lot, but it’s also, you have to put in that own time. You have to be willing to set aside an hour a day to learn the choreography”

In sum, ANT is helpful because it locates meaning in the “going concern” of the network. LMI instructors are enacted as mediators whose action brings about a translation of interests. As material-semiotic links, they shift the frame of reference down as they mediate between on the one hand, the more-abstract inscriptions of the 5 Key Elements and the Quarterly Release Package (CD, DVD, and choreography notes), and on the other hand, the living, sweating class participants in each class event. It is through this shifting that participant interests are translated so they will take part in LMI classes. Yet, the nebulous “essence of the program” and “fitness magic” appearing in discourse (texts, interviewee comments) must be shifted into a frame of reference of felt feelings and lived, sweaty experiences which the instructor “makes happen” in a messy collective lifeworld of living participants in each live class. This is the *heart* of interest translation between instructors and participants. Yet, by treating humans and non-humans symmetrically, ANT is not very helpful in the opening up of the instructor-as-mediator “black box” because simple embodiment and the phenomenological meanings of everyday life are so central to the translation process. To shed light on these aspects, they will be considered through an embodiment method assemblage in the next section.

“They teach in the essence of who they are”;” It’s not planned, it’s just coming”: Les Mills and Embodiment

When you learn this program it is more work. It is more commitment, but the reason instructors do it is because we help them to teach in the essence of who they are, based on the program they are committed to. They don’t want to get up on stage and look like an idiot. They don’t want to fiddle around and not know their choreography. They want to do a good job and they like learning choreography, so we actually help them become what they want to become.¹²³

¹²² Interview material.

¹²³ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 2238-2246

*I wing it kind of thing, like, I just go with the flow, the feeling, what's coming up. I know the choreography, I know what to say and the rest and that's why I'm doing these funny things [joking, teasing members]. It's not planned, it's just coming...*¹²⁴

According to Jill, the learning of LMI choreography is more than a key to delivering a successful class. The LMI system is about helping instructors “teach in the essence of who they are” and it helps “them become what they want to become”. And Diane describes how during the class everything—choreography, scripted words, and her own unscripted jokes—require no thinking, they just come. Though it might be tempting to dismiss Jill’s statement especially as LMI ideology, these quotations index awareness of a certain going-on. Successful LMI instructors do not simply “memorize” any of the 5 Key Elements (choreography, technique, cueing, connecting, fitness magic). To bring these discursive, often textual inscriptions to life requires a preconscious, practical, body-knowledge and body-understanding of them. The 5 Key Elements of LMI are not so much learned as embodied. Instructors are “being” through them to a certain extent. In this section I will explore this using the Embodiment method assemblage and empirical material, but first, a few words on the assemblage.

Instead of in a premodern lifeworld (as in the Rationalization method assemblage), or in the “going concern” of a network (as in the Translation method assemblage), the Embodiment method assemblage locates meaning in a human preconsciousness at the nexus of ongoing *being* between a living human body and its world. As sketched here, this method assemblage is a rough one, founded on some central insights from Merleau-Ponty, but also incorporating ideas from Bourdieu, Leder, Young, and Foucault. The theories of these authors may be thought incompatible as they present very different visions of *society*. However, Merleau-Ponty’s influence can be seen in the work of each,¹²⁵ and if they are regarded primarily as *body* theorists¹²⁶ their insights can be made to overlap in productive ways with reference to the *sociological* phenomenon of LMI instructing.

¹²⁴ Interview with Diane 2009, lines 840-845

¹²⁵ In the cases of Drew Leder. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, and Young, *Throwing like a girl* 1980, Merleau-Ponty’s influence is clearly stated. For Bourdieu and Foucault, I am following Crossley. See Nick Crossley. “Body-subject/Body-power: Agency, inscription and control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty.” *Body & Society* 3, no. 1 (1996): 17-46; Nick Crossley. “Merleau-Ponty, the elusive body and carnal sociology.” *Body & Society* 1, no. 1 (1995): 43-63; Nick Crossley. “Body-subject/Body-power: Agency, inscription and control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty.” *Body & Society* 3, no. 1 (1996): 17-46; Nick Crossley. *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. London: Sage, 2001; Nick Crossley. *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006.

¹²⁶ I have explored how the body is formulated theoretically in sociology, and the problems this poses for the analysis of highly physical practice such as group exercise in Fraser Berndtsson Towards a theoretical perspective of “vibrant physicality” Fall 2009. Though further theoretical dialogue between these various authors’ approaches would be extremely profitable, it is

Central to the Embodiment method assemblage is the relationship between practice, knowledge, understanding, and conscious thought which is also a form of practice. While thinkers such as Descartes and Kant root human subjectivity in “disembodied” conscious thought,¹²⁷ Merleau-Ponty destabilizes this tidy thinking-subject/thought-about-object distinction by focusing on *preconscious perception* as the level at which we and our world become real to us and action becomes possible.¹²⁸ We do not cognitively “think” the world and then take action. Rather, we actively perceive what “is there” *in terms of* our own ongoing practices and projects. The isolated Cartesian “I think” is replaced in Merleau-Ponty’s “body-subjectivity” by an “*I can*” in the ongoing process of being-in-the-world.¹²⁹

An individual’s body-subjectivity grows as he or she engages with the world through action, and experiences become sedimented into unconscious *habits*—habits of perceiving and acting appropriately to goals across a series of situations.¹³⁰ In his concept of “habitus”, Bourdieu formulates these habits as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions,”¹³¹ “cognitive and motivating structures”, “ways of perceiving” which construct the individual’s lifeworld in his or her ongoing activities in terms of “procedures to follow, paths to take”, “already realized ends”.¹³² Habits in body-subjectivity, Bourdieu’s dispositions in the habitus, form the basis of body-knowledge or what Bourdieu calls “practical logic”: “[i]t is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from the effort”.¹³³ Merleau-Ponty argues that “practical logic” is in fact a deep form of bodily understanding:

[I]t is the body that ‘understands’ in the acquisition of a habit. This way of putting it will appear absurd, if understanding is subsuming a sense datum under an idea, and if the body is an object. But the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of ‘understand’ and our notion of the body. *To understand is to experience harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance*—and the body is our anchorage in the world.¹³⁴

beyond the scope of the present paper. The goal here is to see how social body theories can be combined into an Embodiment method assemblage to increase understanding of LMI prechoreographed exercise instructing.

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Grosz. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 5ff

¹²⁸ Merleau-Ponty cited in Reynolds, Jack. *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida: Intertwining Embodiment and Alterity*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004, 6

¹²⁹ Ian Burkitt. *Bodies of Thought: Embodiment, Identity & Modernity*. London: Sage, 1999, 74

¹³⁰ Reynolds, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida 2004, 17

¹³¹ Pierre Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 72

¹³² Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 1990, 52f

¹³³ Merleau-Ponty in Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 2004, 17

¹³⁴ Merleau-Ponty in Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 2004, 17f, emphasis added

Thus Diane's statement, "*I wing it kind of thing...it's not planned, it's just coming*" reflects the high degree of embodied understanding she expresses while instructing LMI classes *today*.

Yet, developing embodied understanding to this level is a long process. For each of my interviewees, it began long before the initial two- or three-day training module they completed at the beginning of each LMI certification process. Five of the six claim they had an athletic, sports, or dance background during childhood, and two claim a musical background. Three had started out as freestyle instructors themselves and were already proficient at delivering classes when they began with LMI. For them, the 5 Key Elements were techniques to extend the "I can" they already had.

The other three were recruited as instructors right out of classes they attended as participants, as their potential was recognized in terms of the physical skills and LMI meaning systems they had *already* embodied through enjoyment and performance as participants. As Maria explains:

That's how I got into it because I just, I loved it... and, the whole musical background really helped me with music and timing and all that kind of stuff and that's a breeze for me... That kind of stuff? I don't even have to think twice about it, it just kind of comes naturally. So I thought, you know what, why not [become a BodyPump instructor]? I love this class, love doing it, and having a good time.

Diane had already partially embodied the speech patterns and attitude of the instructor:

One of my favorite classes was BodyCombat when I first joined and I did it so often that I got really good at it, and as I was doing it I was saying things as I was doing it and you know really getting into it. And I said, 'Hey, you know what? I'm almost like feeling like I should be up there saying these things and teaching.' And the instructor at the time had said 'you know what, I think you'd be great teaching' so I just ran with it.¹³⁵

Significantly, for both Maria and Diane feelings of enjoyment and engagement are already embodied along with the body techniques¹³⁶—enjoyment and engagement which must be available to be expressed if their performances as instructors are to seem genuine to participants.

Christina was recruited out of class by a regional trainer, and could later recognize the same sort of potential in one of her own participants:

¹³⁵ Interview with Diane 2009, lines 144-153

¹³⁶ Marcel Mauss. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88.

And the regional for [city] was also in the class, and she was eight and a half months pregnant doing BodyAttack and she came up to me and said I think you'd be perfect to teach this program... And it's funny 'cause I just approached one of my members today about the same thing. She has such great form, physique, technique, and I would just love to put her through training.¹³⁷

The CHC health club chain actively recruits LMI instructor trainees in this way, recruiting participants whose habitus has already incorporated key aspects of LMI practice. They recognize how doing so reduces the time it takes to train competent LMI instructors. According to Jill,

Somebody can learn from zero [instructing] skills. They have to have energy, passion, they're kind like a front row keener that's there all the time, and that comes up to you after and says, 'I love class, I love the program!' and you've got to say to them, 'you move well, you love this program, you've got energy, have you ever thought of teaching?' We can pull a member and we can train them to become an instructor if they're focused, disciplined, and they're passionate, do their homework, and they take all of the advice of the trainer, they can become a good instructor in three months.¹³⁸

Even so, travelling the route from “keener” participant to an instructor who performs “fitness magic” is perhaps not such smooth sailing. Instructors are expected to lead by example, so they have to literally do the class while speaking and leading it.

You need to use what's called authentic weight. So your teaching weight should literally be almost what you would be pushing if you were just to be a participant in the class... You now have to talk through it, which actually is difficult because I remember when I started I thought there is no way that I'm doing this.¹³⁹

To lead rather than follow, participant-recruits must achieve body-understanding of the 5 Key Elements of LMI instructing: choreography, technique, coaching, and connecting, which together make up the fifth element, fitness magic. Committing choreography and exercise technique to body-understanding and body-memory ahead of time is an essential first step. The whole point of providing instructors with Quarterly Release Packages is to give them the opportunity to do this:

We get handed the music, we get handed the choreography, we get handed the scripting notes, like an actor would receive when they rehearse their lines to be in a movie... and the reason for that is so that an instructor can actually focus on everything else but having to remember the choreography because when you get it ahead of time you can practice.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 65-68, 350-354

¹³⁸ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 203-213

¹³⁹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 1039-1047

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 134-141

The idea is to minimize the intrusion of conscious thematization in the preconscious flow of bodily understanding and intentionality through LMI instructing practice. Following Merleau-Ponty, Leder argues that while doing habitual things we know well, the body itself fades or “disappears” from conscious awareness as the “I can” orientation towards the world is easily fulfilled. However, in situations involving pain, illness, disability, and other disjunctions between what is aimed at and what is achieved, the body “dys-appears” or becomes thematized in consciousness because of its “dys” or malfunctioning state.¹⁴¹ The outward flow of engagement with the world through practice is broken, and the person’s attention is restricted narrowly on the body-self, to the right-here, right-now bodily experience of perceived helplessness or pain.¹⁴² According to Young, this body-self is experienced as a source of “I cannot” and becomes an object-to-itself, a problem to be managed and manipulated as are other objects in the world.¹⁴³

I would argue that the body-self often “dysappears” while new skills are being learned, during the process of sedimentation into body-understanding and body-memory. Jennifer explains how new LMI instructors concentrate so hard on themselves in order to “do it right” that they are unable to project awareness and intentionality outwards and *talk to* the participants right in front of them:

You just ask any new instructor. They are just so wrapped up, ‘I just want to get this right. I just want to do what I’m supposed to do, and they are so focused on choreography that that’s just all they do, they just spit it out and if you ever go to a class where there’s a new instructor, someone that’s never worn the mike, it’s a very quiet class. Kids, they don’t know how to speak, they don’t know what to say, and they’re thinking in their heads, you know their thought process is 16, 32 counts behind where mine would be.’¹⁴⁴

Through repeated practice, the body-self retreats from its own conscious awareness. Intentionality is realized through unthematized body-understanding of choreography, technique, cuing, and connecting. Jennifer describes the difference between herself as a novice and experienced LMI instructor in terms of what she *can do* differently now:

I’m so much more comfortable on the stage that I can step away from the choreography. I know what’s going on that I can recover if there’s any small slips. I can target more technique. I can speak to them more about how to get more from them, whether it be their energy or direction or more technical cues.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Leder, *The Absent Body*, 1990, 70ff

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 87ff

¹⁴³ Young, “Throwing like a girl”, 1980, 148ff

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 937-947

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 931-937

Bourdieu argues that what is often seen as “natural ability” is in fact evidence of a close fit between the field where dispositions in the habitus were formed, and the field where they are currently operating. In other words, high levels of comfort and competence come from experience of similar practice under similar circumstances. Bourdieu gives special weight to experiences in childhood and adolescence, especially when it comes to body-techniques and bodily hexis more generally.¹⁴⁶ The early musical and athletic/dance backgrounds of the interviewees, the relative ease with which participant-recruits embody Key Elements, and the fact that instructors improve as they teach more classes and LMI “disciplines” all make sense in terms of this formulation.

Even so, official LMI and CHC training activities deliberately reformulate lived meaning systems through bodily practice. Two ideas from Foucault suggest how structures of perception and body-understanding can be changed through disciplinary training. The first is “a focus on the little things”.¹⁴⁷ Normalizing power is disciplinary and diffuse. It penetrates individual “souls” (beings suspiciously like “body-subjects”) through “methods of punishment, supervision, and constraint” on the body.¹⁴⁸ It works through “an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervision the processes of the activity rather than its result, and... is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, and movement”.¹⁴⁹ In other words, disciplinary practices direct inordinate attention to and manipulating of “the little things” in the minute-by-minute unfolding of ongoing practice—an apt description of the LMI prechoreographed concept:

It's prechoreographed for every beat of the music. Da da da da da da datada. Da da da da and on that da da da da da da dateda I have to go ah, step touch right left righty step V step, I have to be ready to say and move to every single beat. Now do I have to say exactly what they [instructors on the DVD]’re saying? No. But I have to get that choreography within that eight-count phrase.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Pierre Bourdieu. "The peasant and his body." *Ethnography* 5, no. 4 (2004): 579-599. In analyzing the adult hexis of French peasant farmers while dancing, this paper provides a particularly clear illustration of the points made in Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977, 87ff and Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 1990, 69ff.

¹⁴⁷ There is extensive literature applying on Foucauldian theory to health and fitness practices generally, and group exercise classes more specifically. My goal in including these two ideas in the Embodiment method assemblage is to deal with the knotty problem of how LMI’s deliberate training programs alter the perception and the embodied understanding LMI instructors rely on for their instructing practice. LMI’s activities are shot through with normalizing discourses in bio-politics (e.g. the “global obesity epidemic” or “Globesity” in LMI terms) and micro-power in classes. Extensive exploration of LMI from a Foucauldian perspective would be fruitful, but far beyond the scope of the present paper.

¹⁴⁸ Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books, 1977, 28ff

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 137

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 1590-1598

During initial instructor training modules, trainers study trainees' technique through video recordings. They then provide extensive feedback on the minutiae of movement:

*So training is that, like there's lectures mixed in with teaching of the program, and you teach it probably about three times... the master trainers, they videotape you and then give you feedback, 'Okay, your arms need to be this much stronger, your arms need to be bent here, your foot needs to land on the ground, your shoulders need to be back, your tummy needs to be in, you need to say this more, or that.'*¹⁵¹

Based on his interpretation of Bentham's Panopticon prison, Foucault argues that people make themselves docile by internalizing normalizing rules on the assumption that one could be under surveillance by authorities at any time but one never knows when. Thus, one effectively comes to surveil oneself.¹⁵² LMI classes are shot through with surveillance. It is the instructor's job to be watched and imitated by participants, and to surveil each participant's performance in order to provide the appropriate "coaching" where necessary. If they are participant-recruits, trainees will have already embodied prescribed body techniques to some extent within this environment. Even so, careful self-observation is often required to master the required specificity of technique after initial training:

*The challenges with technique [are that] they may have to work on the technique, get some good feedback, practice in the mirror, videotape the class [so they can watch their own technique] ...*¹⁵³

The goal is to practice the movement patterns consciously and deliberately until they are embodied sufficiently so they become relatively pre-conscious dispositions within the habitus. Yet, another key aspect of the initial training for each "discipline" (LMI terminology for type of class) is an intense physical "challenge" to extend the perceived limits of the "I can". Here is Maria's experience:

*So actually we went for a run and then we came back in and did like okay, whatever your regular weight is you're going to kick it up by either, you're gonna double or you're gonna triple it or whatever it is, and you're gonna do it and you're gonna realize how strong you actually are. Which is part of, the thing is, you're stronger than you think, right?*¹⁵⁴

Challenges under the scrutiny of trainers and peers also serve to refigure the phenomenological meanings instructors attach to immediate pain from training overload.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 436-442

¹⁵² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1977, 203

¹⁵³ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 202-205

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Maria 2009, lines 825-831

Working *through pain*, experiencing it as evidence of “I can” rather than a disappearing obstacle to “I can” attaches pain to feelings of strength and empowerment. Refiguring pain through the disciplinary power of “The Challenge” allows instructors to better motivate their eventual participants to work through this pain.

It's almost like knowing yourself that you can lift that weight and be pushed by people you're working with and the master trainers are going around and [saying] 'yes, you can put a little bit more on there.' Knowing yourself is only going to drive you further and stronger to help you understand the pain and understand the empowerment to push your members a bit more during a class.¹⁵⁵

LMI's Foucauldian-like surveillance refigures the phenomenological “I can” by “pushing” body-subjects—instructors and participants alike—to go beyond what they would if they knew nobody were watching. This, among other things, underpins what LMI has trademarked The Group Effect™. As the LMI website explains it:

We all know results can come from a range of fitness options, but on your own, it's easier to stop when the going gets hard. That's where THE GROUP EFFECT comes in... You'll gain strength from exercising with others and you'll motivate each other to work harder, and push yourself just a little more.¹⁵⁶

The second important idea of Foucault's for the Embodiment method assemblage is that disciplinary power works through the harnessing of desire: “[w]here there is desire, the power relation is already present.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, “what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.”¹⁵⁸ For instructors and participants alike, feelings of empowerment through an expansion of the “I can” can be effective in harnessing desire, perhaps more effective than abstract, rationalized formulations of “results”.

I think what is the point is that they [the participants] know that they are seeing something and whether I say it is in cardiovascular endurance or agility or the height of their jump, well, now they can do a jump kick as opposed to before where they couldn't.¹⁵⁹

Within normalizing discourse, we want to be “good” and be seen to be good to experience all the pleasures, comforts, and advantages it will bring. “Results” in the form of bodily changes,

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 513-520

¹⁵⁶ Les Mills International Ltd. *The Group Effect*. 2011. <http://w3.lesmills.com/sweden/en/classes/bodypump/the-group-effect/> (accessed November 1, 2012).

¹⁵⁷ Michel Foucault. "Truth and Power." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, 109-133. New York: Pantheon Books, [1977]/1980, 81

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 119

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Diane 2009, lines 1256- 1260

and “knowing” oneself that one is taking part in a “healthy” practice is one way to harness desire. Yet as LMI itself recognizes, the pleasures and comforts that keep participants coming back are largely intersubjective, tied to the classes as events, and to interpersonal relationships between the specific instructors and participants who will be there. To bring out this reality, the Cultural Meaning method assemblage is helpful. It is presented in the next chapter.

“I call it the goosebump feeling... that’s fitness magic”: Les Mills and Cultural Meaning

Fitness magic is basically when your class all comes together, when they music’s pumping, and the people are into it, you got, you know your choreography, you’re standing up there, you’ve got great technique, you can coach people to a better place than they could get to on their own... when everything comes together and for me I call it the goosebump feeling when you’re in the zone and the class is rockin’ and everyone’s working hard, and you’re working with them and they’re doing it right, they look great, like they’re looking great meaning they’re moving well and safely and they’re getting what they came for, that’s fitness magic when it’s, it’s like you’re in your zone.¹⁶⁰

Above all, each LMI prechoreographed exercise class is a group event bound in time and space, and brought to life by the particular instructor and class participants themselves. At its most successful, it is far more than rationalized movement patterns, the sum total of trajectories of action through a material-semiotic network, or embodied dispositions and a harnessing of desire. It produces a “goosebump” feeling; it has a magic, and puts instructors in their “zone”. “The Group Effect” and “workout magic” occur only as instructor and participants together take up their roles and breathe life into templates provided in LMI class-in-a-box materials.

The Cultural Meaning method assemblage brings out this reality because it locates meaning in culture, understood as shared systems of symbols humans use to communicate, pass on, and develop their understanding of themselves and the world.¹⁶¹ Following Durkheim, and Geertz, it is based on the idea that it is not possible to be fully human without acquiring from the community symbolic architectures for thought, feeling, and understanding.¹⁶² Unlike Merleau-Ponty’s perspective which locates meaning in dispositions of the body in relation to its world, the perspective proposed by Durkheim, and Geertz locates meaning collectively in the community

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 257-273

¹⁶¹ Clifford Geertz. "Religion as a Cultural System." Chap. 4 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by Clifford Geertz, 88-125. New York: Basic Books, 1973, 89

¹⁶² Clifford Geertz. "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind." Chap. 3 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by Clifford Geertz, 55-83. New York: Basic Books, 1973; Clifford Geertz. "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man." Chap. 2 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, by Clifford Geertz, 33-54. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

and in *being together*. Rather than the body-subject, there is the homo duplex: a dual being, made up of an individual, biologically-based side, and a social side which must understand and share the intellectual and moral order of the community.¹⁶³ This order defines for us who we are as individuals, an important part of which is who we are in the greater collective of the community.

Durkheim, and Geertz provide insights into how this takes place in their studies of religious meaning systems and events such as public ritual.¹⁶⁴ Finally, Goffman's concept of the regular "social occasion" is helpful. A "social occasion" structures the social context in which people gather, what activities are to happen, and the appropriate roles and behavior participants are to engage in.¹⁶⁵ An understanding of LMI classes as providing a shared architecture for interpersonal face-to-face contact and interpersonal relationships is also helpful, because interpersonal bonds are such an important part of "The Group Effect".

The creation of a meaningful sense of community is central to LMI and CHC's goals for their group exercise programs. They purposefully use prechoreographed classes to provide for the human need of community so as to retain health club members. Classes function as architecture for what health club business consultants call "the community within the community" of a club. To do this, providing class members with a sense of belonging is key,

*because if you build that community within your club your retention, that is the members that stay the longest and use your club, are the people that feel like they belong to the community. It's just like you like to live with your neighbours in your neighbourhood because you like your neighbours, right? So you stay there and you support each other, well that's the same thing, group exercise is like your neighbourhood in the community.*¹⁶⁶

LMI classes-as-community bind members together creating "belongingness" in two main ways. The first concerns the quasi-religious ritual aspects of the classes themselves, which is explored with ideas from Durkheim and Geertz in the next few paragraphs. The second, explored

¹⁶³ Emile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915, 16f

¹⁶⁴ The connection I make between Durkheim, and Geertz owes much to Alexander's Cultural Sociology approach as explained to me by Prof. Mats Trondman in a conversation at Lund University in Spring 2011. As I had the insights expressed here before becoming acquainted with Alexander's work, I have cited primary sources. However, for an introduction to the Cultural Sociological approach please see Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith. "The strong program in cultural theory: Elements of a structural hermeneutics." *In Handbook of Sociological Theory*, edited by Jonathan H. Turner, 135-150. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002. For an interview where Alexander discusses his approach, see Rodrigo Cordero, Francisco Carballo, and José Ossandón. "Performing Cultural Sociology: A Conversation with Jeffrey Alexander." *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 4 (2008): 523-542. Prof. Trondman's understanding is explained in Trondman, Mats, Anna Lund, and Jason L. Mast. "Introduction: Toward an understanding of a cultural sociology." Forthcoming. I must also thank Magnus Ring and Erik Hannerz for discussing Durkheim, and Geertz with me during their course, "Cultural Sociology" at Lund University.

¹⁶⁵ Goffman, Erving. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press, 1963, 18

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 13-22

in subsequent paragraphs, concerns interpersonal relationships which form between individuals in and around the “social occasions” classes provide. The chapter ends with a concluding paragraph.

In his later anthropological work on religion, Durkheim argues that society is the source of the very “categories of thought” or basic conceptual architecture about “time, space, class, cause, personality” etc. which make human making-sense-of-the-world possible.¹⁶⁷ Due to the social origin of these categories, overarching moral orders, and cosmological beliefs, individual community members are linked directly to their culture and each other through collective consciousness.¹⁶⁸ Collective consciousness forms the basis of what Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is the connection we feel with others when they express ideas we can just agree with without thinking, and when similar emotional reactions simply arise:

[a]t the moment when this solidarity exercises its force, our personality vanishes,... for we are no longer ourselves, but the collective life... In societies where this type of solidarity is highly developed, the individual does not appear... Individuality is something which the society possesses.¹⁶⁹

The *mechanism* by which common moral values and sentiments are implanted and reinforced is emotional: “Collective life... brings about a state of effervescence which changes the conditions of psychic activity”.¹⁷⁰ Effervescence—a heightened emotional state—occurs during public rituals or symbolic events where “great waves of enthusiasm, indignation and pity... come to each one of us from outside.”¹⁷¹ Thus, coming from the outside and experienced on the inside together with the community, the sacred is felt to be powerful, immediate, and compelling in contrast with the simply there of the every day.¹⁷² As Geertz explains:

In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one’s sense of reality...¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1915, 18

¹⁶⁸ Emile Durkheim. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by George Simpson. New York: The Free Press, [1893]/1964, 79ff

¹⁶⁹ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, [1893]/1964, 130

¹⁷⁰ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1915, 442

¹⁷¹ Emile Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Edited by George, E.G. Catlin. Translated by Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, [1895]/1938, 52

¹⁷² Thus conceived, religious aspects have been analyzed as essential elements in phenomena not thought of primarily as religious. See for example Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed. *Durkheimian Sociology Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988., an edited collection of papers analyzing these “religious” aspects of phenomena including social revolution, mass strikes, friendship, media events, and political scandal, i.e. Watergate.

¹⁷³ Geertz, *Religion as a Cultural System* 1973, 112

Religious rituals, Geertz continues, are not merely “models of” what is believed. They are “models *for* the believing in it. In these plastic dramas, men [people] attain their faith as they portray it.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, the processes of meaning and believing are inseparable from the ritual doing. And what rituals *do* is order the world according to categories of “the sacred” and “the profane”. What is sacred is sacred by virtue of superior dignity and power, and it must be protected from the profane everyday through ritual prohibitions and rites ordering the sacred.¹⁷⁵

As public ritual, LMI classes refigure ordinary understandings. Excessive perspiration for instance is often experienced as uncomfortable and mildly disgusting, that is, profane. Yet Jill explains that participation in her class allows participants to get beyond this:

*I wanted them [participants] to go to a place of their fitness level that they can't go on their own... A lot of women don't like to sweat... But I can tell you, not hardly any women in that class tonight could do that many squats and lunges and move their feet that long on their own. The music got them there, my coaching got them there and being there with their friends.*¹⁷⁶

In other words, ritual elements of classes transform the meaning of unpleasant physical exertion: music provides psychic excitement; the instructor’s coaching reformulates cognitive meanings, and participants’ enacting the meanings within a community of friends provides the effervescence and environment in which the reformulation of meaning is experienced as true.

Public ritual enacts the sacred by being special, separated temporally, spatially, cognitively, and emotionally. LMI group exercise classes are marked off sharply from other everyday pursuits. LMI instructor Dianne explains how very separate and much more intense her experience of classes is to what she does at work on an ordinary day.

*My ordinary mode of during the day is that I'm at the office sitting in a chair all day long at the computer [laughs] so I mean it's a total night and day with sitting at the computer ... when you're in a class like BodyCombat class you're trying to think that you're a karate master, you're a boxing champion, heavyweight boxer and that's what I visualize. When I'm in cycling I'm visualizing that there's five bikers and I'm trying to overtake each one of them so you get into the zone...*¹⁷⁷

Of course, part of this separation is due to the distinct interaction orders of CHC and other commercial health clubs or gyms. Sassatelli has analyzed the transition through frames as gym

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 114

¹⁷⁵ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1915, 37ff

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 718-732

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Diane 2009, lines 1002-1015

members move from street, through changing areas, to workout areas, and back.¹⁷⁸ Yet, instructors also use other, more personal rituals to reframe their own mindsets so as to be able to lead participants in the ritual enactment of meaning that is the LMI class:

On a regular day, you know, if I've had a rough day working or tedious or just running around or I feel my energy is low...we were talking about this, what gets you set for a class? Most instructors, it's just a trip to the washroom, you know, go in that stall whether you have to go to the washroom or not, just take a couple of deep breaths, you're like, okay, I'm here for them [the participants] ...¹⁷⁹

Being “here for them” means being able to provide a model *of* and a model *for* the ritual experience of physical exertion upon which a successful class depends. Effective instructors struggle and suffer through sequences they find personally challenging so that participants will identify with them and follow suit. Maria describes this willingness to struggle in front of a class as one aspect of her favorite instructors when she was a participant:

you just know that they're trying, they're giving it their all and you can see that about them... maybe the weight's a little more than they want but they're gonna push through it. They're breathing a little heavier, they're sweating... you're like 'hey, it's okay for me to do that too because if the instructor's doing it, I can do it.'¹⁸⁰

As an instructor today, she points out how important it is to her to see participants putting similar degrees of effort into the challenging exercises:

I watch people and I'm like, you know what? If you grimace a little bit and I see you working it's like yeah, it's not just me working up here and I'm like if you don't see the sweat on me, it's okay... I want to know that you worked with me. Don't leave me up there hanging by myself. This is group exercise, so it's not just me doing the work, you have to do it too.¹⁸¹

Ritual elements built into the prechoreography as “magic moments” also work symbolically to unify instructors’ and participants’ experiences of tough physical effort. Christina explains that aspects Parviainen¹⁸² finds contrived and inauthentic, like repeating song lyrics and striking poses at the end of challenging songs/exercise sequences, increase feelings of group togetherness. For Christina, a pose shows all are suffering similarly for similar ends, and that the power to continue comes from mutual support through mechanical solidarity:

¹⁷⁸ Roberta Sassatelli. "Interaction order and beyond: A field analysis of body culture within fitness gyms." *Body & Society* 5, no. 2-3 (1999): 227-248.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 1049-1056

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Maria 2009, lines 314-319

¹⁸¹ Interview with Maria 2009, lines 1076-1083

¹⁸² Parviainen, The standardization process of movement in the fitness industry 2011

*Using the words and finalizing the track with a strong pose, to say 'It's hurting for me, but I know it's hurting for you, but it's hurting for me too. Like we're all, we can do this together'*¹⁸³

Even the sheer silliness of certain choreographed sequences, such as the air guitar Christina describes in certain Attack releases, serves to increase feelings of camaraderie among participants and lighten the atmosphere despite the intense physical effort of the class.

*Whenever there's like a Rocky song we'll do the air guitar thing. And you show it once and the members really get into it and you're just like 'okay, your turn' you know, and everyone just does it. So everyone knows that they kind of look goofy, but everyone does it and it doesn't matter.*¹⁸⁴

In this way, the meaning of physical challenge is also linked less to suffering for results than to companionship, and shared lightheartedness and fun.

Instructors themselves experience classes as public rituals. The effervescence and energy during classes enable instructors to reach an intensity not easy to achieve at more mundane times:

*Someone asked me today how do you do the double [teach BodyPump and BodyAttack classes back-to-back on Wednesdays]because it's a tough double... And I, my response was I get through with you guys [the participants].*¹⁸⁵

The quasi-religious elements of LMI classes summarized above serve to demonstrate the importance of mechanical solidarity to the LMI choreographed class as a sociological phenomenon. The Cultural Meaning approach also brings out a reality where instructors and participants enact and experience a moral order. LMI instructors do not only motivate by communicating that physical exertion brings bodily results. "Hard work" is required in the service of a distinctly sacred element, the healthy, fit, improved self. Here Maria expresses her frustration with participants who just go through the motions, and in the process she shows this part of the moral formulation of what LMI classes are about:

*Why did you [the participant] bother to come?... I'm not trying to get [attendance] numbers. I know a lot of times the organization wants numbers. But you know to me it's quality over quantity. Can we get these people to really work at it, can these people make themselves better. Make yourself better. Do something for you.*¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 222-226. It is possible the difficulty Parviainen experienced in reading such symbols "with the grain" was connected to her placement on the insider/outsider continuum of participatory research. She and her research assistant participated in hours of classes, but do not seem to have been able to share the frames of meaning orienting aficionados' understanding of the genre. Mechanical solidarity depends on similarity. As trained dancers and athletes, and as social researchers it is possible they were too different to take up a position within the community of class regulars.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 215-220

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Christina 2009, lines 942-949

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Maria 2009, lines 1083-1091

Thus, the mechanical solidarity and ritual elements within LMI classes lead instructors and participants to experience participation as a moral imperative to a longed-for self. At the same time, a sense of responsibility to the group is often what gets people through the gym doors any given week. According to Jill,

*women especially will show up for other people before they show up for themselves... They all show up because their girlfriend's coming. They'll show up because they don't want to let the instructor down. It's hilarious but it's true. 'I'm sorry I couldn't come this week,' they call you, they email you up, 'I'll see you next week. Or when they come and they haven't been they say 'Sorry I wasn't here for the last couple of weeks but I love your class.'*¹⁸⁷

Thus, LMI prechoreographed classes provide a particular social architecture, a regular “social occasion” in the Goffmanian sense,¹⁸⁸ as they occur every week and develop over time, largely with the same participants called “regulars”. This allows instructors and participants to meet regularly and develop emotional ties through familiarity, which in turn acts as a primary motivation for continuing to participate in subsequent classes. Emotional connection with the instructor is key:

*I think people come back because they make a connection with you. So they know that [Sara – the interviewee] teaches Tuesday morning at 9:30 BodyPump and that she has a son that's five years old and that she was just on vacation last week and that she knows your kids' names and your, all about your life and she asks you, 'Hey, did you have a good weekend?', 'Did you have a good birthday?' Blah, blah, blah. [If] you can make personal connections in your class, then people will come back. They'll forgive you if you don't know your choreography or you're 10 pounds overweight, or if you are not the best technician, or you're not the fittest in the world. But if you make good personal relationships with them and they feel comfortable in your class they'll come back.*¹⁸⁹

Finally, for instructors this sense of social connection, of being a part of a group which meets regularly, is important too. When asked why she has been instructing LMI classes since they were first introduced, Jennifer replies with an anecdote

*I'll speak to the crowd and say 'oh, glad that you're all here today'. There's something in the chorus today about 'I'm so happy you're here' and we were doing this twist move and I said 'I'm really happy you're all here' Because I don't like working out alone, and so in general... the music and the moves I think are what [are] going to draw, and just the individual and the group, the group setting...*¹⁹⁰

She sums up why she likes leading LMI prechoreographed classes this way:

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Jill 2009, lines 1880-1887

¹⁸⁸ Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*, 1963, 18ff

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Sara 2009, lines 1099-1113

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 1097-1106

*You can have a really crummy day and Jesus it's my job, but I just got a plus from it because 30 other people walked out feeling good about their day and that made me feel good although I didn't.*¹⁹¹

In sum, the Cultural Meaning method assemblage brings out the important realities of community, togetherness, and shared experience of meaning so central to successful LMI classes and instructors. The LMI instructors I interviewed found the LMI standardized, commodified, prechoreographed form of group exercise class meaningful because they *made* it meaningful through the public ritual of in-the-moment classes, and the interpersonal interaction made possible by the regular social occasions of weekly classes.

Conclusion, Reflections, and Areas for Further Research

[I]t is not possible to separate out (a) the making of particular *realities*, (b) the making of particular *statements* about those realities, and (c) the creation of *instrumental, technical and human configurations and practices*... that produce these realities and statements [because] *all are produced together*.¹⁹²

A study is an advance if it is more incisive—whatever that may mean—than those that preceded it; but *it less stands on their shoulders than, challenged and challenging, runs by their side*.¹⁹³

This study began as a relatively straightforward empirical enquiry into the question, “How do instructors and participants make prechoreographed classes motivating and meaningful?” As collection and analysis of empirical material proceeded, the study became a broader exploration of how things *mean*. In other words, how does LMI prechoreographed instructing become *meaningful* from the point of view of instructors who like the system? And how does qualitative empirical material become *meaningful* through social science analysis?

To provide a more “incisive” answer to the former question, it was first necessary to tackle the latter. Following Law, it was argued that researchers faced with qualitative empirical material are faced with mess. Analysis consists of working on the material with various “method assemblages” which detect and amplify different realities and their meanings. By designating empirical elements as present, absent manifest, and absent other, meanings are created, and amplified, purified realities emerge. Yet individual method assemblages obscure as many realities

¹⁹¹ Interview with Jennifer 2009, lines 1129-1132

¹⁹² John Law. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, 2004., 31, emphasis in original

¹⁹³ Clifford Geertz. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, 1973, 25, emphasis added.

as they enhance, while within empirical material, multiple realities resonate, support, influence and undo one another. The goal of the researcher, then, is to be open to different assemblages and make them overlap in productive ways. Advances are made, to paraphrase Geertz, as subsequent studies, challenged and challenging, run by their predecessors' sides, building new knowledge as they create new meaning and increase understanding.

This approach to knowledge-creation was applied to empirical material on LMI prechoreographed exercise instructing to explore how instructors who like it find it meaningful. Four method assemblages were put in conversation with the same empirical material, and four realities emerged. The Rationalization method assemblage brings out the reality that the standardized, instrumental-rational elements of the LMI system help instructors by providing them with resources necessary to lead classes they consider enjoyable and effective. As enlightenment subjects, instructors use the LMI system deliberately to achieve their goals. "Deskilling" in one area opens possibilities for the development of new skills in others. Yet, the assemblage's placing of more meaning in less rationalized forms obscures rationalization as an important source of meaning from the interviewees' points of view.

The Translation method assemblage brings out the reality that LMI is a material-semiotic network into which individual instructors are enacted. LMI instructors work as links in a chain of meaning, and during every class take the more-abstract, standardized, timeless, relatively universal knowledges solidified in Quarterly Release Package templates and transform them into right-here, right-now sweat and celebration. At the same time, as empty-subjects of ANT, LMI instructors are left "black boxed" when it comes to understanding *how* they achieve the material-semiotic shifts that translate the LMI network interests into participant interests which keep participants coming to class.

Using the Embodiment method assemblage, it is possible to glimpse how LMI meaning-systems, those governing what an LMI instructor "is" and should do, become en-habitus-ed in instructors. Gradually, through experience, instructors develop tendencies to perceive, act, struggle, and enjoy in LMI-sanctioned ways in and around classes. They, as body-subjects with a central orientation of "I can", develop the dispositions necessary to carry out and enjoy their roles in the LMI network without consciously thematizing them.

Finally, the Cultural Meaning method assemblage brings out the *intersubjective*, community-based nature of prechoreographed exercise instructing. The Group Effect works

because classes are shared enactments of cultural meaning, and LMI instructors, like leaders of other public rituals, play a key role in orchestrating events charged with effervescence. As regular social occasions, classes themselves provide scaffolding for interpersonal interaction which also make participants part of the group and LMI instructors work hard to create social bonds. As homo duplex, instructors orchestrate situations where mechanical solidarity is created and expressed.

Many areas for further enquiry remain. As meaning in LMI classes is intersubjective, the lack of scholarly research into the experiences of LMI or other prechoreographed exercise class participants remains an important gap to be addressed by future research. Similarly, as this paper is largely based on interviews of six female Canadian instructors in a single province, all of whom like the LMI system, further inquiry involving male interviewees, and interviewees who dislike LMI or teach their own freestyle classes as well as LMI would be fruitful. It would be particularly interesting to investigate instructor meaning-making with interviewees in countries outside Europe, North America and Oceania, especially where group exercise classes are a relatively new phenomenon.

Due to its extensive use of expert knowledges drawn from social and other sciences, LMI would provide an interesting site to study institutional reflexivity as formulated by Giddens.¹⁹⁴ Certain formulations in my interview material were highly suggestive of social science discourse. It would be interesting to investigate how social science research is applied in and by a corporation such as LMI, and how the introduction of such method assemblages changes trajectories of action on the ground.

Finally, due to the limited length of this paper, the method assemblages sketched here are by necessity rough. They would become more useful if developed further through additional theoretical work.

Though a paper written from a multiple method assemblage approach ends, the approach itself points to the multiplicity of realities in qualitative empirical material, and thus to new possibilities and beginnings. Through its application of the multi-method assemblage approach to the question of prechoreographed exercise instructing, this paper illustrates the value of the approach in the study of messy phenomena from a cultural and everyday life sociological perspective.

¹⁹⁴ Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

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Appendix A: Samples of Transcription and Coding

Sample 1 - Original Transcript

M. = Mary

I. = Interviewee

M.	Okay, thank you. The first question I'd like to ask is what is your background in the fitness field? How did you yourself get involved in fitness? Have you been involved since childhood or...?
I.	Yes. I, I danced when I was young, um, all through childhood, and middle school and high school. And then, ah, during I think it was the summer before my last year of high school I got into the gym atmosphere and just going to... I got into boxing actually <Really?> Um, so that was kinda... Yeah. <Was it a...?> It was a boxing gym. <unhuh> Um, and then I would just do their classes. I was always into the classes and then I went off to university and um they had a gym on campus and you can't really go wrong when you're paying like \$90 for an eight month membership. Um, and ah, actually at [university] I was mainly going into the gym. I would go in with my sister and my cousin. We all lived together you know at the same university. And we would go pretty much every day. Um, and then by my third year at [university] it was just so busy at the gym, you had to sign out machines so I just got into the group classes there... and um and then during my last, it was probably my last month, one of the instructors at the class approached me and she said, you know, you really should do your CanFit, come back and teach here with us. And I was just, I just said I'm graduating this year, I'm done, so... I was finished that, but I kind of had it in my head, you know, to do the CanFit. And so I ended up doing it that summer, the fitness instructor specialist, just 'cause I had time and it was of interest to me. By that time I had kinda done all the research back here because I had to find my own new gym membership now 'cause I was done at school and I really got into the classes at [health club chain] as a member. And another thing that drew me to [health club chain] was that I was starting my second agree at [university] so I knew that I could, you know, hit the gyms in [city] and then hit the gyms in [city] at home and whatnot so... that was that and then I was in a Body Attack class and actually [...]... she is the master trainer for Bodyflow, BodyVibe, and RPM. She's just the most inspiring women ever. And ah, the regional for [city] was also in the class, and she was eight and a half months pregnant doing Body Attack and she came up to me and she said I think you'd be perfect to teach this program. So <wow> we chatted and she told me a little bit about the CanFit but I had already done it so I was one step, kind of, in the door already and I decided to go for the training. So, so Body Attack was my first training.
M.	First training. Had you taught any classes... You, you had done the CanFit the summer before... had you been teaching classes during that time or?
I.	No. No, I had just done the CanFit 'cause I knew I had time then to do it, and as I said, it was kind of the thought of becoming a fitness instructor in the back of my mind,, um 'cause I'd always loved fitness, and, and getting involved and meeting new people and stuff like that. So, you know, during the course you get up on stage and you teach a little bit but I hadn't taught any classes before then, so ...
M.	So you started with the Body Attack ... and...
I.	Yup, and then the following... following? Or maybe it was two years, I can't, I've lost track, but Bodypump was next and then I just did Bodyflow in February <unhuh> So it's a nice complement now. Those are the three disciplines I, you know, I set out and I had thought about doing and I did them in my own time when I had the time <umhum> and I think I'll just ride with these for, for some time. Although they keep tell, the instructors keep saying when you doing your Jam or your BodyVibe. So, it's a little, it's a lot of work <umhum> as far as being an instructor and, you know, bringing the essence of the program to the, the members. <umhum> And I just find, I feel if I were to overstep what I could handle and do a fourth or fifth discipline I wouldn't deliver each class the way I know it's supposed to be delivered, so...
M.	Do you mind my asking, how long ago was this? When, when did you start teaching the Attack?
I.	I started teaching Attack January of 2007...
M.	OK so about two and a half ...
I.	Yeah. I did a training in the November, 2006 and then from training you have three months to send and submit a video and be certified, and then I was given, I submitted my video in the December <umhum> So I just, I really got on it, and ah, and I got my first class, [health club location] actually <unhuh> Sunday morning

	<Oh!> They're like, do you want an Attack class Sunday morning at nine and for that you're very excited. Oh my gosh, my first class! So, you, you take it and, and, you know, I don't regret it one minute. But, yeah, [health club location] was my first, so two and a half years now... <Wow.> And then when I did Pump it was a little longer to take, to get my own class, just because there's a bunch of Pump instructors and... But I didn't mind it. You know you sub out and whatnot... Um, so yeah...
M.	Yeah, so that's good. What was I gonna say? I'm sorry...
I.	Did I answer just all your questions there?
M.	Ah, no <I. laughs> No. But, um, you mentioned the essence of the program, and I hear that phrase, essence of the program and also, what was it, workout magic...
I.	Oh, yeah, magic moments? Or yeah ...
M.	Or magic moments, or magic... Can you ... Those sound real, I'm sure, I'm trying to get a sense of what they are because for myself, the motivation that happens in a class, when the class is, is a really good, does seem magical and ... That's one of the difficulties I've been having in some of my interviews, to get an idea of what it is, yeah...
I.	What this is. Ummm <pause> The head trainers in New Zealand are absolutely phenomenal. <umhum> And like I said, every three months we get new music, new choreography, new notes, and a DVD with the master trainers, the head trainers, and some other master trainers from New Zealand or Sweden or um Japan or Canada or the United States also presenting <umhum> And, you know, to look, to listen to the music, and read the choreography notes and know what's going on in the class is one thing but then to watch that DVD and see these people shine <unhuh> It's just they have so much passion for this a program <umhum> and I just, I get so much from those DVDs. Whether it's, you know, seeing familiar faces every week that you know you're going to come for instance my, my class I just taught, it's the, at least a dozen and a half of the ladies come every Wednesday. They're consistent, and it's just, I know I'm gonna see them, we're gonna catch up and say hi and it's like how was your week today or, or if, if something fun happened and you can kind of make light of it. Um, now I'm going off on a tangent... but just knowing that you're gonna share that experience with those people... and then almost remembering how the master trainers delivered that class <unhuh> Um, just with the energy, and whether it's taking words from the music and using those words to push people to another level <umhum> Attack is a tough class. <Yeah, it is.> And everyone agrees with it. It's, even for me as an instructor, each time I teach it, it's a new challenge. <umhum> Um, so for me, I know that when I bring that class to my members, I can't just be like 'step-touch, step-touch in five... four... three... two and walk and five' because they're not gonna get anything from that. We need to have a push, they need to have the excitement <umhum> Um, my motto, not motto but every time I explain the class, what it entails, um, sports inspired, agility, yada, yada, yada, um, I always finish off with 'the most important thing is to have fun' because if you're not gonna have fun, you're not gonna come back. Right? <Yeah.> The class is challenging, but we can all get through those challenges, we can all get through those hurdles <umhum> You know you show the options and you, you know, take it down in this track but then lift up in the following track kind of thing. Um, and that's just I guess bringing the essence of the program is being able to experience, almost take what they give out to us from New Zealand and experiencing it with my members. <unhun> 'Cause that's what I look at. I look at the DVD and I'm like, she's having so much fun, she knows these people by their first names and she's, you know, walking four up and four back and she's saying, 'how're you doing? Or how was your weekend?' you know, just like having a conversation. And um <umhum> and for me it's bringing that to my class, bringing, you know, that same thrill and excitement and I guess overall, not calmness but like being so casual with the members, like, yes, looking at it as a class and a fitness hour, but also looking at it as fun, you know, and you're all in it together kind of thing. <umhum> So... did I totally? <No, that helped> Did that like... I'm like... I'm going off right now aren't I...

Sample 2 – Coded Transcript

Project: Les Mills Magister project -- den 19 december 2012 -- 7

Line	Text	Memos	Codes
239	get a lot of people who are not motivated, um, to motivate	008	motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
240	them they like that because they know what to expect when	008	motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
241	they go to a class < okay> you know, so < unhum>	008	motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
242	they don't feel like "oh I'm not sure" they're like try it	008	know the moves, motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
243	once, try it two times, try it three times, and then <	008	know the moves, motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
244	unhum> there they are ready to go	008	know the moves, motivation, predictability, why GL/LM?
245			
246	Mary: Okay, I see. Um, did you, when you, before you came		
247	to or even after, I don't know, did you ever		
248	notice a class that was like really really good? Like of		
249	course the classes are all basically the same, but		
250	what I'm thinking of is um...		
251			
252	I: Outside of to you mean, or?		
253			
254	Mary: Outside of inside of just any		
255	class you can think that after that class was particularly		
256	motivating, or you thought "okay this class I just went to,		
257	all the classes are good and some are less good but this		
258	class was just fantastic? Did you ever have an experience		
259	like that?		
260			
261	I, I did and I would say it was a very long time ago		
262	because, like my first class < unhum> um you know, but I		
263	think that every time I leave a um class,		
264	because that's what I do now < right> I don't go to the		
265	community centers and things like that, every time I leave	009	"great class", always, experience, why GL/LM?
266	as a participant < unhum> I always feel good, you know, I	009	"great class", always, experience, why GL/LM?
267	always feel like "Wow, that's a great class" like you get	009	"great class", always, experience, why GL/LM?
268	that almost every time < right> you do a class, which is	009	"great class", always, experience, why GL/LM?
269	kinda nice < unhum> so I think almost every time I do a	009	"great class", always, experience, why GL/LM?
270	class < unhum> I have that feeling. Now that's just me	009	"great class", always, endorphin rush, experience, why GL/LM?
271	personally < unhum> 'cause I'm so driven to the workout and	009	"great class", always, endorphin rush, experience, why GL/LM?
272	< okay> um you know when I've got the endorphins going	009	"great class", always, endorphin rush, experience, why GL/LM?
273	'cause I'm working out < unhum> I just feel awesome and I	009	"great class", always, endorphin rush, experience, why GL/LM?
274	just come out of there and I just say "that was an awesome	009	"great class", always, endorphin rush, experience, why GL/LM?
275	class" you know we have some awesome instructors too at		"great class", always, endorphin rush, why GL/LM?
276	so...		
277			
278	Mary: Oh, okay. Now I want you to think of an awesome		

Project: Les Mills Magister project -- den 19 december 2012 -- 8

Line	Text	Memos	Codes
279	instructor, like 'cause I know there are some awesome		
280	instructors a and you don't have to tell me who		
281	it is < unhum> but you think of the awesome instructor,		
282	what is awesome about that particular instructor as		
283	compared to the other instructors that are good.		
284			
285	Yeah, I think that there are some qualities that make		"good instructor"
286	an awesome instructor < okay> Okay, and I'll tell you what		"good instructor"
287	those qualities are, okay, and that's why I think they're		"good instructor"
288	awesome < right> um is one, character, so it's, it's not	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
289	just about coming onstage and delivering the class, it's	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
290	about being and feeling that... this is where you want to be,	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
291	and something like a BodyCombat class for example has a lot	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
292	of character behind it because you're a fighter now. You're	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
293	a, you might be doing Tae Kwon Do, you might be doing, like	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
294	this is a mixed martial arts class < unhum> you may be	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
295	doing boxing so you take on the personality of a boxer.	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
296	When you emulate that personality to the class < unhum>	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
297	they feel motivated too < unhum> it's not just about doing	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
298	it now, it's about feeling it < unhum> and I think that	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
299	that, that's one thing, that it's about character. Do you	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
300	get into the moment? Do you get into the groove of the	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
301	class, what it's meant to be? < Unhum> The other thing is	010	"good instructor", "in character", experience, feeling
302	your voice < unhum> okay? Um, how, how your voice is	011	"good instructor", voice
303	projected, if, if um, if you are trying to motivate,	011	"good instructor", motivation, voice
304	there's going to be highs in your voice, there's going to	011	"good instructor", voice
305	be um, you know, when you're trying to, to bring them down	011	"good instructor", voice
306	to a level and coach them < unhum> to maybe say "okay this	011	"good instructor", coaching, voice
307	is more of a recovery, you're going to bring it down" so to	011	"good instructor"
308	also be able to motivate through your voice < unhum> okay,	011	"good instructor", motivation
309	um, then I also think that it comes down to um your um I		"good instructor"
310	just lost my thought here... Ah, so we talked a bit about		"good instructor"
311	the character, the voice, um... and connecting with the class	012	"good instructor", connecting
312	< okay> so are you here? < Unhum> or are you out there and,	012	"good instructor", connecting
313	and asking them to bring it in to you, so you might call	012	"good instructor", connecting, know names
314	out people's names, you might say you know motivating	012	"good instructor", connecting, know names
315	things like um, "great job!" or you know "you guys are	012	"good instructor", compliments, connecting, motivation
316	fantastic" < unhum> it's about you know that type of	012	"good instructor", compliments, connecting, motivation
317	motivation < unhum> and um creating, creating just a	012	"fitness magic", "good instructor", compliments, connecting, motivation
318	fitness, a fitness magic, you need to be open < unhum> so	012	"fitness magic", "good instructor", connecting

Sample 3 – Memos/Preliminary Analyses After Coding

Memo # 007	Hires; Instructor personality; psychological hinterland “centric” social	<p>HIRES + INSTRUCTOR PERSONALITY + MOTIVATION + SOCIAL</p> <p>- "centric" = psychological hinterland = people-centred people -> look for relationships with others</p> <p>= who see job as "about them", i.e. the members particularly MOTIVATED by the SOCIAL</p>
Memo # 008	Instructor personality; training; “meet and greet”	<p>"World class meet and greet" = technique for creating social connection + can be taught</p> <p>- esp. for front desk = really engage, ask about plans = PERSONALIZE</p> <p>- IN CLASS = use names + connect + give feedback</p>
Memo # 009	Prechoreographed; Non-LM	<p>PRECHOREOGRAPHY = just handed the moves (many types/degrees) - so there are systems where you can choose own music and build up class yourself (Zumba?)</p> <p>BUT LM prechoreography = "takes care of all of it"</p>
Memo # 010	Prechoreographed “like a movie”; “world-class script”; embodiment	<p>- class = "like a movie" with a world-class script</p> <p>- script/music/moves, etc. = can be MEMORIZED/PRACTICED (embodied) ahead of time so NOT THEMATIZED IN CONSCIOUSNESS **** Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, Young</p>
Memo # 011	“world-class script”; experts; research; prechoreographed; goal rational	<p>LM = division of labour - the "work" will function - goal rationality in fitness, i.e. "it's safe, it's results oriented, it's going to deliver what it says it's going to deliver" ALSO it will "work" in the context of the class, i.e. it's "doable" -music goes with moves, appropriate cues, ideas for motivation etc.- PREPARED by "experts"</p> <p>"TAKES ALL OF THE HARD WORK IN THE SENSE OF THE FOUNDATION OF HAT PROGRAM AWAY FROM THE INSTRUCTOR SO WE CAN FOCUS ON ADDING OUR PERSONALITY TO IT"</p>
Memo # 012		<p>Instructor's main role = "add personality" authenticity - feeling of authenticity must come from instructor + his/her genuine personality</p> <p>Instructor's PERSONAL STYLE = also important e.g. = technical, focus on intensity</p> <p>"other" = fun/humor => entertains participants into doing work (esp. good for people hate exercise)</p>

Memo # 013	“not robot”; prechoreographed, preparation; “in the moment”	<p>DIVISION OF LABOUR => everyone can work to personal strengths - letting</p> <p>INSTRUCTORS = constructed as INTERACTORS - must have "embodied" choreography = unthematized most of the time so can FOCUS ON PARTICIPANTS</p> <p>EMBODIMENT - through a) prep for 6 weeks; b) practice with team; c) rehearse; d) online/video coaching</p> <p>***- not “robot” because not focused narrowly on what going to do when=> “personality” come out</p>
Memo # 014	LM- experts;	<p>LM = "hires the best in the world"</p> <p>Experts = entertainers, actors, life coaches, physiotherapists, club consultants</p> <p>TEACH US TECHNIQUES by video</p>
Memo # 015	Experts; LM; authenticity; effective; expedited; training	<p>NARRATIVE - "use name" = psychological technique to connect</p> <p>- trained = how + how much to use it SO a) it comes across as "authentic", and b) it has intended effect/achieves goal = making participant feel good + connected with</p>
Memo # 016	LM; “deskillling”; expedited; training; member -> instructor; prechoreographed	<p>LM training = VERY EFFECTIVE</p> <p>- can turn "zero skills" keener member => "pretty good instructor" in 3 months vs. 9 to 12 months before LM system</p>
Memo # 017	Hires; member-> instructor; ”deskillling” expedited; prechoreographed; training	<p>- recruit keener members to be instructors</p> <p>= love program! move well! have "great energy" - have you ever thought of teaching?</p>
Memo # 018	Before LM; freestyle => LM; member-> instructor; training	<p>before LM at GL about 80% instructors came with prior experience somewhere</p> <p>- XX says industry growing faster than can get new instructors/personal trainers</p> <p>SO in order for company to expand = MUST "grow own instructors"</p>
Memo # 019	CanFitPro; GL sister company; grow instructors to meet GL needs; training	<p>CHC founder = owner HAD corporate strategy CanFitPro (Canadian Fitness Professionals)</p> <p>GOAL = largest chain fitness clubs Canada</p> <p>NEEDED = train/grow own staff BUT not able to do as much as needed within GL so 16 years ago (at time of interview) So created CanFitPro as national training/certifying body</p>

Appendix B: Tables and Figures

Table 1: LMI's Internationally Available Programs

Program	Genre	Slogan/Essence	Description & History
BodyPump	High rep, low weight, barbell and handweights class	“Gain strength and lean, toned muscle without adding bulk”	- High repetition, low weight workout using barbell, weight plates, and step bench; includes compound “full body” exercises; one body part worked to exhaustion per musical track. - Tracks: Warmup; Squats; Chest; Back; Triceps; Biceps; Lunges; Shoulders; Abdominals; Cooldown - created 1990 in New Zealand under original name “Pump” and trialed 1995 in Australia See (About BodyPump 2011)
BodyStep	Step aerobics	“Energizing and motivating to make you feel liberated and alive”	- Aerobic and muscle conditioning workout using height-adjustable step bench; - Tracks: Warmup; Step Warmup; Step Orientation; Step Athletic; Mixed Strength; Power Peak; Step Recovery; Peak; Recovery/Conditioning; Cooldown/Stretch (alternates : Party Step; Speed Step) - launched internationally 1997/8 See (About BodyStep 2011)
BodyAttack	Athletic high/low impact aerobics	“Sports inspired high-interval training”	- Athletic drills to improve speed, fitness, strength and agility; - Tracks: Warmup; Mixed Impact; Aerobic; Plyometric; Upper Body Conditioning; Running; Agility; Interval; Power; Lower Body Conditioning; Core Conditioning; Cooldown - launched internationally 1997/8 See (About BodyAttack 2011)
BodyCombat	Mixed martial arts	“Strike, punch and kick your way to superior fitness”	- moves taken from karate, boxing, taekwondo, taichi, muay thai; - Tracks: Upper Body Warmup; Lower Body Warmup; Combat 1; Power Training 1; Combat 2; Power Training 2; Combat 3; Muay Thai; Power Training 3; Conditioning; Cooldown - launched internationally 1999 See (About BodyCombat 2011)
BodyBalance/Flow	Mind-body fusion (yoga/Pilates/ tai chi fusion)	“Build flexibility, strength and inner calm”	- moves taken from yoga, tai chi, and Pilates; - Tracks: Tai Chi Warmup; Sun Salutations; Standing Strength; Balance; Hip Openers; Core/Abdominals; Core/Back; Twists; Forward Bends/Hamstrings; Relaxation; Meditation - launched internationally 1997/8 - known as BodyFlow in North America for copyright reasons, and as BodyBalance elsewhere See (About BodyBalance 2011)
RPM	Spinning-style indoor cycle class	“Push yourself and ride to the rhythm of powerful music”	- instructor styled as “team coach” for cycling team; - Tracks: Pack ride; Pace; Hills; Mixed Terrain; Intervals; Speed Work; Mountain Climb; Ride Home; Stretch - launched internationally 1997/8 See (About RPM 2011)
BodyJam	Dance aerobics (street dance)	“Addictive dance styles and the hottest music”	- warmup, rehearsal, performance, recovery phases; each musical track with separate focus - launched 2001 See (About BodyJam 2011)
BodyVive	Functional fitness (mimics the movements of everyday life)	“Low impact to boost whole body fitness and core strength”	- uses small Pilates ball, resistance tubing in cardio, balance, resistance, core training; - Tracks: Warmup; Cardio 1; Cardio 2; Cardio 3; Peak Cardio; Active Recovery; Dynamic Strength; Integrated Strength; Hips; Core 1; Core 2; Stretch - launched 2006 See (About BodyVive 2011)
Sh’Bam	Dance aerobics (dance club dance)		- launched 2011 (after my empirical material collected)
CXWorks	Core training		- launched 2011 (after my empirical material collected)

Table 2: Instructors Interviewed for the Study

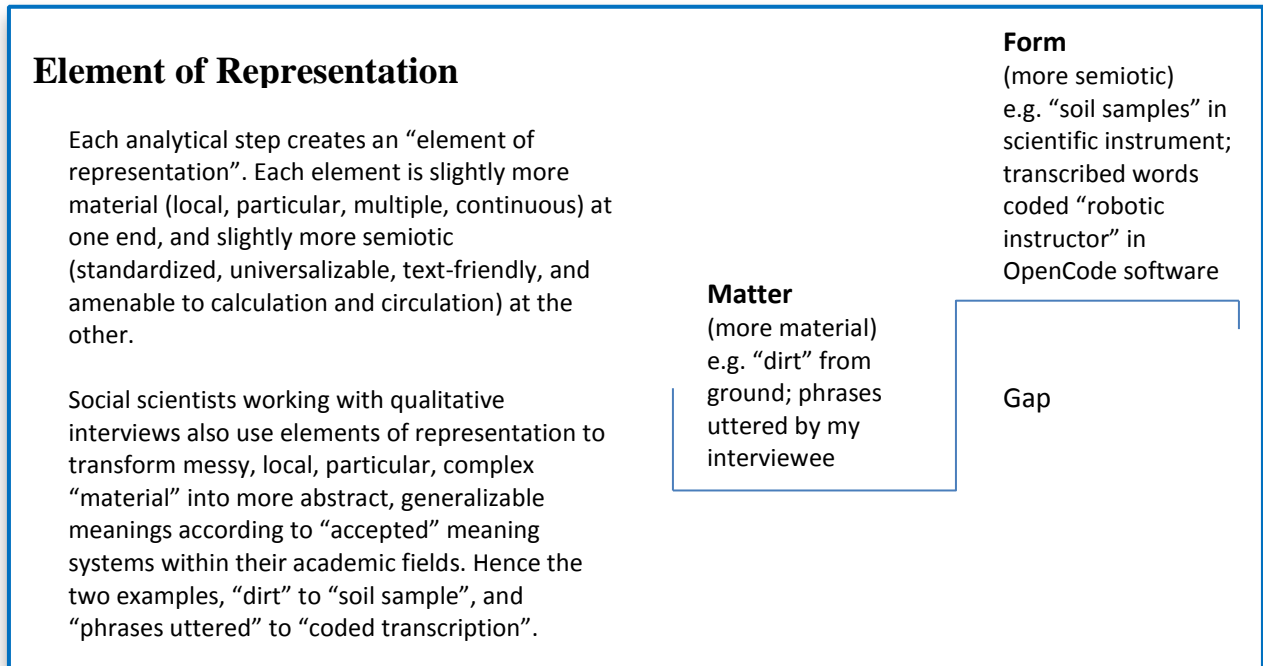
Pseudonym	Background and Involvement with LMI
Jill	- BA in PhysED, registered physiotherapist; VP of Operations and Director of Education, Canadian Health Clubs; involved in decision to introduce LMI to CHC; preformats own program for CHC; has appeared in Master Class video in LM Quarterly Release Package; author of book on own health/fitness program for women; instructs BodyPump; BodyFlow
Sara	- former freestyle instructor, yoga instructor, converted to LMI when LMI introduced at CHC; master (instructor) trainer at CHC; has appeared in Master Class video in LMI Quarterly Release Package; instructs BodyPump; BodyFlow, BodyAttack; RPM, freestyle yoga
Jennifer	- trained as coach for figure skating; former freestyle instructor; converted to LMI when LMI introduced at CHC; instructs BodyPump, BodyStep, BodyFlow
Christina	dance background, musical background; studying to be registered dietician; recruited as participant; regional team leader BodyAttack; also instructs BodyPump; BodyFlow
Diane	- active in sports since childhood; hobby = triathlon; registered holistic dietician; regional team leader BodyCombat; also instructs BodyPump; RPM
Maria	- musical background; disliked gyms before LMI classes at CHC; recruited as participant; teaches BodyPump once a week, intends to take BodyAttack certification
**Names have been changed **	

Table 3: Summary of Concepts in Latour’s Model of Circulating Reference

Messy World of the Field		Orderly World of the Scientific Paper	
Locality	Situated in (tied to) a certain space and time	Compatibility	Situation in space/time of field site made comparable to situations in other spaces/times
Particularity	Each individual is “only itself”—a collection of idiosyncratic characteristics	Standardization	Each individual is a member of a class based on standardized measures of specific characteristics; individuals measured against fictional composites or “types”; relevant characteristics emphasized, irrelevant ones ignored
Materiality	Objects and living things have a material existence	Text	Objects and living things are represented in texts
Multiplicity	Many idiosyncratic individuals	Calculation	Multitude of individuals reduced to collection of measures of a single characteristic; collections can be “reshuffled like a deck of cards” to create new meanings and open up new possibilities for action
Continuity	Bound to material conditions in specific space/time	Circulation	Standardized, abstract meanings move rapidly in space/time; situation here can be rapidly understood in terms of standardized meaning systems
		Relative universality	Generalizable conclusions can be drawn; knowledge circulates in space/time and can be sent back down a chain of representation into different localities to change ongoing activities there

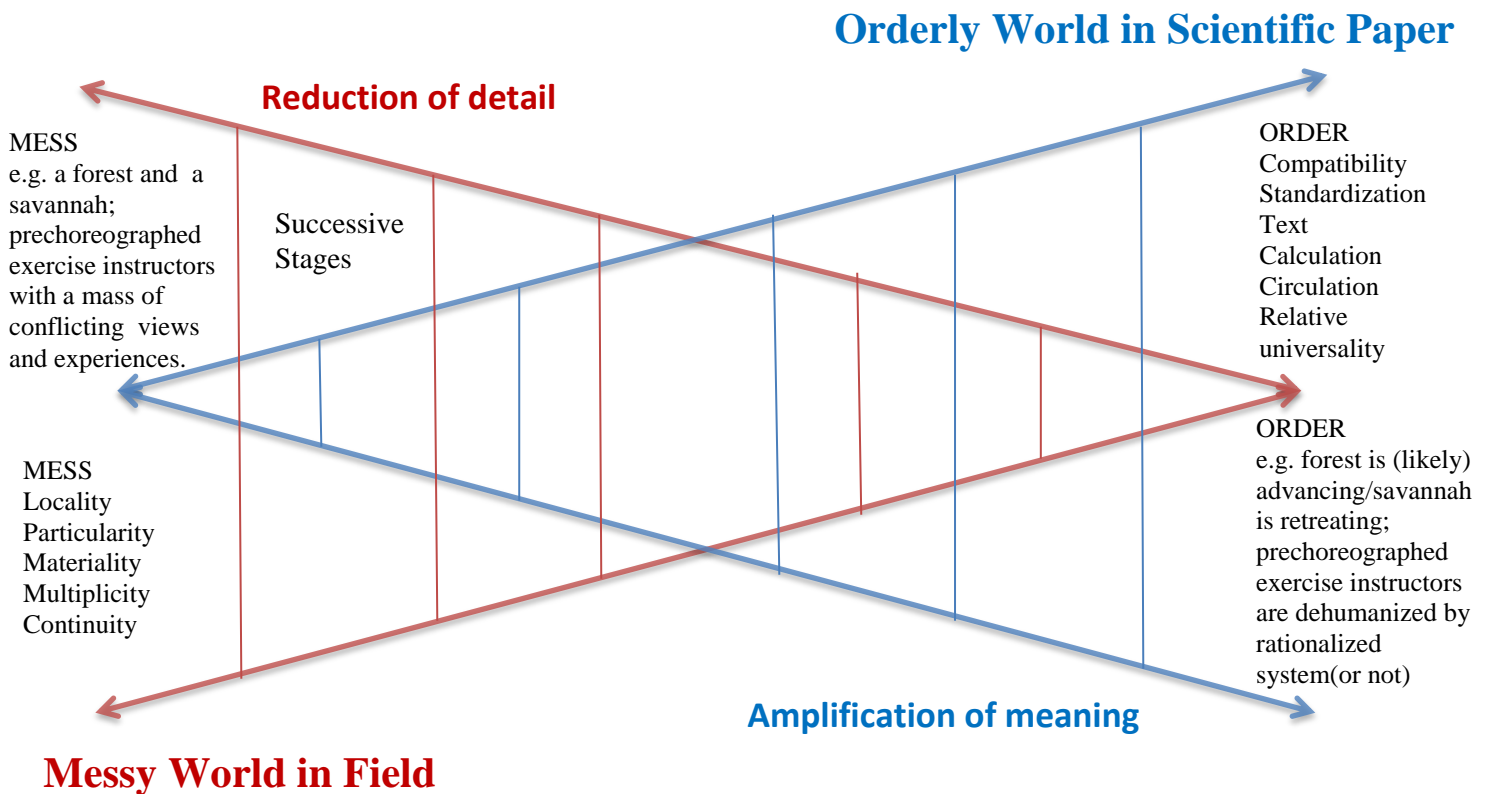
as presented in Latour, *Pandora’s Hope* 1999, 24-79

Figure 1: An Element of Representation



adapted from Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 1999, 70

Figure 2: Processes of Reduction of Detail and Amplification of Meaning

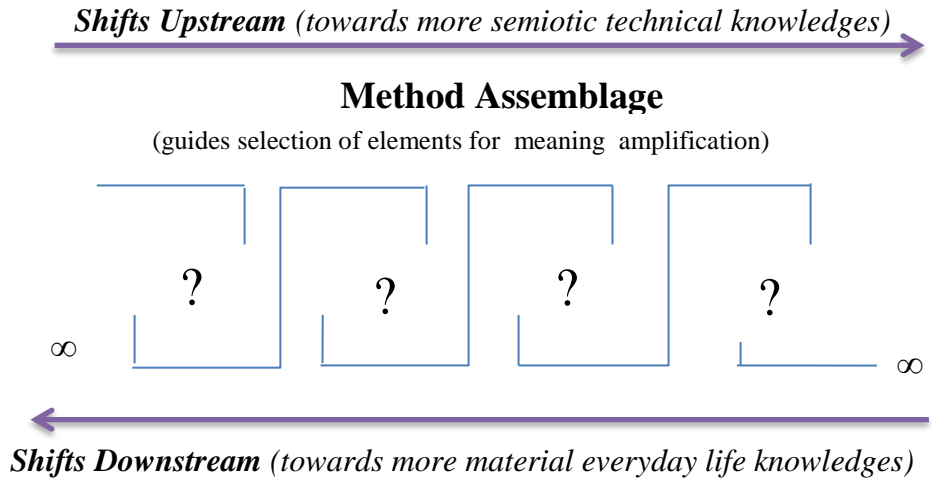


Researchers engage in these processes as they work their way from messy world of the field to the orderly world of the scientific report, adapted from Latour. *Pandora's Hope*, 1999, 71

Figure 3: Latour's Chain of Representation and Law's Method Assemblage

According to Latour, researchers “analyze” in a series of steps where they select and amplify some elements from the mess of the everyday (empirical material) while purifying away other details.

With reference to Law, I argue, it is the “Method Assemblage” or theoretical perspective which allows researchers to “see” or “select” what is significant or meaningful. A method assemblage makes some realities more present (at each link in the chain) while others fade because there is no space in the assemblage for them. They are Othered out of sight, and when research conclusions are used as the basis for action or future research, they disappear.



They can be made to reappear if one follows the chain back towards the more-material, undoing the operations conditioned by the Method Assemblage. Yet the greater the number of links, and the more complex the operations that create them, the more “robust” the research results conditioned by the Method Assemblage will be.

Yet, it is not *simply* a matter of shifting representations, but of shifting realities. A Method Assemblage is “a combination of a reality detector and a reality amplifier”. It changes a flow of action as well as drawing attention to it. Significantly, expert, more semiotic knowledges are often sent back downstream, to change courses of action in (and thus shift realities within) the messy, complex situation of the everyday. This is evident everywhere in the development and presentation of prechoreographed group exercise.

adapted from Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 1999, 71, and Law. *After Method* 2004

Figure 4: Summary of Four Method Assemblages

Four Method Assemblages:

Theoretical Roots

<p>Rationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weber as interpreted by Ritzer - Instrumental rationality + bureaucratic forms displace other rationalities of lifeworld meaning systems 	<p>Translation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material-semiotic approach, ANT - Actants enacted by networks through translations of interests - networks = obligatory passage points for actants' trajectories of action
<p>Embodiment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, Leder, Young, Foucault - understanding in the body - pre-conscious perceptions ("dispositions") = crystalized experience of the world => action 	<p>Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Durkheim + Geertz + Goffman - Mechanical solidarity, effervescence, ritual events - Interpersonal ritual – emotional connections

Four Method Assemblages:

Meaning Locations

<p>Rationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in pre-modern, non-bureaucratic, non-instrumentally rationalized practice (craft work) and its products 	<p>Translation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the "going concern" of the network
<p>Embodiment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the nexus of "being" between individual and world (including other people in the world) 	<p>Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the collective meaning systems of the community (culture)

Four Method Assemblages:

Subjects / Subjectivities

Rationalization <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enlightenment subject with transcendental essence- Cartesian ("I think, therefore I am")	Translation <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "empty" subject- Actants have no stable essence- Different aspects come out depending on network
Embodiment <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Merleau-Ponty's "body subject"- "I can" orientation to world- Knowledge = ability to DO- Founded on "dispositions" or crystalized ways of percieving, acting from experience	Meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Homo Duplex = half culture, i.e. meaning systems community holds in common (inc. language, cosmology, etc.) AND half biological individual

Figure 5: Freestyle Network

The **Freestyle Network** is a set of loosely connected actors. **Freestyle instructors** are **primary actors** in the “going concern” of making their classes happen. They individually translate activities of many other actors (some of which are shown here) in the process of choreographing classes, setting them to music, and enacting them in specific spaces/times with participants. (Note that actors themselves are networks which must be Black Boxed at some point to make analysis possible).

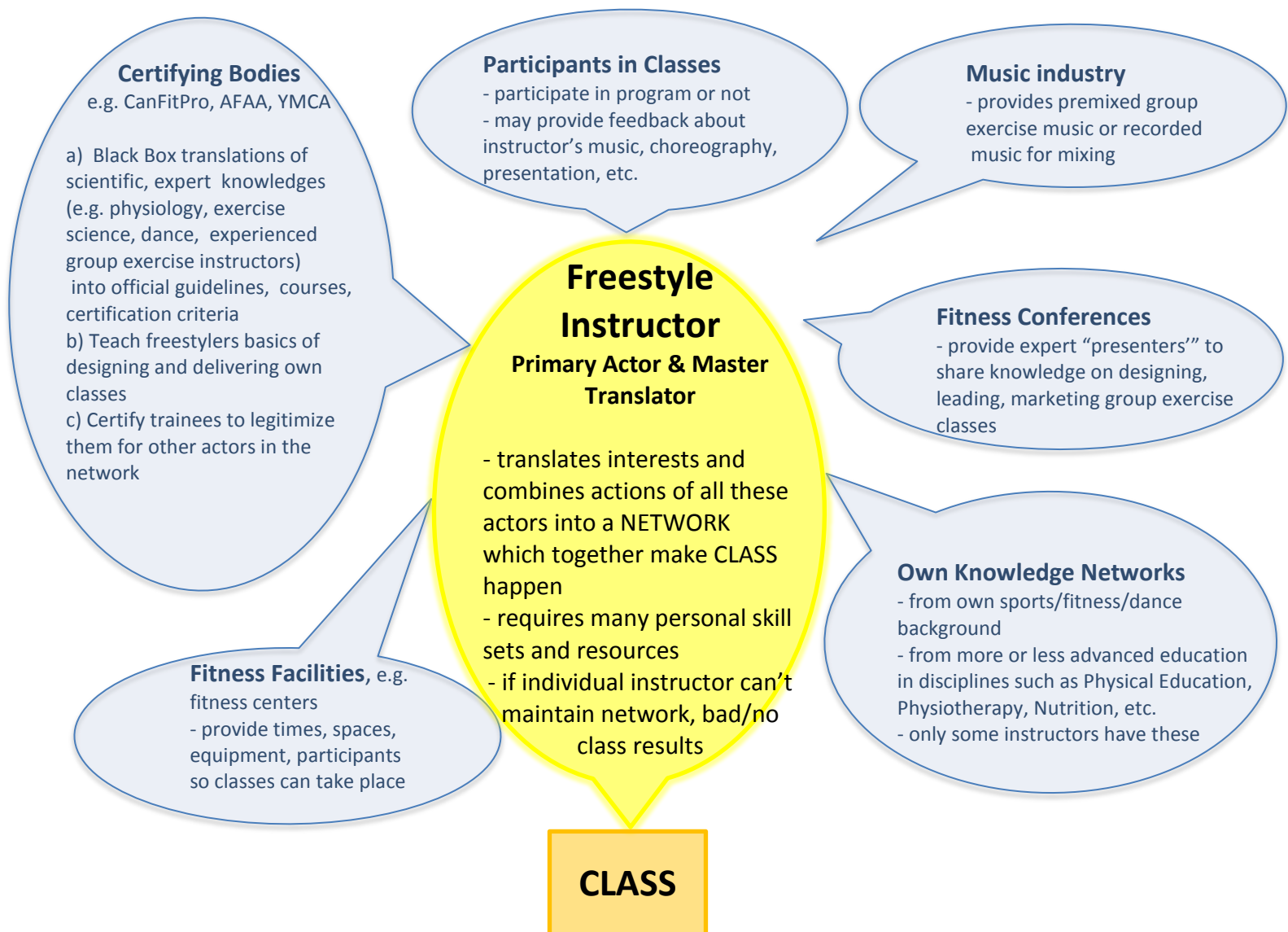


Figure 6: Instructor in LMI Network Chain of Translation

The **LMI Instructor** is a link towards the end of a long chain of translation resulting in a live LMI exercise class. To enable the translation (which makes class participation an “obligatory passage point” for participants), she performs two shifts:

- from more-semiotic inscriptions in the Immutable Mobile Quarterly Release Package to the more-material embodied movements in live classes, and thus
- from the rationalized to the lived.

The Embodiment and Cultural Meaning Method Assemblages, described in the relevant chapters show how.

