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Like Mother, Like Daughter? Understanding Maternal Experiences of Intending to End the Intergenerational Transmission of Body Dissatisfaction to Daughters

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Like Mother, Like Daughter? Understanding Maternal Experiences of Intending to End the
Intergenerational Transmission of Body Dissatisfaction to Daughters

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

Addressing a critical gap in existing literature, this study ventures into the relatively unexplored domain of mothers' experiences of intending to prevent the passing of body dissatisfaction to daughters. In a society where thinness is often idealized, this research underscores the critical need to delve into the complex and nuanced experiences of mothers endeavouring to cultivate healthier body image for their daughters. Utilizing hermeneutic research methods, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven mothers, each navigating their own struggles with body image while being fiercely determined to protect their daughters from similar challenges.

This study sought to understand the varied experiences of these mothers, exploring both the hurdles they faced and the triumphs they achieved. The findings illuminate the profound complexities inherent in the mother-daughter dynamic, particularly under the weight of societal expectations regarding body image. The insights gleaned from participant interviews underscore an urgent call for robust support systems for these mothers. Drawing upon the methodologies of Feminist Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, as well as family therapy, the findings of this study suggest a comprehensive approach, providing mothers with vital tools and psychological support. The suggested strategies are designed to empower mothers to effectively tackle their own body image concerns, while simultaneously shaping their daughters' attitudes and perceptions about their bodies. Moreover, this research envisions broader societal implications—paving the way for a new societal norm that embraces diverse body images and ideals.

Altogether, the findings of this research transcend the realms of academia, offering significant insights for both ongoing research and clinical practice. This study highlights the

imperative for tailored strategies and interventions that enable mothers to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational body dissatisfaction. Serving as a rallying cry for a more profound, empathetic understanding and fostering of healthier body images across generations, this research spotlights the crucial role of mothers in forging a future where body satisfaction is celebrated and normalized.

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Dedication

To our baby girl, Winnie. We love you already and cannot wait to meet you soon.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I grew up with a mother who struggled to love her body shape and size. For as long as I can remember, she was on a diet, trying so desperately to shrink her frame to fit the ‘thin ideal.’ Despite my mother’s best intentions, that body dissatisfaction was passed down to me. I, like my mother, struggled throughout my life to love the body I was given and, as a result, suffered from disordered eating. (Brun et al., 2020, p. 5)

Given these experiences and my profound desire to become a mother, I wondered what it might be like for mothers to intend to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. This wondering and the lack of literature examining this topic called me to conduct the following research.

The Thin Ideal

In Western cultures, societal appearance standards have become increasingly unattainable and unrealistic for most girls and women (Noser & Zeigler-Hill, 2014). These appearance standards, which are often referred to as the “thin ideal,” suggest that girls and women should be unrealistically thin to be considered attractive, desirable, healthy, and good (Levine, 2012). Given that the thin ideal is widely unachievable for most, girls and women are regularly disheartened by their appearance, which negatively impacts their body image (i.e., the subjective view of one’s own appearance) and often results in body dissatisfaction (i.e., the negative evaluation of one’s own appearance; Thompson et al., 1999). This is troubling as body dissatisfaction has been found to be associated with the development of disordered eating (e.g., dietary restriction, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder), as well as other co-morbid mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety and depression; Dooley et al, 2015). In view of

these findings, it is not surprising that the prevention of female body dissatisfaction has been identified as a significant public health objective (Bucchianeri & Neumark-Sztainer, 2014).

Maternal Influence on Daughters' Body Dissatisfaction

Given the harmful potential consequences associated with body dissatisfaction, researchers have attempted to identify factors that contribute to its development among girls and women (Cash, 2002). Body image development has been investigated from numerous theoretical perspectives; however, the conceptual framework that has garnered most attention in research literature is the tripartite influence model of body image (Tiggemann, 2011). Researchers who have studied this model suggest that parental, especially maternal, influences have a significant effect on the development of daughters' body image (Field et al., 2005; Smolak & Levine, 2001). In fact, researchers have demonstrated that specific maternal influences (e.g., weight-related teasing and pressure to diet) are linked to the development of body dissatisfaction for daughters (Francis & Birch, 2005; Presnell et al., 2004). Moreover, researchers have shown that mothers with body dissatisfaction are more likely to negatively influence daughters' body image than mothers without body dissatisfaction (Davison et al., 2000; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). Altogether, researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding the complex nature of mother-daughter relationships and their influence on daughters' body image (Baker et al., 2000; Corning et al., 2010).

Research Problem

Although mother-daughter interactions have been found to be associated with the development of body dissatisfaction in many research studies, mother-daughter relationships have also been suggested to offer a means for the promotion of body satisfaction (i.e., the positive evaluation of one's own appearance; Maor, 2012). For instance, Gross and Nelson

(2000) found that when daughters received positive maternal messages concerning body shape and eating, they experienced greater body satisfaction. However, studies that have explored positive maternal influence on daughters' body image are scarce. As such, little is known about mothers' subjective experience of attempting to positively influence daughters' body image. More specifically, no research has been conducted to examine mothers' experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Altogether, understanding the experience of mothers who intend to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction through the mother-daughter relationship is necessary and important, as this unique perspective offers great potential to influence research and practice.

Purpose and Research Question

My purpose in this study was to gain a deeper understanding of maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Given this aim, I investigated the following research question: *How might we understand maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters?* To explore this research question, I was guided by Gadamer's (1960/2014) philosophical hermeneutics. In hermeneutic inquiry, consideration is placed on instances of the particular rather than focusing on instances that come up repeatedly (Gadamer, 1960/2014; Moules et al., 2015). As such, hermeneutics brings forth the often obscured, and taken for granted, aspects of life and makes them visible.

Overall, hermeneutics is concerned with achieving new understanding of a topic through interpretation of language (e.g., text or dialogue with participants; Gadamer, 1960/2014; Moules et al., 2015). Gadamer put forth the idea of interpretation as a way to animate human experience through language (Moules et al., 2015). Thus, as a researcher, I aimed to make-sense of the

studied topic through interpretation of the data (e.g., conversations between myself and participants about our experience of the topic) and enliven the topic through the interpretive writing of my research findings.

Seven mothers who self-identified as struggling with body dissatisfaction but intending to end its intergenerational transmission to daughters took part in an unstructured, yet topic focused, research interview. Each participant was asked about their experiences (i.e., obstacles, successes, etc.) of parenting daughters in a manner that intends to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. Hermeneutic philosophy and method (i.e., applied hermeneutics), outlined by Moules and colleagues (2015), was used to guide interviews, as well as the data analysis process (i.e., developing and refining interpretations). Analysis was on-going throughout the research process and included reviewing audio recordings and transcripts of participant interviews, memoing, creating interpretive themes, reviewing pertinent literature, and developing and refining interpretations. Findings (i.e., interpretations) from this proposed study are described with supporting literature, as well as participant quotes, and were written in a way that intends to further understanding of the topic.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

To this point, I have provided background information on maternal influence on daughters' body dissatisfaction, offered a description of the research problem, and briefly outlined the current study's purpose and design. In chapter two, I review the research literature on the tripartite influence model of body image development; parental, and more specifically, maternal influence on daughters' body image; maternal transmission of body dissatisfaction; and lastly, I explore the need for research that explores positive maternal influence on daughters' body image. Following this, in chapter three, I describe the study's methodology. In chapters four,

five, and six, I outline my interpretative findings. In chapter seven, I explore the implications of my interpretative findings for practice and research. To conclude, in chapter eight, I present my interpretative findings in story format, aiming to evoke a final transformative shift in the readers' understanding of maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Integrating this literature review within the hermeneutic research framework necessitates a strategic emphasis on this study's practitioner-focused orientation. This orientation naturally guided my examination of the literature towards the domain of psychology, deliberately prioritizing practical over philosophical explorations of body image. This choice ensured that the review remained closely connected to the real-world implications and applications crucial for this hermeneutic investigation.

As such, in my literature review, I am aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of how maternal influence can shape daughters' body image and highlight the urgent need for greater understanding of maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. This process involved a comprehensive search across multiple databases for psychological literature related to key terms such as body image, body dissatisfaction, body satisfaction, maternal influence, and intergenerational transmission. Guided by Greenhalgh et al.'s (2017) insightful question, "Is this paper likely to add meaning to our emerging overview of the field?", I was directed to select literature that contributed significantly and relevantly to the research topic (p. 2). This approach reinforced the literature review's relevance and depth within the context of hermeneutic methodology (Webber et al., 2023).

Thus, the literature review begins by examining the importance of investigating the intergenerational transmission of body image through highlighting the relationship between negative body image (i.e., body dissatisfaction) and the development of mental health concerns (e.g., eating disorders). Following this review, I offer an outline of the tripartite influence model of body image (Tiggemann, 2011), which is best regarded as a general framework for understanding, and studying, body image development. This perspective informs the current

study as it explains how body dissatisfaction and body satisfaction can be influenced via sociocultural pathways (e.g., maternal influence). Overall, the tripartite influence model of body image regards sociocultural ideals and pressures as paramount to the development of body dissatisfaction and body satisfaction (Tiggemann, 2011).

Body Image

According to Cash and colleagues (2004), body image is a multidimensional construct that encompasses an individual's subjective perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about their own appearance. As such, an individual's body image can fall somewhere on the body image continuum (i.e., from positive to negative body image). While positive body image has been associated with the construct of body satisfaction (i.e., positive thoughts and feelings about one's appearance) in the literature, negative body image is generally connected to the concept of body dissatisfaction (i.e., negative thoughts and feelings about one's appearance). Moreover, body dissatisfaction can be described as global (i.e., when an individual is dissatisfied with their overall weight, shape, or size) or characteristic-specific (i.e., when an individual is dissatisfied with specific aspects of their body, such as body hair or acne; Wertheim & Paxton, 2012). For this study, the focus will be placed on global body dissatisfaction, which highlights concerns about overall appearance (i.e., body shape, size, and weight).

Body Dissatisfaction and its Consequences

Body dissatisfaction is so prevalent among girls and women that it has become normative (Cash, 2002). In fact, results from a study conducted by Eaton and colleagues (2012) indicated that 61.2% of female participants reported being dissatisfied with their weight. Moreover, researchers have found that girls already exhibit body dissatisfaction by three to six years of age (Davison et al., 2000; Hayes & Tantleff-Dunn, 2010; Smolak, 2011), which often remains stable

throughout the life span (Slevec & Tiggemann, 2011). This is concerning as body dissatisfaction has been shown to predict the development of subclinical disordered eating (e.g., dieting; Leahy et al., 2011) and clinical eating disorders (e.g., anorexia nervosa; Rohde et al., 2015). For example, in a study conducted by Rohde and colleagues (2015), body dissatisfaction was found to be the most consistent and robust predictor of eating disorder (e.g., anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder) development. These findings are distressing as individuals who suffer from eating disorders tend to experience serious health complications. For example, individuals who struggle with anorexia nervosa face mortality rates that are six to thirteen times higher than the general population due to physical complications such as heart disease and organ failure (Herzog et al., 2000). Lastly, body dissatisfaction has been shown to be associated with the development of other co-morbid mental health concerns, such as anxiety (e.g., Dooley et al., 2015; Kostanski & Gullone, 1998), depression (Dooley et al., 2015; Bélanger & Marcotte, 2013; Johnson & Wardle, 2005), stress (Johnson & Wardle, 2005), and low self-esteem (Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Van Den Berg et al., 2010; Wichstrøm & von Soest, 2016). Altogether, the numerous potential negative health and mental well-being repercussions of body dissatisfaction present a great need for research investigating body dissatisfaction prevention (Bucchiarneri & Neumark-Sztainer, 2014).

Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image

Given the serious potential negative consequences associated with body dissatisfaction, many researchers have attempted to identify factors that contribute to its development among girls and women (Cash, 2002). Body image influences have been investigated from numerous theoretical perspectives; however, the conceptual framework that has garnered the most attention in the research literature is the sociocultural model of body image development (Tiggemann,

2011). The tripartite influence model of body image holds that (a) sociocultural ideals of beauty (e.g., being unrealistically thin, which is referred to as the thin ideal) exist and are (b) transmitted and reinforced through sociocultural pathways, namely through media, peer, and parental influences (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann, 2011). These sociocultural beauty ideals are then (c) internalized by individuals, and (d) results in satisfaction, or most commonly, dissatisfaction with one's appearance depending on the extent to which the individual meets the sociocultural standard of beauty (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann, 2011).

Although the tripartite influence model of body image has been applied to all genders, this study focuses on female body image, and as such, the following will describe female experiences of tripartite body image influence. The thin ideal is largely propagated by the media, through the consistent portrayal of very thin girls and women. Many correlational, experimental, and meta-analytic research studies have demonstrated the association between exposure to media (e.g., social media, advertisements, television programs, and fashion magazines) and body dissatisfaction for girls and women (Grabe et al., 2008; Hausenblas et al., 2013; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Want, 2009). For example, in a landmark study, Becker (1995) found that female body dissatisfaction did not exist in rural Fijian communities until the introduction of the television and its accompanying presentation of the Western thin ideal.

While research focusing on the influence of media in relation to body image development is important, it does not provide an explanation as to why some girls and women exposed to the thin ideal through media develop body dissatisfaction, while others do not (Benedikt et al., 1998). Clark and Tiggemann (2006) suggested that the thin ideal, proliferated in media, may become more impactful when it is reinforced through interactions with others. As such, comments and modeling by others (e.g., peers and parents) may mediate the internalization of

the thin ideal (Clark & Tiggemann, 2006). In line with this assertion, peers have been implicated in the transmission of the thin ideal through the following means: (a) commenting on weight and shape (e.g., teasing), (b) modeling of weight concerns and weight control behaviours (e.g., dieting), (c) discussing weight or appearance among peers (e.g., “fat talk”), and (d) reinforcing the belief that popularity is dependent on whether or not one meets the thin ideal standard (Tiggemann, 2011).

Although peers have been identified as reinforcers of the thin ideal, some researchers suggest that family members may exhibit greater influence on daughters’ body image (Field et al., 2005; Smolak & Levine, 2001). Researchers have proposed that parents are uniquely positioned to influence body image development as they act as children’s primary socializing agents and they can, to a certain extent, control their children’s engagement with peers and media, especially while they are young (Tiggemann, 2011).

Parental Influence

Due to its accessible nature, parents often rely on the media to gain “health information,” which is influenced and tainted by the thin ideal, rather than accessing other, more reliable resources (Schwitzer et al., 2005). As such, despite their good intentions, parents may be inadvertently setting their children up for body dissatisfaction by reinforcing the thin ideal (Cooley et al., 2008; Fulkerson et al., 2002; Keery et al., 2005; Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009). For instance, parents have been shown to reinforce the thin ideal through modeling certain behaviours (e.g., dietary restriction), direct verbal messages about their children’s weight and eating, and encouraging their children to engage in weight control behaviours (e.g., dieting or exercising; Balantekin, 2019; Cooley et al., 2008; Faith et al., 2004; Fulkerson et al., 2002; Keery et al., 2006; Oliveira et al., 2019). Overall, in a literature review conducted by Rodgers

and Chabrol (2009), the researchers found that parental focus on weight was associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction among their children. Furthermore, they found that this outcome was particularly strong when parents criticized their children about their weight or when they encouraged their children to lose weight (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009).

Maternal Influence

Whereas paternal influence on children's body image has been demonstrated, maternal influence has been shown to have a more significant effect on children's, and particularly, daughters' body image (Davison et al., 2000; Elfhag & Linné, 2005; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Wertheim et al., 2002). The uniqueness of the mother-daughter relationship is one that often results in the tendency for mothers and daughters to exhibit parallel beliefs and behaviours (Chodorow, 1999). Mothers often take on the role of primary caregiver in the family (i.e., they are frequently responsible for food preparation and distribution), and given their increased contact with the children, have the greatest influence on children's behaviour socialization related to eating and weight (Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2001; Elfhag & Linne, 2005; Pike & Rodin, 1991).

Given society's pervasive focus on female thinness, mothers are more likely than fathers to feel pressure to reinforce thin ideal compliance with their children, and more specifically, to daughters (Evans & Grange, 1995; Fallon et al., 2014; Hart & Chow, 2019; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). By commenting on their and/or others' weight and eating behaviours, mothers communicate beliefs about what bodies and behaviours are deemed acceptable and valued in the home and society at large (Hart & Chow, 2019; Tiggemann, 2011). What is more, daughters may be especially susceptible to absorbing and internalizing mothers' comments about

weight and eating as mothers often serve as daughters' primary model of womanhood (Cooper et al., 2004).

Maternal Transmission of Body Dissatisfaction and its Consequences

As noted by Brun and colleagues (2020), “maternal perpetuation of the thin ideal is often done with the best of intentions” (p. 2). For example, a mother may persuade her daughter to diet to protect her from the perceived health complications associated with overweight and obesity. Additionally, a mother may restrict her daughter's caloric intake in the hopes of helping her succeed in a society that upholds the thin ideal. Despite mothers' best intentions, however, researchers (e.g., Anschutz et al., 2009; Benedikt et al., 1998; Canals et al., 2009; Gil-Llari et al., 2019; Pike & Rodin, 1991; Rodgers et al., 2019) have shown “maternal reinforcement of the thin ideal, through direct or indirect means, to predict body dissatisfaction in daughters” (Brun et al., 2020, p. 2).

Maternal Modes of Influence

To better understand the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction, it is necessary to discuss the ways in which the thin ideal is reinforced, and body dissatisfaction is transmitted from mothers to daughters. Maternal influence on body image is believed to transpire through two routes: direct communication (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Vincent & McCabe, 2000) and modeling (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Byely et al., 2000; Ogden & Steward, 2000).

Direct Influence

Direct communication, also known as direct influence, typically involves commenting on a child's weight or encouraging a child to lose weight (Brun et al., 2020). In this section, I describe maternal means of direct influence.

Maternal Commenting on Daughters' Weight

Many researchers have established that daughters' body dissatisfaction is associated with maternal commenting on daughters' weight (e.g., encouraging daughters to lose weight and weight-related teasing; Baker et al., 2000; Benedikt et al., 1998; Francis & Birch, 2005; Schwartz et al., 1999; Suzuki, 2023). Benedikt and colleagues (1998) discovered that daughters' body dissatisfaction and weight-loss efforts correlated with mothers' desire for their daughters to lose weight and encouragement of weight loss. Smolak and colleagues (1999) found that daughters who were concerned about being, or becoming, overweight often had mothers who commented on their weight. Moreover, Cooley and colleagues (2008) established that daughters who felt pressured by their mothers to lose weight also experienced body dissatisfaction and engaged in disordered eating. Lastly, maternal pressure to lose weight appears to have a lasting impact on daughters' body image; Helfert and Warschburger (2011) found that mothers' weight loss encouragement was positively correlated with daughters' body dissatisfaction one year later. Overall, findings indicate that mothers negatively influence daughters' body image through comments on daughters' weight and encouraging weight loss.

Mothers may also reinforce the thin ideal through teasing their daughters about their weight. Through teasing, mothers communicate disapproval of a characteristic embodied by their child (Schwartz et al., 1999). Weight-related teasing by mothers has been shown to contribute to body dissatisfaction among daughters. In fact, findings from Baker and colleagues' (2000) study demonstrated that mothers' criticism of their daughters' eating and/or weight, along with their daughters' perception of this criticism, was correlated with body dissatisfaction, as well as increased engagement in weight loss behaviours. In addition to direct influence, mothers might influence daughters' body image via indirect processes (i.e., modeling).

Indirect Influence

Modeling, also described as indirect influence, includes mothers' visible behaviours (e.g., pinching belly fat in disgust and dieting) or verbal expressions of body dissatisfaction (e.g., disparagingly calling oneself fat) and anti-fat bias (e.g., displaying anti-fat prejudice; Pike & Rodin, 1991).

Modeling

Researchers have found that mothers affect daughters' body image through modeling of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. Mothers who are dissatisfied with their bodies often implicitly communicate this body dissatisfaction to their daughters; this phenomenon has been linked to daughters' experiences of body dissatisfaction (Evans & Grange, 1995; Golan & Crow, 2004; Jones & Young, 2021). Lowes and Tiggemann (2003) showed that daughters' perception of mothers' body dissatisfaction was positively linked to their own level of body dissatisfaction (i.e., as perceptions of mothers' body dissatisfaction increased, so too did daughters' body dissatisfaction). Furthermore, daughters who perceived that their mothers desired a thinner figure were more inclined to choose an ideal body figure that was smaller than their current size when presented with images of different body sizes (Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). Kroon Van Diest and colleagues (2018) established that mothers and daughters make parallel comments about their bodies (i.e., if mothers make disparaging comments about their bodies, so do their daughters). Moreover, Handford and colleagues (2018) found maternal negative commenting on their own weight, shape, or eating behaviours to be associated with diminished body satisfaction for daughters. In other studies, daughters' drive for thinness was correlated with their mothers' own weight concern and body dissatisfaction (Davison et al., 2000; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). In addition to maternal verbal comments, mothers' eating behaviours have also been found to influence daughters' body image (Jones & Young, 2021; Klein et al., 2017; Smolak, 2005). For

example, Klein and colleagues (2017) found maternal dieting to predict daughters' drive for thinness 20 years later. Furthermore, Smolak (2005) explained that body dissatisfaction can be modeled by mothers to such a slight degree that it seems unnoticeable (e.g., refusing to have your picture taken for fear that you look fat); however, this modeling can still be perceived and internalized by daughters.

Ending the Intergenerational Transmission of Body Dissatisfaction Through the Mother-Daughter Relationship

Mothers, as primary caregivers, are widely considered to be the most significant influence on their children's lives. From childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, they play a crucial role in shaping all aspects of their children's development, including physical and psychological well-being (Davison et al., 2000; Elfhag & Linne, 2005; Pike & Rodin, 1991). Recognizing the deep-rooted potential mothers hold in influencing their daughters' perceptions of body image, it becomes imperative to explore the research literature on maternal strategies for promoting the development of positive body image for daughters. Prior to delving into research findings, it is crucial to situate this discussion within the historical and cultural backdrop that frames such possibilities. To this end, the following presents a concise overview of the evolution and impact of the body positive and acceptance movement. This overview aims to shed light on its profound influence in guiding mothers towards nurturing healthier, more positive body image development in their daughters.

Historical and Cultural Context: Body Positivity and Acceptance

The body positivity and acceptance movement, with roots tracing back to the fat acceptance movement of the late 1960s, represents a critical shift in societal attitudes towards diverse body shapes and sizes. Initially focused on challenging discrimination against overweight

individuals, the movement has broadened to embrace all body types, advocating for a universal acceptance of body diversity (Cohen et al., 2019). This historical backdrop is essential for understanding the contemporary landscape in which mothers and daughters navigate issues of body image. The transformation of this movement over time, from niche activism to mainstream acceptance, underscores the shifting narratives around beauty, health, and self-acceptance (Cooper, 2016).

In recent years, the proliferation of social media has significantly amplified the reach and impact of the body positivity movement, fostering a global community committed to challenging traditional beauty standards (i.e., the thin ideal). Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have become arenas for sharing personal stories, promoting diversity, and challenging the stigmatization of certain body types (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). However, this visibility has also attracted critique with some arguing that the movement's commercialization has diluted its radical roots and marginalized the voices of those it initially sought to uplift (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). Despite these criticisms, the movement has played a crucial role in reshaping societal norms and expectations around bodies, offering new narratives of acceptance and self-love, which are in direct opposition to prevailing thin ideal narratives.

For mothers aiming to interrupt the cycle of body dissatisfaction to daughters, the historical and cultural context of body positivity provides a rich source of strategies and perspectives. Educating daughters about the diversity of body types and the importance of self-acceptance becomes a powerful tool in combatting societal pressures and unrealistic beauty standards. By aligning with the principles of the body positivity movement, mothers can foster environments where daughters learn to appreciate their bodies, recognize the media's role in shaping beauty ideals, and develop resilience against negative body image influences.

Mothers as Agents of Positive Body Image Development

Within the above-described societal context, mothers can play a pivotal role in countering negative body image narratives and promoting positive body image. Although some researchers have shown maternal influence to be significant in daughters' development of body dissatisfaction (e.g., Anschutz et al., 2009; Baker et al., 2000; Cooley et al., 2008; Francis & Birch, 2005; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Smolak, 2005), others have shown mothers to act as catalysts for the development of positive psychological development for daughters (Boyd et al., 2006; Hutchinson et al., 2003; Kroon Van Diest et al., 2018; Northrup, 2005; Teitelman et al., 2008; Usher-Seriki et al., 2008). In fact, mothers have been shown to help shape their daughters' worldviews, as well as provide them with the information and skills needed to effectively deal with life and its obstacles (Biederman et al., 2010; Flaake, 2005). Thus, the mother-daughter relationship may also act as a protective factor against daughters' development of body dissatisfaction. Flaake (2005) offered that mothers can guard daughters from developing body dissatisfaction through their own behaviours (e.g., modeling body satisfaction) and beliefs (e.g., endorsing body positive attitudes). As outlined by Brun and colleagues (2020), through mother-daughter interactions, "thin ideal reinforcement and internalization can be interrupted and a new, healthier way of relating to one's body can be encouraged and established" (p. 5).

Research on Positive Maternal Influence on Daughters' Body Image

Findings from a small, though growing, pool of research have demonstrated a link between maternal influence and daughters' development of positive body image. A recent quantitative study, conducted by Arroyo and colleagues (2018), explored the relationship between perceived maternal communication and daughters' body image, as well as weight- and eating-related attitudes and behaviours. Findings showed that recall of mothers' modeling of healthy

behaviours was linked to higher levels of adaptive weight-related behaviours for daughters. In another quantitative study that explored maternal influence on daughters' body image, it was found that greater perception of positive maternal messages concerning body shape and eating was linked to greater body satisfaction among daughters (Gross & Nelson, 2000).

In addition to quantitative research, a growing number of qualitative studies have explored positive maternal influence on daughters' body image. In a recent qualitative study, Maor and Cwikel (2016) amalgamated maternal strategies for promoting the development of healthy body image for daughters from four different qualitative data samples. Through a content analysis, they found five strategies for encouraging the development of healthy body image for daughters: (a) filtering (i.e., employing caution and sensitivity when communicating about body image issues), (b) informing daughters about the dangers of eating disorders, (c) positively reinforcing (i.e., offering positive feedback about daughters' bodies), (d) engaging in discussion (teaching daughters to be critical of dominant body-related societal discourses), and (e) reinforcing positivity (i.e., shifting focus from weight-loss to making health-conscious choices and enjoying food). While these qualitative findings are useful and highlight the potential for daughters' positive body image development through the mother-daughter relationship, they do not directly explore the topic from the perspective of mothers who struggle with body dissatisfaction. Given that very little is known about maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction, it seems hasty to endorse strategies intended for maternal use without greater understanding of their experiences or needs.

In another example of qualitative research, McBride and colleagues (2017) explored daughters' healthy body image and their understanding of how the mother-daughter relationship supported its development, through the lens of the developmental theory of embodiment (Piran

& Teall, 2012). Participants suggested that their mothers protected them from experiencing body dissatisfaction by breaking the intergenerational silence (i.e., allowing for discussion of body image in the mother-daughter relationship), creating relational safety (i.e., removing weight-related judgement from the mother-daughter relationship), seeing their daughters as individuals (i.e., not seeing daughters as an extension of themselves), commenting on daughters' appearance in a positive manner when appropriate, and focusing on health rather than weight. Furthermore, findings suggested that mothers' encouragement of sports play, emphasis on nonappearance-related aspects of daughters' identities, and fostering spirituality encouraged daughters' development of positive body image (McBride et al, 2017). While informative in terms of strategies, there is still a lack of understanding regarding mothers' subjective experiences of parenting in such a way (e.g., obstacles and successes). Furthermore, by fitting participant responses into Piran and Teall's (2012) pre-existing framework (i.e., the developmental theory of embodiment), this study's findings do not necessarily speak to the individualized, silenced, and perhaps dissenting perspectives that might deepen and enrich understanding about maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction.

In 2021, Carbonneau and colleagues delivered a comprehensive review of the research literature that delved into parental approaches aimed at shielding children from developing body image concerns and disordered eating, while also encouraging the development of positive body image and eating behaviours. Although this review was not explicitly centered on mothers and daughters, its findings remain relevant to these demographics. Carbonneau and colleagues (2021) categorized their findings into three primary segments. First, they discussed strategies related to 'Body Image', which encompassed modeling a positive self-image, adopting a non-critical perspective towards children's appearances, emphasizing the body's functionality, recognizing

children's achievements beyond mere physical appearance, promoting activities that encourage body connection, broadening children's perception of beauty, and enhancing their media literacy skills. The second category, 'Family Climate', highlighted the importance of modeling intuitive eating, fostering mindfulness during meals, and emphasizing a nurturing sense of connection during mealtimes. Lastly, under 'Feeding Strategies', the focus was on practicing responsive feeding, modeling healthy eating habits, and ensuring that nutritious food choices are readily available and accessible. While these insights provide actionable strategies for mothers to bolster positive body image in daughters, the review falls short of exploring the lived experiences associated with enacting these practices. As such, little is known about the potential challenges, nuances, and victories mothers might encounter while implementing such strategies.

Overall, greater knowledge is warranted to address the needs of mothers who intend to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters. Therefore, my goal in conducting the present hermeneutic research was to better understand the unique experience of attempting to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction from the perspectives of mothers who struggle with body dissatisfaction. As no other studies have explored the topic from this viewpoint, I believe this new understanding can inform future research and practices (e.g., interventions).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Hermeneutic research has a focus on a particular topic in relation to how it is lived out in the world of practice, how it has evolved over time, how it relates to the surrounding culture, and what it means to the practitioners involved. (Moules et al. 2015, p. 117)

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, which is described as the “practice and theory of interpretation” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 3), was used to build a deeper understanding of maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Hermeneutic researchers are tasked with furthering their understanding of the topic of inquiry through interpretation (i.e., process of making an unfamiliar meaning understandable; Grondin, 1994). As a research method, hermeneutics has been well established within human sciences research (e.g., nursing, education, psychology, and social work research), and has demonstrated its value through the practical applicability of its findings (Grondin, 1994; Moules et al., 2015).

The Evolution of Hermeneutics: From Philosophy to Research Method

Etymologically, the word “hermeneutics” is derived from *hermeneuein* which, in Greek, means “to interpret” or “to say” (Grondin, 1994). Hermeneutics, which was originally developed as a method for analyzing biblical text, has more recently been adopted by qualitative researchers as a method for interpreting topics, phenomena, or experiences (Byrne, 1998). Influenced by philosophy, hermeneutics as a research method highlights, among other things, the significance of interpretation, history, and prejudices in gaining new understanding of a topic. The following briefly outlines the works of two philosophers, Heidegger and Gadamer, whose influence on hermeneutics, as a qualitative research method, has been immeasurable.

Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976)

Heidegger's version of hermeneutics (i.e., hermeneutic phenomenology) explored the phenomenology of being human (Laing, 2013; Moules, 2002). In his form of hermeneutics, Heidegger recognized that individuals are situated within, and are a product of, their worlds (Laing, 2013; Moules, 2002). Hermeneutic phenomenology was not comprised of guidelines for interpretation; instead, Heidegger's hermeneutics was ontological in nature and was concerned with "his phenomenological explication of human existing itself" (Palmer, 1969, p. 42). Overall, Heidegger's hermeneutics can be described as an uncovering of being. Yet, as Heidegger described, uncovering also comes concealing. This phenomenon was referred to by Heidegger as "aletheia," which has its roots in the Greek word *lēthē*, meaning forgetfulness. Heidegger explained that forgetfulness and truth are connected, and where one is present, so is the other. For Heidegger, and subsequently Gadamer, arriving at "truth" meant revealing, which was also believed to be accompanied by concealment elsewhere (Bruns, 1992).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 – 2002)

Gadamer (1960/2014) followed Heidegger's hermeneutic teachings and added his concept of "historically effected consciousness" to hermeneutic philosophy (p. 301). Gadamer (1960/2014) explained that individuals cannot be separated from their history; in fact, Gadamer asserted that our history is what guides us to research a topic that is worth investigating. While speaking on the connection between the notion of historically effected consciousness and Heidegger's concept of aletheia, Gadamer (1960/2014) explained that "we more or less forget half of what is really there – in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon – when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth" (p. 300). In his seminal work, *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1960/2014) rejected the scientific method as the only means of arriving at truth, and as such, philosophical hermeneutics was born.

Philosophical Hermeneutics

In the following sections, I introduce and describe the central concepts of Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics. I utilized Gadamerian concepts (i.e., historically effected consciousness, language, conversation, play, prejudices, the hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons, and phronesis) to guide me in better understanding the research topic.

Historically Effected Consciousness

Gadamer contended that to gain new understanding, temporal dimensions of a topic must be attended to and considered. According to Moules and colleagues (2015), robust interpretive work considers a topic's history. For Gadamer, history, and more specifically historically effected consciousness, involves acknowledging that we exist within an ever-changing world that is always influenced by history. Moules and colleagues (2015) argued that "we can consciously do our best to clarify our understanding from within the flux, but what we cannot do is step out of history" (p. 38). As such, hermeneutic researchers cannot study, or further understand, a topic without acknowledgement of its history; therefore, an understanding of the history of the topic is necessary. The following briefly outlines a historical perspective of maternal influence on daughters' body image.

Historical Understanding of Maternal Influence on Body Image. Historically, psychological research has focused on the mother-daughter dyad, and more specifically, maternal influence on daughters' development of psychological pathology. As has been previously mentioned, many researchers have written about mothers' responsibility and involvement in the development and maintenance of body dissatisfaction (e.g., Cooley et al., 2008; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003), which leaves the impression that mothers are to blame for daughters' psychological suffering (Jackson & Mannix, 2004).

Numerous explanations have been brought forward to explain mother-blaming tendencies in psychological research. For instance, “maternal instinct” implies that mothers have the innate ability to care for their children, and thus, are accountable for their children’s attitudes and behaviours (Phares, 1999). Moreover, the mother-blaming tendency could be explained by the good mother versus bad mother discourse (Phares, 1999). Based on unrealistic expectations, the “good” mother is always cognizant of, and able to address all her children’s needs without effort. In contrast, the “bad” mother is overly concerned with her own needs (e.g., embodying the thin ideal or having children that embody the thin ideal), and as such, ignores her child’s needs. Given her failure to provide proper care and nurturance, she inadvertently causes her children pain and suffering (e.g., body dissatisfaction) and is unable to recognize this impact. Although, research has demonstrated that both the concept of maternal instinct and the good/bad mother dichotomy have been disproved, many years ago (e.g., Reed, 1923), as an explanation for children’s psychological struggles, mother blaming continues among researchers, practitioners, and the lay public.

Bernard (1974) noted that mothers are often put in a double bind (i.e., a no-win situation). For example, if a mother is overprotective and possessive she is regarded as a “helicopter parent,” which has a negative connotation. In comparison, if a mother is independent from her children and does not dote on them constantly, she is seen as “self-centered,” which also has a pejorative implication. Overall, it is important to consider the influence of mother-blaming discourses and history on the participants of this current study. For my research, the experience of intergenerational transmission of body image is unmistakably rooted in mother-blaming history, and as such, I must acknowledge its past, as well as my past and my participants’ past, to inform my understanding.

Language

For Gadamer (1960/2014), language is central to interpretation and understanding, as it is essential for the expression of anything and everything (Grondin, 1994). Hermeneutic researchers acknowledge and interpret language in all its forms; they explore the context of a word, allowing for and considering “what is said, what is uttered, but at the same time what is silenced” (Grondin, 1995, p. x). In hermeneutics, language does not only include verbal or written communication; it also encompasses body language and inner dialogue (i.e., a person’s thoughts). According to Grondin (1994), the significance of body language and inner dialogue is rooted in the notion that individuals “always mean more than is actually expressed” (Grondin, 1994, p. 123). As such, in hermeneutic research, attention must be paid to what is not said, in addition to what is verbally expressed, as these non-verbal cues can be interpreted and lead to a greater understanding of the topic.

Given this study’s focus on constructs (e.g., body image, body dissatisfaction, and body satisfaction) that are described as complicated and multidimensional (i.e., can influence cognition, affect, behaviour, and perception), it was of particular importance that I monitor non-verbal communication, as articulating experiences related to such constructs could be seen as difficult. During interviews with participants, in instances where I saw non-verbal shifts (e.g., change in affect) occur without clear explanation, I would make sure to point out such occurrences to participants and discuss them to gain a greater understanding of the topic.

Conversation

For Gadamer (1960/2014), language and conversation are the mediums through which new understanding of a topic develops. Moules and colleagues (2015) described conversation as a “social form of the open dialectic” through which understanding develops as participants speak,

and more importantly, listen to one another (p. 41). Furthermore, Gadamer explained that not all conversations are hermeneutically productive; he specified that in “every true conversation . . . each person opens himself up to the other [and] truly accepts his point of view as valid” (Gadamer, 1960/2014, p. 387). As such, conversation, through which both parties attempt to comprehend one another’s experience through openness and interpretation, becomes the vehicle for understanding (Gadamer, 2014).

Overall, when conducting hermeneutic research, it is important to assume a curious and open attitude during interviews with participants, while simultaneously acknowledging that both parties possess, and as such can share, valid experiences surrounding the topic of inquiry (Moules et al., 2015). Moules and colleagues (2015) described the hermeneutic research interview as “a joining with the participant in an exploration of a community, culture of which they are a part and have expertise to share” (p. 42). Thus, throughout conversation with research participants, I employed hermeneutic questioning, which is rooted in openness to the possibility that participant responses could shift my understanding of the topic at hand (i.e., instead of looking to confirm my biases; Moules et al., 2015).

Play

Hermeneutics is not just about making sense of people’s statements; it is also about considering the veracity of their claims and its meaning (i.e., what would it mean if what they are saying were true?). According to Gadamer (1960/2014), “play” means to lose yourself in conversation, to explore what is at play, and consider the consequences. Thus, play refers to the process of going back and forth with participants, while exploring possible meanings and being fully immersed in the development of interpretations. Moules and colleagues (2015) described play as “a period of uncertainty in which impressions, experiences, opinions, viewpoints (literal

and metaphorical) are given free play” (p. 43). As such, through conversation, the researcher and the participants enter play regarding the topic of inquiry, sharing ideas and opinions, which enables interpretation to emerge as the play ensues. Gadamer (1960/2014) contended that “in being presented in play, what is emerges. It produces and brings to light what is otherwise constantly hidden and withdrawn” (p. 117).

Prejudices

Prejudice, as explained by Gadamer (1960/2014), is one’s pre-existing knowledge of a topic. Many qualitative research methods endorse practices (e.g., bracketing) intended to remove prejudice from the investigative process to ensure that researchers are unbiased in their practice. In phenomenology, for example, bracketing is regarded as a way of ridding the mind of topic-related preconceptions to allow the researcher to focus on a phenomenon. However, Gadamerian hermeneutics does not endorse bracketing as “understanding is always about something that is already there, which means we can never start as if with a blank slate” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 43). Davey (2006) contended that “subjectivity is not a block to greater objectivity but rather a gateway to it” (pp. 18-19). In fact, for Gadamer (1960/2014), prejudices were understood as informative, as they point individuals to aspects of a topic that imbue significance and require further exploration.

However, as Moules and colleagues (2015) explained, there are good prejudices (i.e., ones that open us up to new possibilities) and bad ones (i.e., those that encumber openness to taking in new information). Therefore, Gadamer appealed for “the foregrounding and appropriation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices, [since] the important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias” (p. 271). As prejudices are always present in hermeneutic research, it is necessary for

researchers to consider our prejudices and remain open to new possibilities for understanding (Moules et al., 2015).

Returning to my topic of the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters, my previous experience related to this topic was seen as advantageous and was used as an effective tool in this hermeneutic investigation. Moules and colleagues (2015) suggested that “the point is not to remove subjectivity from the work, which is impossible, but to acknowledge how it allows us into the interpretive process” (p. 120). Altogether, in hermeneutic research, my previous experiences as a woman, researcher, daughter, and mother, were acknowledged, as well as viewed as an important contribution to the research, instead of being bracketed or silenced. With this being said, I engaged in on-going reflection on my prejudices and worked towards remaining open to participants’ viewpoints, ideas, opinions, and such, to increase the potential for new understanding to develop.

The Hermeneutic Circle

Central to Gadamerian hermeneutic inquiry is the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which is described as “the movement of existing understanding into constructive interchange with another” (Moules et al, 2015, p. 44). Gadamer (1960/2014) contended that we are to extend understanding in ever-widening circles by moving back and forth from the whole (i.e., historical understanding of the topic) to the part (i.e., interpreter’s understanding of the topic). Moules and colleagues (2015) explained that the hermeneutic circle is, on occasion, described as a spiral, in which the “whole,” or understanding, is shaped by each perspective that lends new understanding to the topic.

Through each conversation with participants, I explored novel ways of interpreting the topic at hand, which widened the hermeneutic circle and brought me to explore literature I had

not considered in relation to this topic. This widening of the hermeneutic circle, as well as my contemplation of old and new understandings of the topic within it, allowed me to develop rich interpretations. Fusion of horizons occurs when the interpreter moves within the hermeneutic circle.

Fusion of Horizons

Moules and colleagues (2015) described the fusion of horizons as the transformation of topic comprehension through the coming together of previous understandings. This fusion of horizons can occur when considering a topic's history, present, and future to inform or evolve one's understanding. Moreover, fusion of horizons takes place when exploring topic-related writings that transform one's current comprehension. Lastly, fusion occurs when individuals, with differing understandings of a topic, converse and are open to each other's points of view; this often results in the recognition that a different understanding of the topic is possible, and that this new perspective should be considered in relation to the topic.

In this research, my participants brought their stories, understanding, and prejudices to the conversation, and I met them with my own stories, understanding, and prejudices related to the topic. In this way, fusion of horizons occurred, and understanding became shared and evolved as a result. In this research, the participants and I brought our respective ways of understanding the topic to our meeting and, through conversation, a new way of understanding the topic emerged. Warnke (1993) explained that when one acknowledges that their own history and experiences have been understood through interpretation, they must also attempt to re-assess their history and experiences when exposed to differing perceptions and understandings. That is, as a hermeneutic researcher, I had to test my prejudices related to the studied topic to experience a shift in understanding.

Phronesis

Hermeneutics is concerned with uncovering *phronesis*, which translates to practical wisdom (i.e., knowledge and skills that can be applied to practice; Moules et al., 2015). Gadamer was concerned with acquiring understanding “of how to act well in concrete, particular circumstances” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 77). Thus, *phronesis* implies exploration of a topic through a practical lens; one that looks to enhance our practical understanding of a topic. Moules and colleagues (2015) contended that hermeneutic researchers “seek out possibilities for application that are comprehensible within the horizon of present understanding” (p. 49). As such, hermeneutic researchers aim to enrich understanding of a topic so that it can be seen differently, and as a result, practiced differently (Moules et al., 2015). Given its focus on *phronesis*, it is not surprising that hermeneutic research has been taken up by researchers from various practice disciplines (e.g., nursing, social work, and education) with great success. In relation to the current study, attention was paid to real-world applications (i.e., for counselling psychology) of the findings.

Research Design

The Address

In hermeneutics, the research process begins when one is called to the topic through an address. “An address is the feeling of being caught in some aspect of the world’s regard, of being called or summoned” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 71). Thus, the topic chooses us as it has personal relevance and importance. As Moules and colleagues (2015) described:

We are hailed by a subject matter, or better stated perhaps, *a subject that matters* so that, when we are addressed, we are obligated to respond, not in ‘any old fashion,’ but to

respond to the best of our abilities, to do the right thing, in the right way, as Gadamer would say. (p. 72)

In alignment of hermeneutic inquiry, through attempts to comprehend that which has addressed us, we participate in dialogue with others with the aim of gaining that understanding. Through curious and open dialogue, between researcher and participant, meaning making occurs and new understanding is attained.

I was called to this topic many years ago and it has lingered in the background of my consciousness ever since. In my late teens, I began to reflect on my own experience of the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction and began to wonder what could be gleaned and better understood from talking to others about their experiences of maternal influence on daughters' body image. I have been haunted by the unknowns of this topic, which has motivated me to conduct this research, and conduct it well.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Once ethics approval was granted by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB), I began recruiting participants through advertisements, and continued to recruit through snowball sampling. Advertisements promoting the research study (see Appendix A) were displayed around the University of Calgary campus and were sent to potential participants through the Faculty of Nursing listserv. Advertisements included a brief description of the study, participation criteria, and my contact information in case of interest. Participation criteria for this study included:

- Participants must be mothers of daughters who are living at home and are between the ages of five (research has shown that girls as young as five can develop body dissatisfaction; Davison et al., 2000) and 18 (age of maturity).

- Participants must be familiar with the experience of body dissatisfaction.
- Participants must speak fluent English.

For this study, eight women met participation criteria and volunteered to be interviewed. One of those interviews, however, was not completed due to concerns about English language fluency (I was not able to determine language fluency during screening as it was conducted via e-mail). As such, in total, seven mothers described their experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters. Previous hermeneutic research has demonstrated that samples of six to ten participants can produce more than enough data to answer research questions such as the one for this study (Hovey & Craig, 2012; Moules et al., 2012). The merit of hermeneutic research is evaluated based on its interpretations and their ability to further understanding and influence practice, it is not founded on the number of participants (Moules et al., 2015).

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over a period of 3 months (from November 2019 to January 2020). Consent forms (see Appendix C) were sent to participants via e-mail prior to the interview process for their review. Additionally, I outlined informed consent with participants at the beginning of interviews, and answered questions, as necessary. Following the review of consent forms, the interview began. The interviews took place in private rooms located in the Taylor Family Digital Library on the University of Calgary campus, or over the phone, and took 45 minutes on average to conduct.

As this study aimed to explore maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters, it was necessary to implement an open and exploratory approach to interviewing that allowed for deeper

understanding of the topic to be attained (Moules et al., 2015). As such, I utilized an unstructured approach to participant interviews; this meant that I did not adhere to a pre-determined interview script or asked a set of pre-planned interview questions. In hermeneutic research, interviews do not necessitate strict adherence to a scripted interview protocol. Rather, interviews are guided by certain questions that acquaint the researcher and participant with the topic of interest (Moules et al., 2015). According to Moules and colleagues (2015), “hermeneutical questioning is informed by a humility toward one’s own not knowing, a genuine curiosity toward what the other might have to say, and the goal of shared understanding – not simply taking information for one’s own ends” (p.42). Thus, the interviews took a conversational, albeit topic focused, form with the aim of gaining new and shared understanding of the topic. Guiding questions can be found in Appendix B. Lastly, conversations about the intergenerational transmission of body image were considered delicate, and as such, were conducted with prudence and sensitivity. Through my attentive listening and thoughtful probing, participants felt comfortable enough to share pertinent experiences, thoughts, and ideas related to the topic at hand to deepen understanding of the topic.

Data Analysis

Hermeneutics provides a substantive philosophy (i.e., a methodology), instead of a step-by-step method, to guide the researcher (Moules et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2018). This means that hermeneutic research is “substantively driven rather than methodologically given” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 5). As such, hermeneutic research analysis is an ongoing and iterative process, that starts with an address (i.e., a call to the topic) and continues to the last phase of the research process (i.e., writing), in which the researcher is driven by Gadamerian philosophical concepts (e.g., phronesis, aletheia, play, historically effected consciousness, and fusion of horizons) to gain a deeper understanding of the topic of inquiry (Moules et al., 2015).

The Interview

Analysis occurred throughout the interview process through conversational engagement with the participant. As a hermeneutic researcher, it was important that I be present in the conversation with participants to observe, record, and explore non-verbal cues, as they may be informative in the interpretation process. Moreover, it was imperative that I listen intently to participant descriptions, to tune into what was said, as well as what was silenced, while presenting participants with my preliminary interpretations. After each interview, I made note of my initial interpretations as part of an ongoing and iterative process of reflection. I continued to analyze and interpret data during the interview transcription process (all interviews were transcribed verbatim), where I was able to attend to cues that I might have missed during the interview. By reviewing transcripts multiple times, I continued to search for instances (e.g., words, phrases, silences, images, or metaphors) that shifted my understanding of the topic and deepened my comprehension.

Memo Writing

Memo writing allows hermeneutic researchers to make note of their thoughts, interpretations, questions, and ideas during the research process (Moules et al., 2015). For this study, I wrote memos throughout the entire research process, which were used to record and reflect upon significant moments in research to try to make sense of how they might deepen understanding of the topic. Furthermore, I engaged in reflective practice, through memo writing, to explore the ways in which my history and prejudices influenced how I have come to understand the topic of inquiry.

Themes as Interpretive Tools

Throughout the process of analysis, I described or summarized meaningful segments of interviews as themes to aid in my interpretation of the data. In hermeneutic research, theming data (i.e., reducing the phenomenon to a simple form) is not the goal of analysis, but rather themes are used to open the topic and progress data analysis towards interpretation (Moules et al., 2015). Moules and colleagues (2015) suggested that “there is no need for individual experiences to be subsumed into themes under the rubric of the same, but neither is any individual experience wholly separate from the fabric of understanding” (p. 127). Hermeneutic inquiry aims to complicate and add richness to understanding of a topic; in doing so, we move beyond simple reduction and description of phenomena towards depth and realness, which results in greater understanding of a topic. As such, I aimed to shift back and forth from the particular (i.e., individual accounts) to the whole (i.e., commonalities between individual accounts), to interpret and understand the data in a meaningful way.

Writing

According to Gadamer (2014), play ends with the creation of a work of art. The final work of art is transformative as it “re-presents the world in new alignments of possibility” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 50). When individuals encounter the work of art, there is recognition of something that is known, self-recognition, and “the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar” as a result of interacting with the art (p.113). In hermeneutic research, the write-up of the findings constitutes the transformative work of art. Writing one’s findings in hermeneutic research brings playful interpretation to an end, momentarily, and reconstructs the topic in a manner that brings new possibilities for practice to the foreground (Moules et al., 2015). In the end, hermeneutic researchers hope that the writing will evoke something in the reader, and that the reader’s interpretation of the writing furthers understanding of the topic (Moules et al., 2015). As such, I

used memos and transcripts, as well as pre-existing data (e.g., research literature, other writings, and media reports), to inform the writing of my findings (i.e., my interpretations of the data). In my findings, I used participant quotes and existing literature to support my interpretations that aim to further and deepen current understanding of the investigated topic.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, researchers often seek ways to garner trust in their research process and findings (i.e., establish “rigor”). Rigor in the qualitative community has been used to show a researcher’s objectivity. However, in hermeneutic research, rigor is defined as the “quality of being careful” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 171), not as a lack of subjectivity. As such, hermeneutic researchers are not concerned with removing or bracketing bias, but instead focus on being thorough in their exploration of the topic and thoughtful in their interpretations. Moreover, in hermeneutic research, one must reflect upon the ways in which their interpretations are meaningful, further understanding, and have practical implications (i.e., *phronesis*). Altogether, hermeneutics is not concerned with thematic coding or theory development but, instead, pursues greater understanding of a topic so that it can be *viewed differently and, as such, practiced differently* (Moules et al., 2015).

Additionally, as it is central in hermeneutic research to develop interpretations that are thoughtful and thorough, memo writing helped my process of developing and honing interpretations. As such, I documented my analytical process and reasoning for generating my interpretations. Furthermore, I called on my supervisory committee, who have research and practical experience in the areas of body image and hermeneutics, for guidance and feedback on the meaningfulness of my interpretations. Overall, in hermeneutics, rigor and integrity is upheld

using memos that outline the methodological decision-making process, as well as through consultation with others (i.e., committee members; Morse & Field, 1995).

Ethics

Many considerations were taken to ensure that this project's procedures were in line with CFREB's ethical guidelines. The following outlines the steps that were taken to guarantee that informed consent was attained, and that data was stored appropriately. Furthermore, participation risks and benefits associated with participating in this research are also described.

Informed Consent

A week before the interview, consent forms were sent to interested participants via e-mail, so they were informed of the discussion that would occur. Once they agreed to participate in the study, a face-to-face or over the phone interview was scheduled. Before beginning the interview, I reviewed informed consent with participants and answered questions, as necessary. Once informed consent was obtained, I began the interview.

Storage of Data

Many steps were taken to guarantee the ethical and confidential storage of data. To begin, the supervisory committee and I were the only individuals who had access to the confidential data. The electronic data files (e.g., audio recordings and transcripts) were stored on password protected computers in encrypted files. Additionally, during the informed consent process, each participant selected pseudonyms [for themselves and their daughter(s)] to which their information (i.e., interview transcripts) was ascribed. In this way, any accessible data provided by this individual was only associated with the pseudonyms provided. Lastly, consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet separate from participant consent forms in my home.

Risks and Benefits

Given the nature of the interview, where participants were asked to discuss their experiences and perceptions related to intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction, there was a chance that thinking and talking about these experiences could cause temporary upset. In the instance that a participant was to show signs of distress, I would have stopped the interview and inquired about the participant's needs (e.g., ask if they would like to take a break). In the unlikely event that the participant continued to feel distressed, I would have provided them with appropriate referrals (i.e., a comprehensive list of community psychological resources). No participants showed distress and, as such, this protocol was not used.

Potential benefits of this study included greater and deeper understanding of maternal influence on daughters' body image. By advancing the knowledge in this area it is believed that future researchers will begin to consider implications of maternal influence on daughters' body image, thus driving future research in the area. More specifically, I hope that findings from this study are used to help develop interventions that help mothers who struggle with body dissatisfaction parent in a manner that protects daughters from body dissatisfaction transmission.

Participant benefits included the opportunity to discuss their experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction; participants who were called to discuss this topic may have benefited from self-reflection or deeper understanding initiated by our discussion of the topic. Finally, participants received a \$20 gift card to Cadillac Fairview malls to thank them for their participation in the study. Given that the incentive to participate was less than \$50, it was deemed that the payment encouraged individuals to engage in the research but did not cause undue influence or manipulation.

Conclusion

Although no research studies have explored maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters, many books and online accounts have narrated the complexities of this experience (i.e., the struggles, successes, and unmet maternal needs). These anecdotal accounts, which can and were used to inform the topic of research, demonstrate the need for research that furthers understanding of maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Given hermeneutics' focus on deepening understanding, research exploring this topic from a hermeneutic lens resulted in findings that have implications for research, and more specifically, practice related to positive maternal influence on daughters' body image. In the following chapters, I provide interpretations that offer faithful and recognizable descriptions of the topic that ring "true" and open possibilities for the enhancement of research and practice related to the topic.

Chapter 4: Origins of Intentions

When I found out I was having a girl, it was an immediate, “OK, I need to do things differently.” I really reflected on why I had these issues . . . and really thought about where my body dissatisfaction came from. (Amelia)

When attempting to understand another's intentions, a hermeneutic perspective encourages us to dig deeper, to excavate the historical sediment of their life (Moules et al., 2015). It invites us to explore the labyrinthine past, where every turn and twist reveals fragments of experiences that coalesce into a person's present outlook and future aspirations. Gadamer (2004) asserted that "understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event" (p. 300). In other words, one's present and future cannot be understood without an engagement with their past.

Informed by this perspective, I explored participants' histories, while acknowledging the pivotal role of the past in understanding their current parenting intentions and vision for the future. As such, in this chapter, I explore the impact of maternal idolization of thinness and its effect on daughters' (i.e., participants) current intentions to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Through this hermeneutic exploration, I endeavoured to illuminate the ways in which maternal thin idolatry impacts daughters—both in their developing years and as they venture into motherhood themselves.

Thin Ideal or Thin Idol?

I did not understand it [Brittany's mother's body dissatisfaction] because she was lovely . . . I felt like I had to do that [be dissatisfied with her body] too because I love my mom and want to be quite like her. (Brittany)

This quote resonated deeply with me as I contemplated Brittany's experience of growing up with a mother who idolized thinness and loathed her body. Poring over Brittany's account, a poignant

realization stood out: "While mothers idolize thin bodies and disparage their own, daughters idolize their mothers." This sentiment was not unique to Brittany; it echoed among other participants in this study. In fact, Sunny elaborated on this dynamic when she spoke about mothers and daughters more broadly. She noted: "They really love their mothers. But they always heard their mothers talking about how awful they were. They [daughters] were then looking at themselves and saying: "I have the same body. I am not allowed to love my body.'" Through Sunny's lens, this maternal body dissatisfaction becomes a toxic inheritance, leaving daughters at odds with their own body image. Their bodies, like their mothers', become targets for self-criticism. Despite the immense affection they bear for their mothers, they also carry the heavy burden of their mothers' disdain for their bodies, and its impact on their own body image.

Throughout conversations with participants on the topic, the idea of false idols began to consume my thoughts. I found myself wrestling with their insidious allure, pondering over how they can blind individuals to what is most important in life, ensnaring them in destructive patterns that harm their well-being and that of those around them. These thoughts compelled me to delve deeper into the phenomenon of thin idolatry within the context of mother-daughter relationships, seeking to unveil the lasting impact of these experiences on daughters' intentions as they transition into motherhood.

False Idols and Idolatry

The concept of false idols finds its roots in religious and philosophical thought, signifying the act of worshiping or idolizing entities, objects, or ideas that are misleading or superficial (Exodus 20:3-4, New International Version). While idols are often associated with religious statues or images, their scope can extend far beyond that; they can encompass anything that diverts attention or devotion from genuine and moral pursuits (Eliade, 1959). These idols can

range from material possessions to abstract ideals such as perfectionism. Within the context of this interpretation, I examine the thin ideal as a form of false idol and its worship as a form of idolatry.

Idolatry, at its core, involves excessive admiration, adoration, or worship of entities or ideals that are revered as gods but lack divinity in their essence (Grudem, 2008). Historically, this has manifested in the tangible worship of statues, symbols, and art (i.e., 3D representations grounded in time and space). As society has evolved, however, our idols have transformed. While tangible 3D idols persist, the digital age has introduced more ephemeral and mutable 2D forms of worship, driven in part by the omnipresence of social media. These contemporary idols, from materialism and consumerism to the exaltation of human achievements, often manifest as an unwavering fixation on transient ideals like wealth, fame, power, and aesthetic allure (Taylor, 2007). This ever-shifting focus, easily influenced and manipulated online, not only disrupts our intrinsic values but also skews our priorities, championing the superficial over the substantive. Such distortion often culminates in psychological distress and dissatisfaction (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

Within the confines of this study, I present the idea of thin idolatry. Here, thinness evolves from a mere physical attribute to a revered, worshiped, and venerated idol. However, akin to traditional idols, the “thin idol” is deceptive and superficial. It promises happiness, acceptance, and love (Grabe et al., 2008) but often delivers dissatisfaction (Thompson & Stice, 2001) and unhealthy habits (e.g., dieting, disordered eating; Leahy et al., 2011; Rohde et al., 2015). To understand the concept of thin idolatry, we must examine the historical and sociocultural factors that elevated thinness to a highly revered status.

Thin Idolatry: From Ideal to Idol. In the late 20th century, there was a notable shift in beauty ideals, as emphasized by Brumberg (1997), where thinness became a predominant standard. This transformation was not sudden but rather a gradual change driven by complex sociocultural processes. As societies modernized and industrialized, there was a fundamental shift in lifestyles. Sedentary jobs, processed foods, and changes in family structures all contributed to changes in body sizes. Simultaneously, concerns about obesity began to gain attention, leading to a societal inclination towards thinness and the demonizing of larger bodies (Sobal & Stunkard, 1989).

However, thinness did not merely symbolize a healthy lifestyle; it became a powerful social and cultural symbol. Thin bodies became associated with self-control, discipline, and success, while larger bodies were linked to laziness, lack of control, and failure (Puhl & Heuer, 2009; Major et al., 2014). In line with this notion, Sunny described her mother's attitudes towards individuals in larger bodies in the following manner: "Well, I remember the voice. If somebody is fat, they do not have any self-control. There was always a negative to it." Sunny's poignant description of her mother's attitudes towards individuals in larger bodies highlights the pervasive nature of such societal beliefs. She recalls her mother's disapproving voice, vividly expressing the negative judgment attached to individuals living in larger bodies.

Moreover, the media and commercial industries played a substantial role in amplifying and perpetuating these stereotypes; fashion trends, advertisements, movies, and television shows presented thin bodies as the epitome of beauty, success, and desirability, thereby reinforcing the thin ideal (Levine & Smolak, 2006). Amelia's recollection of her upbringing encapsulates the powerful impact of these messages:

I was brought up [by my mother] thinking that a woman's body should be the way it is in magazines, and if it was not, then, you were unattractive and you were going to be unsuccessful in life.

Amelia's reflections on her upbringing shed light on how maternal reinforcement of these ideas played a crucial role in shaping her perception of herself and her body.

Furthermore, industries related to diet, fitness, beauty, and fashion capitalized on the growing anxieties about body size, further fueling the desire for thinness (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Amelia recalled how this societal shift infiltrated daily conversation with her mother: “We [Amelia and her mother] would discuss dieting with each other or different exercises and how to lose weight. Even though neither of us, looking back, needed to.” Amelia's recollection reveals how the preoccupation with thinness had become a pervasive topic within the mother-daughter relationship. Altogether, the normalization of these conversations perpetuated the belief that one's body size should be scrutinized and “improved,” leading to a constant cycle of self-criticism and body dissatisfaction.

As such, in the context of the mother-daughter relationship, thinness transitioned from being a mere physical attribute to a coveted idol, falsely promising happiness, social acceptance, and personal success (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999). This societal fixation on thinness, shaped by historical and sociocultural factors, fostered the phenomenon of thin idolatry. What is more, as was unveiled through discussions with participants, maternal behaviours often inadvertently became the conduits for reinforcing thin idolatry to their daughters.

Blinded By False Idols: Thin Idolatry Reinforcement

Historically, according to Eliade (1975), idolatry practices were passed down through generations, creating long-lasting societal norms and values. The same process applies to the

idolization of thin bodies, where parental attitudes and behaviours, particularly from mothers, significantly influence daughters' body image perceptions and attitudes (Rodgers et al., 2011). Through engaging in conversations with the participants, a tangible representation of thin idolatry reinforcement emerged. Participants' mothers, often unknowingly, perpetuated the reverence of thin bodies, inadvertently becoming a source of damaging beliefs for their daughters. Amidst this context, a poignant paradox arises, while mothers idolize thinness, their daughters idolize them. For many daughters, their mothers become temporary idols, figures who stand close to divinity in their eyes. Drawn by the deep-seated admiration for their mothers, participants conveyed their attempts to mirror their mothers' values, particularly their pursuit and idolization of thinness. Amelia's narrative elucidates this connection:

She [Amelia's mother] would look in the mirror and [say] "Oh, I look so fat in this." And my mom is also a very petite woman. She has always been fit and petite. So it is like "You know what? If she thinks she is fat then I should feel that I am fat." She just never held back her feelings about herself. I guess she just was not conscious of how it would affect all those around her . . . I feel like around the age of twelve I really started to pick up on that . . . that was the way that women should view themselves. You know, not good enough. Their bodies are never good enough.

As is demonstrated in the quote above, mothers, often unconsciously, contribute to the proliferation of the thin ideal/idol through their self-criticism. Their daughters, desiring to emulate their mothers, internalize this thin idolatry, unknowingly subscribing to the worship of thinness. Lee further described this point by saying:

I watched her [Lee's mother] stand in a mirror and go, "I look so fat today." . . . If you hear someone that you idolize so much, make so many of those statements, it becomes

natural for that to be your narrative, too . . . I remember her putting herself down. And that became the acceptable narrative for me to have as: “Oh, mom puts herself down, all women put themselves down. I probably should too.”

As Amelia's and Lee's testimonies suggest, in their quest to emulate or win the approval of their mothers, daughters internalize the standards set by them, often with damaging consequences. In doing so, mothers inadvertently become transient idols for their daughters. This dynamic, while deeply rooted in love and the desire for connection, can inadvertently perpetuate cycles of insecurity and body dissatisfaction, emphasizing the profound influence a mother holds in shaping her daughter's self-perception and body image.

As was previously noted, while mothers idolize thinness, daughters idolize their mothers, perpetuating the cycle of thin idolatry. The phenomenon of thin idolatry presents a pernicious paradox, akin to chasing a mirage of divinity that inadvertently inflicts harm, especially within the context of mother-daughter relationships. As such, mothers, in their pursuit of the socially constructed 'ideal' body, often fail to perceive the damaging implications of their actions (Polivy & Herman, 2004).

Consequences of Maternal Thin Idolatry

The influence of maternal thin idolatry unravels a narrative of lasting repercussions within mother-daughter relationships. As described by participants, daughters influenced by mothers who venerate thinness often find themselves internalizing severe body-related self-judgments, developing maladaptive coping strategies, experiencing overwhelming feelings of shame, and becoming estranged from the mother-daughter bond.

Self-Judgment. Participant testimonies brought to life the ripple effects of maternal thin idolatry. Entranced by societal definitions of an 'ideal' body, mothers may perceive their fixation

on thinness as a form of benevolent guidance for their daughters, a path towards societal acceptance or personal fulfillment (Polivy & Herman, 2004). However, this pursuit can often take on an insidious form as mothers may unknowingly project their body-related insecurities and ideals onto their daughters through negative comments about their bodies. Amelia recollected a poignant episode where her mother made a casual yet hurtful remark about her body, a scar that still lingers in her memory:

She [Amelia's mother] had made a comment about how I was getting a bit of a gut. I truly do not think she meant it . . . she did not mean to hurt me. I do not think she knows how much it has always stuck with me.

This offhanded comment etched a lasting impact on Amelia's body image, highlighting the profound influence of such inadvertent remarks. Such comments often arise naturally and automatically, given how deeply ingrained thin idolatry is in our society, further emphasizing the ubiquity and potency of these seemingly casual observations. When asked about what she had learned from this experience, Amelia shared:

[I learned that] my body was not attractive . . . I carried that with me. In school, I would always wear great big hoodies to cover my belly. You know, I would not go swimming because I did not want to wear a bathing suit.

This testimony provides a sobering example of the repercussions that can arise from being raised by a mother who idolizes thin bodies. For Amelia, this realization impacted her body image and behaviours throughout her adolescence. In school, she would shroud herself in oversized hoodies, her personal armour against judgment. Fearful of revealing her figure, she shied away from activities such as swimming, thereby depriving herself of joyful experiences. Her clothing

choices and behavioural avoidance were clear indicators of how deeply rooted this early conditioning had become in shaping her body image and behaviours.

Emily echoed this sentiment, recalling a distinct memory that etched a deep mark on her body image. She recalled being taken to a Weight Watchers meeting by her mother:

I cannot remember exactly when she said, “Do you want to go to Weight Watchers with me?” . . . I knew that it was not a positive thing. I took it as “something is wrong with my body. I am on warning . . . there is a problem here.”

This incident reinforced her belief that her body was a problem that needed fixing, further eroding her body image. Altogether, the implications of maternal thin idolatry are profound and far-reaching. When mothers engage in negative body talk or make disparaging remarks about their daughters' bodies, they inadvertently reinforce the importance of adhering to the thin ideal (Thompson & Stice, 2001). This behaviour further cements the notion that self-worth and societal acceptance are contingent upon physical appearance. This not only fosters an environment of body dissatisfaction but also feeds into the development of unhealthy coping strategies, such as disordered eating (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010).

Harmful Coping. According to participants, when mothers engage in critical body talk or make derogatory remarks about their daughters' bodies, they reinforce thin idolatry to their daughters. This not only cultivates an environment rife for the development of body dissatisfaction but also encourages the use of detrimental coping methods, such as disordered eating (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010). Lee's struggle with disordered eating epitomizes such harmful coping methods. She shared:

I would limit the absolute least amount of calories I could eat in a day. I would go without breakfast. Then I would eat the tiniest dinner. I would workout non-stop. And the

problem with that was that because I was losing weight, it was fuel for the fire in that when you do, everybody goes “You look so great. You look amazing” . . . [I would say to myself] If I look good now, imagine what I will look like 10 pounds less, 5 pounds less, 20 pounds less. And the way for me to do that is to continue down this treacherous path.

Daughters, in their endeavours to “fix” perceived flaws, often succumb to harmful behaviours (e.g., disordered eating or extreme exercise). Worryingly, these accounts expose how thin idolatry may drive mothers to tacitly, and occasionally overtly, endorse these disordered eating patterns. Far from receiving censure, such behaviours often attract applause, adding a deeply troubling dimension to this multifaceted issue.

Maternal Endorsement of Disordered Eating. Participants' accounts revealed another distressing aspect of maternal thin idolatry: mothers often ignored the detrimental methods their daughters employed to adhere to the thin ideal. Emily's account poignantly demonstrates this phenomenon, as she recounts her parents' apparent indifference, if not happiness, towards her disordered eating: "My parents, to my recollection, did not say anything. They were not concerned. I think she [Emily's mother] was happy that I was finally doing something about this [her weight], what she perceived to be a problem." As a result of such experiences, disordered eating becomes normalized rather than identified as problematic.

Supporting this disturbing pattern, research indicates that an alarming 95% of the female population would have to partake in some form of disordered eating to achieve or maintain the thin ideal (Striegel-Moore et al., 1986). Emily's subsequent statement underscores the explicit sanction her mother provided for her disordered eating:

She [Emily's mother] said, maybe 10 years ago, "I know I should not say this, but when you were the most crazy about your weight is also when you looked the best." And so, I know . . . that she was happy about it.

From the narratives shared by participants, it emerged that mothers, engrossed in thin idolatry, often failed to recognize, or even implicitly endorsed, harmful practices adopted by their daughters in their efforts to conform to the thin ideal. This suggests that these mothers might misguidedly perceive their daughters' unhealthy behaviours as beneficial strides towards achieving the idolized figure (Thompson & Stice, 2001), instead of viewing them as critical indicators of distress and self-harm (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010).

Within these twisted mother-daughter dynamics, an additional layer of psychological damage emerged – the engendering of shame within daughters. Participants highlighted their internal struggles with shame, perceiving themselves as falling short of the thin ideal within the dynamics of their mother-daughter relationship.

Shame and Isolation. Shame is a self-conscious emotion that encompasses feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, and self-disgust, often resulting from perceived failure to meet personal or societal expectations (Nathanson, 1994). It is characterized by a desire to hide or withdraw from others due to an internal negative evaluation of the self, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and disconnection (Tangney, 1995). Within experiences of maternal thin idolatry, shame emerges as a personal burden and a catalyst for fracturing the mother-daughter relationship. As noted by participants, this deep-seated sense of inadequacy, stemming from the inability to align with the thin ideal, often prompts daughters to withdraw emotionally and socially from their mothers. As they internalize their perceived failure to meet their mother's expectations, daughters may instinctively isolate themselves, leading to a significant disconnect

within the relationship. In line with this idea, Lee candidly explained her hesitation to seek help from her mother when struggling with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating, stating, “I think probably shame, you know in a lot of ways. Shame for the way I looked and felt. Shame for what I was doing to make those changes.” Emily's recollections further amplified this sentiment, revealing the presence of a powerful undercurrent of shame influencing her decision not to speak to her mother about her body image and eating concerns. She poignantly expressed:

Oh, I think it is shame. I think it is totally shameful. But like even confessing to . . . or sharing that I have an eating disorder now or had one [in the past] feels shameful. I do not think it is the shame of mental illness. I think it is the shame of weight . . . I think as women we want to be above that and not like above that, as in we are not vain but as in thin enough that it was never an issue for me . . . I knew it was shameful to be fat and to have to work on not being fat.

Altogether, daughters' shame, engendered by the pressures of maternal thin idolatry, manifests not only as a personal struggle with body image but also as a significant relational challenge, straining the critical bond between mother and daughter. This interplay between individual feelings of shame and relational discord underscores the intricate and far-reaching implications of thin idolatry within the mother-daughter context.

The collective experiences of participants underscore the pervasive negative consequences of maternal thin idolatry. The shared narratives, viewed through a hermeneutic lens, reveal the profound effects of maternal thin idolatry on daughters' body image and behaviours, as well as relationship with their mothers.

Intentions

As previously noted, when daughters idolize their mothers, they often inadvertently adopt their beliefs, values, and insecurities. The need to connect, to seek validation, or to replicate the ideals cherished by their maternal figure can trap daughters in a cycle of body dissatisfaction and harmful coping strategies. However, if mothers can pivot from thin idolatry to idolizing genuine, safe connections with their daughters, it could herald the end of the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. As such, in the following section, I explore how participants intend to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters.

From False Idols to True Ideals

Emerging from the participants' accounts is a shared resolve to break the chain of intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. Having weathered the storms of a childhood steeped in maternal thin idolatry, these women described being determined to provide a different experience for their daughters. To begin, they plan to foster a nurturing environment, one that encourages critical thinking about societal body standards rather than blind adherence to the thin ideal. Lee reported doing so in the following manner:

And it just, it needs to happen in age-appropriate ways. So having a conversation today about what makes you beautiful is your kindness, you are smart. You are a wonderful human being, and you are a great big sister and you are a good friend, is eventually going to morph into a conversation of, “What you are seeing on the TV and those magazines is not necessarily the norm, and I do not want you to get that idea in your head that that is OK.”

Lal further described her intentions to foster critical thinking regarding the thin ideal in the following manner:

Well, it is difficult because, you know, even ourselves as adults, female adults, we get presented with these . . . How do I call it to make the picture better. Photoshop, Photoshop. Right. You know, it is not real. You are an adult and you can see that and you kind of disengage. But as a child, you think it is the truth and the reality. I feel like I am a little bit of an interpreter if she lets me.

Brittany further outlined: “I really am trying to teach them how to read things correctly so that they can still enjoy [media] without feeling badly [about themselves].” This approach, participants hope, will imbue their daughters with a robust sense of self-worth that defies societal norms, thereby creating resilience against potential body dissatisfaction.

Moreover, participants seek to create an atmosphere devoid of shame within their mother-daughter relationships. They wish to establish a safe, open dialogue about body image, health, and self-acceptance, replacing the shame they once felt with understanding and support. Amelia voiced this intent poignantly, expressing her desire to be a safe harbor for her children:

Just being there to support them. I want them to be able to come to me and discuss with me any issues that they are having. And if I cannot be the one to help them, then I will be there to find somebody else who can, you know, give them the support they need.

Building on Amelia's thought, Sunny emphasized the importance of offering consistent support, a safety net for her daughters: “She has had years of knowing that we have her back. She can count on us for support. That is what I want for my daughters...to ask for help and not feel worried about asking for help.” Brittany resonated with Sunny's sentiment, extending it to the emotional climate of their home: “I want them to be 100 percent comfortable. I do not want them to feel judged at all in my home.” Their shared narratives illuminate the collective resolve to redefine the mother-daughter relationship dynamic, replacing shame with understanding, and

fostering a supportive environment for open dialogue on body image, health, and self-acceptance.

Overall, participants' past experiences with maternal thin idolatry have informed and fueled their intentions as parents. They stand poised to replace the destructive cycle of body dissatisfaction with a new paradigm – one that promotes resilience, critical thinking, and a healthier, more accepting view of one's body. Lal encapsulated this collective sentiment with the following words: "All you can do is build a foundation and build a relationship." This assertion distills their shared aim to influence a transformative shift, fostering an environment and relationship that champions acceptance, resilience, and critical engagement with societal ideals.

Conclusion

Time and history are undeniably interwoven into the fabric of our personal narratives. The personal stories shared by participants, shaped by their experiences of mothers' unhealthy reverence for thinness, lay bare the profound impact of such idolatry. Just as ancient societies might have been ensnared by the worship of false idols, the modern-day idolization of thinness, deeply entrenched in historical and societal roots, continues to wield its damaging power. As reported by participants, this harmful focus on thinness can wound not only those directly ensnared by its allure (i.e., mothers) but also those who idolize and emulate them (i.e., daughters).

These accounts, however, are more than just tales of victimhood; they stand as testaments to resilience and transformation. Rooted in their personal battles against the idols of thinness, participants vocalized powerful intentions to break free from this toxic reverence. Their stories embody a truth: our history, no matter how painful, shapes our present desires and aspirations.

For these women, past experiences with the oppressive ideals of thinness inspire a fervent wish to protect their daughters from the pain they once endured.

Altogether, it is precisely because of this past that they possess such a powerful drive to change the narrative. Without a historical connection to the pressures of the thin ideal, there might not be the same conscious drive to defy it. It is because these women have been touched by maternal thin idolatry that they can now actively work against it, channeling their past pain into a force for transformation. Their narratives resonate with their determination to protect their daughters from the pain they endured. By harnessing their experiences and acknowledging the role of their past, these women aim to transform their pain into a catalyst for change, creating a healthier narrative for their daughters. Through confronting and overturning the idolization of thinness, they aspire to shield future generations from its oppressive hold, guiding their daughters not just away from the unyielding pursuit of thinness, but towards a comprehensive appreciation of health in all its diverse manifestations (Puhl & Heuer, 2010).

Chapter 5: Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts

Then, being a mom, I was so petrified . . . I watched an [episode of] Oprah when I was younger, and she said this phrase: ‘The wounds of the mother show up in the daughter.’

That has haunted me. (Brittany)

For many of the participants in this study, the fear of negatively influencing their daughters has been all-consuming. Participants described being anxious, wondering if their experiences with body dissatisfaction would negatively taint their daughters' futures. They described longing to shield their daughters from the pain that they themselves experienced in relation to their bodies. In the process of exploring these haunting concerns, some participants shared an interesting perspective: they embraced their ghosts of body dissatisfaction, seeking to glean wisdom and understanding from them to support their daughters.

As such, in this interpretation, I explore ghosts as a metaphor for body dissatisfaction, and how adopting two different attitudes towards these ghosts – hostility and hospitality (Kearney, 2015) – can impact mothering. Finally, I examine the potential positive effects of inviting the ghosts of body dissatisfaction to the metaphorical table, and how learning from them could help mothers become better parents, improve their relationships with their daughters, and enhance their daughters' resilience in the face of society's relentless pressure to conform to the thin ideal. By taking on a hospitable attitude towards their ghosts of body dissatisfaction, mothers may be able to find healing and break free from the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters.

Haunted by Ghosts of Body Dissatisfaction

Ghosts and hauntings have long been embedded in human culture, serving as powerful symbols that capture the mysterious and unsettling aspects of our existence (Nordini, 2016).

These ghostly hauntings have transcended folklore and found their way into the realm of metaphor (Gordon, 2008). In this interpretation, I delve into the insidious effects of the intergenerational ghosts of body dissatisfaction (i.e., the remnants of harmful body-related beliefs and self-judgments passed down from previous generations). As I navigate the depths of this haunting, I uncover how these spectral echoes can possess mothers, compelling them to parent in ways that are incongruent with their genuine intentions. Despite their valiant efforts to exorcise these ghosts, they persist, evoking an ever-present fear within mothers who worry about passing on a legacy of body dissatisfaction to their daughters. By exploring this topic, I shed light on the enduring and far-reaching influence of these disembodied phantoms.

Haunted Mothers

In the opening quote of this interpretation, Brittany's use of the word "haunted" to describe her struggles with body dissatisfaction deeply resonated with me. The definition of haunting as "remaining in consciousness, and not quickly forgotten" struck me as particularly fitting when considering it in relation to body image (Dictionary, 2023). Although participants made conscious efforts to improve their body image, they reported that past maternal messages regarding their bodies would resurface, affecting their moods, thoughts, and behaviours. These messages could be likened to ghosts, lurking and waiting for the perfect moment to emerge. For instance, Sunny revealed how her old ways of thinking about her body would return after having a large meal, resurfacing body dissatisfaction and negative self-talk. Sunny reported:

I have been feeling really good about myself lately, but then I eat a big meal because we have guests or something, and I go to the bathroom and look in the mirror and suddenly I'm like, "Oh my god, I'm so fat."

Despite feeling confident about her ability to manage body dissatisfaction, the experience of “overindulging” triggered a flood of negative self-talk regarding her body. Overall, as participants shared, the transmission of harmful ideologies (e.g., thin ideal) from mothers to daughters creates a challenging cycle that is difficult to break. As the adage goes, “Old habits die hard.” Based on these conversations with mothers, it could be argued that even when the habits finally “die,” they continue to linger in the form of haunting thoughts and memories, such as the ones described by Sunny.

Mothers who took part in this study described their ongoing struggles with body image, suggesting that the intergenerational ghosts of body dissatisfaction continue to linger, as evidenced in Sunny’s following quote:

I still hear my mother's voice come out of my mouth sometimes. It comes out of my mouth, and I am like, ‘Oh, that was not actually me. Who was that?’ It was just like a learned experience. And just in moments of stress.

This haunting manifestation of their mothers’ influence is a testament to the intricate and enduring effects of the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. Moreover, the daily struggles mothers face in contending with the haunting presence of body dissatisfaction seems a constant and disquieting concern. Despite the commitment and tireless efforts of mothers to free themselves from the patterns that perpetuate the transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters, their ghosts persist, pulling them to think and act in ways that contradict their intentions. Altogether, the haunting possibility remains; despite their best intentions, their daughters may still be susceptible to the same plight.

Facing a Haunting Reality. As described above, the mothers in this study vividly described the haunting feelings that arise from the prospect of their daughters experiencing the

same struggles with body dissatisfaction. Despite their diligent efforts to remain resilient and dismiss the presence of their ghosts in their role as parents, participants described how certain situations serve as triggers, causing their ghosts of body dissatisfaction to emerge at the edges of their consciousness. These apparitions provoke fear-driven responses, evoking deep-seated emotions and challenging their resolve in navigating the intergenerational cycle of body dissatisfaction. As such, the persistent presence of these ghosts can incite actions that contradict one's authentic intentions and values, fueling the mothers' worry that they might inadvertently introduce their daughters to these specters instead of shielding them from their malevolent influence. For example, one participant described the ghosts' pull to worry about her daughter's weight gain. Emily reported:

It is alarming, as a parent, to see your child who looks like every other child go through this sudden change when you feel like everything else is the same. In our life, exercise, food, movement, nothing has changed, but her body is changing rapidly. I do not know what is going on. And I was surprised at how worried and personally I took that . . . As long as my kids were, you know, falling in that normal [weight] range, I felt like I was doing the right thing . . . But as soon as it was like, "Well, what if they are looking heavier? Does that mean that I am making wrong choices? Should I have been giving her more kale smoothies? Have I let her down? Have I not provided this healthy home environment for her?"

As described by Emily, these haunting thoughts, which emerge during vulnerable moments, can lead mothers to consider actions that contradict their intentions of breaking the cycle of body dissatisfaction passed down to their daughters. In this context, the ghosts of body dissatisfaction act as a distorted form of peer pressure, wherein the "peer" takes the form of a ghostly critic that

has haunted the family for generations. Now, these ghosts have found a comfortable place within the mother's mind and yearn to be introduced to her daughter. This dynamic bears a striking resemblance to ghostly possession. Unlike conventional notions of possession where an alien entity takes over the physical body, here the ghosts of body dissatisfaction take over the mind. These ghostly inhabitants serve as unseen puppet masters, pulling at the strings of body image, distorting self-perception, and prompting actions misaligned with the host's intentions. In line with this thought, Lee spoke about the inescapability of these ghosts and her fear of passing on negative attitudes to her daughter. She noted:

And I still, actually five years later, have to check in with myself on the daily to go, “Am I doing OK? I have had this thought about myself or my daughter. I am not going to say it out loud because that is not a narrative she needs to hear. Those are your issues, not her issue.”

Unfortunately, Emily and Lee’s above-described concerns regarding the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction are not unfounded. Research conducted by Berlin et al. (2011) and Toth et al. (2013) illuminates a clear link between unresolved personal issues and parenting behaviours, shedding further light on the significance of the experiences shared by participants. Berlin et al. (2011) found that parents with unresolved traumatic histories often struggle with emotional regulation and exhibiting sensitivity toward their children. These parents find it challenging to separate their own unresolved emotions from their parenting responses, resulting in less consistent and responsive caregiving. Moreover, research by Toth et al. (2013) investigating the intergenerational transmission of unresolved trauma and its impact on parenting revealed that parents with a history of unresolved trauma are more likely to parent their children

in ways that mirror their own traumatic experiences. Consequently, these parents unintentionally recreate similar environments for their children, perpetuating the cycle.

Altogether, the ongoing struggles with body dissatisfaction experienced by the mothers and the potential inheritance of these struggles by their daughters align closely with the findings of Berlin et al. (2011) and Toth et al. (2013). The haunting thoughts and memories passed down from previous generations represent a legacy of unresolved personal issues that have the potential to significantly influence parenting behaviours and contribute to the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. The mothers in this study find themselves ensnared in a cycle influenced by the lingering ghosts of body dissatisfaction, fervently striving to break free for the sake of their daughters. However, the research strongly suggests that without actively addressing and resolving their own unresolved personal issues, the risk of passing on these haunting legacies remains an ever-present concern.

Recognizing the seemingly inescapable nature of the ghosts of body dissatisfaction, I embarked on an exploration of how participants in this study cope with them. In the following section, I examine two coping strategies adopted by participants in this study: hostility, where they try to push the ghosts away, and hospitality, where they embrace the ghosts and attempt to learn from them. Understanding these strategies and their effects is crucial in assisting mothers in navigating the haunting presence of the intergenerational ghosts of body dissatisfaction.

Approaching Ghosts: Hostility Versus Hospitality

As I engaged in conversations with study participants, it became evident that mothers haunted by the ghosts of body dissatisfaction faced a profound dilemma: whether to perceive these apparitions as adversaries to be avoided or to embrace them with hospitality, recognizing their potential as sources of wisdom and guidance. These discussions led me to an enlightening

insight shared by Dr. Nancy Moules during my research committee meetings, where she directed my attention to Kearney's (2015) philosophical exploration of hospitality. Dr. Moules emphasized that the choice between hostility and hospitality reflects the very essence of the word "hospitality" itself. Delving into the origins of the term, Benveniste and Lallot (1973) revealed that "hospitality" derived from "hostis," originally meaning only "guest." However, over time, the term acquired an additional connotation of "enemy" (Benveniste & Lallot, 1973). This semantic evolution occurred as communities transformed into foreign states, and the personal connections between hosts and guests gave way to a sense of mistrust and potential threats (Kearney, 2015). Consequently, the concept of hospitality became intrinsically intertwined with the possibility of hostility, and hosts found themselves compelled to make decisions about how they would approach their guests (Kearney, 2015). Similarly, when facing the specters of body dissatisfaction, mothers (i.e., hosts) must interpret and make deliberate choices about how to engage with these ghosts (i.e., guests).

Hostile Approach

When individuals take a hostile approach towards the ghosts of body dissatisfaction, it is often a reaction rooted in feelings of fear, denial, and avoidance. The participants who displayed this attitude did not consciously choose hostility; rather, they found themselves resorting to it as a means of coping with these overwhelming emotions. They believed that recognizing and confronting their past struggles with body dissatisfaction would cause more harm than benefit, preferring to leave such experiences in the past.

A significant motivation behind this reactive hostility was a desire to protect their daughters. Participants expressed a deep concern that revealing their past traumas or experiences with body dissatisfaction would jeopardize their daughters' innocence and well-being. Thus,

rather than exposing their children to these painful memories, they chose to keep them hidden, believing it was in their child's best interest. This notion is exemplified by Emily's quote:

I think I would feel like I was letting her down. That part of my story does not match with how I have raised her. I think it would make me less of a role model . . . That is my gut instinct . . . I do not want her to know.

In this passage, Emily voices a concern regarding sharing her own encounters with the ghosts of body dissatisfaction with her daughter, recognizing that it may contradict the values and principles she has diligently instilled through her parenting. She worries that acknowledging her ghosts could undermine the carefully crafted image she has cultivated; she chooses to keep them hidden to preserve her role model status. Furthermore, mothers may feel compelled to maintain an illusion of having their body image under control for the sake of their daughters. Lee provides a description of such:

To be honest, I feel like . . . I feel fraudulent some days that I still have such a negative narrative in my own head and then portray this great body image to her. It sometimes feels like, "Ah man, that is not what I'm feeling."

Lee highlights the internal struggle experienced by some mothers who feel inauthentic while projecting a positive body image despite grappling with their ghosts of body dissatisfaction. They may perceive this conflict between their true selves and the image they present as undermining their credibility.

The pressure to maintain an image can be overwhelming, often culminating in feelings of inauthenticity and self-doubt. Participants described the tension they felt between their true selves and the façade they believed they needed to uphold in front of their daughters. This suggests a need to explore alternative approaches that might allow mothers to parent more

authentically. Based on my interpretations of the participants' experiences, I explored a more hospitable approach to addressing the ghosts of body dissatisfaction.

Hospitable Approach

As our discussions deepened, participants shared a transformative perspective on their ghosts of body dissatisfaction. Rather than perceiving themselves as haunted, they embraced a profound reframe, viewing their ghosts of body dissatisfaction as guiding spirits that could lead them towards healing, recovery, and a deeper sense of purpose. This revelation struck a chord within me, igniting a surge of inspiration that had previously eluded me. Through the enlightening discussions with participants, a transformative path emerged—one deeply rooted in the principle of hospitality. Their insights prompted me to envision a life where the haunting presence of my own ghosts of body dissatisfaction would no longer be met with fear, but instead, embraced in a harmonious coexistence. This approach, as described by participants, involved cultivating an openness to their ghosts of body dissatisfaction and a genuine willingness to learn from them. Through this perspective, they discovered that by embracing their ghosts of body dissatisfaction with a hospitable mindset, they unlocked invaluable lessons and transformative growth. Lal expressed this sentiment:

All my life, it has shaped me . . . I went through this [body dissatisfaction] and it made me a stronger person . . . I will do anything I can to make this better. And at least I have some idea of how to make it better. I know what not to do.

In this quote, Lal describes acknowledging her ghosts and welcoming the knowledge and lessons she has learned from them. She recognizes the importance of using her experiences to improve herself and others, and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Adopting a hospitable attitude towards their ghosts meant that participants could see them as sources of guidance or wisdom,

and their struggles with body dissatisfaction as valuable resources for informing and inspiring the present. Marie noted:

Because life is all about struggle. You know, life is all about the ups and downs. Life is about the process and the experience along the way. I want them [her daughters] to know that I have made mistakes and that I have learned from those mistakes. I would not be who I am today if I had not been through all of the self-acceptance issues that I have had up until now. I would not be as resilient as I am.

Marie's statement highlights the transformative power of embracing one's ghosts of body dissatisfaction and using them to fuel personal growth and resilience. By adopting a hospitable attitude towards her ghosts, Marie has come to see her struggles as opportunities for learning and self-improvement. She recognizes that her experiences with body dissatisfaction have shaped her into the person she is today and have given her the strength and resilience to overcome future challenges. By sharing her journey with others, namely her daughters, Marie hopes to inspire and empower them to do the same.

Inviting our Ghosts to the Table. When individuals struggle with body image issues, the ghosts of body dissatisfaction can linger, haunting their thoughts and impacting their daily lives. In reading about the topic, I came across Allione's (1998) book, *Feeding your Demons*, which provides a method for approaching ghosts in a hospitable manner. Allione (1998) described an ancient Buddhist meditation practice where one visualizes their demons and invites them to a dinner party, treating them as honored guests. According to Allione (1998), this practice has a healing effect, as it encourages accepting and befriending the darkest parts of oneself. Instead of being paralyzed by fear of our ghosts, we can be hospitable, and learn from them and utilize their teachings to enhance our parenting. The practice of inviting our ghosts to

the table and nourishing them serves as a powerful reminder that we possess the agency to control our reactions to our ghosts and choose to approach them with compassion and hospitality. By embracing these ghosts, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their own body dissatisfaction, confront their insecurities, and discover effective ways to cope or even utilize them.

Furthermore, the participants in the study emphasized that when they embrace their ghosts with hospitality and glean wisdom from them, it equips them with a deeper understanding of their daughters' behaviours and needs, enabling them to respond to them with greater effectiveness and empathy. By acknowledging and learning from their own struggles with body dissatisfaction, they develop a heightened sensitivity to the challenges their daughters may face. This increased awareness allows them to create a nurturing environment where open communication thrives, enabling them to address their concerns, offer support, and guide them through their own experiences of self-discovery and acceptance. Amelia reflected on this idea:

I think just having that open communication, being able to talk and if they know that I have felt that way, then, you know, if they are dissatisfied themselves, they are not alone. These feelings are not exclusive to them. And I feel like if I can share my stories and how I have tried to push through, I think that could be supportive as well.

The quote highlights the idea of normalizing experiences of body dissatisfaction. Moreover, when daughters realize that mothers have gone through similar experiences and have found ways to cope, they may feel more comfortable discussing their own struggles and seeking support from their mothers. The acknowledgement of ghosts may help our daughters feel seen and heard, which is vital for fostering a sense of self-acceptance and resilience in the face of societal

pressures and personal struggles, as well as establishing a strong and healthy mother-daughter relationship (McBride et al., 2017).

Furthermore, by making the conscious decision to welcome our ghosts to the table, we open ourselves up to gaining valuable insights into our own upbringing and experiences, and how they impact our parenting. Through this process of reflection, we can identify patterns and behaviours that work, as well as those that do not. Brittany noted: “Rather than tiptoeing around it, rather than kind of ignoring what I went through...saying I used to spend way too much time thinking about this. It is not worth it.” Instead of avoiding her ghosts of body dissatisfaction, Brittany acknowledges their existence and chooses to learn from them and use them to educate and empower her daughter.

Altogether, ghosts can be seen as more than just malevolent spirits meant to scare us; they can teach us important lessons and provide guidance (Kearney, 2003). While both attitudes towards ghosts or past influences have merits, the hospitable approach may be more inclusive and enriching. By acknowledging the presence of ghosts or past influences and inviting them to the table, we open ourselves up to new perspectives and insights to better understand ourselves and the world around us. This approach also allows us to honor and respect the past while still moving forward towards a better future. Ultimately, the attitudes we take towards our ghosts can have a profound impact on our lives, and it is up to each individual to decide which approach aligns with their beliefs and values and helps find greater meaning and purpose. By inviting our ghosts to the table and hosting them with compassion and hospitality, we can nurture a more harmonious relationship with our past, ourselves, and our daughters, leading to growth, healing, and a stronger bond between mothers and daughters.

Conclusion

I thought . . . I was doomed to be a shitty parent. And when I realized I was not . . . this was the first step of me feeling like, 'OK, I can actually do something.' (Marie)

The concept of ghosts and their symbolism provides a profound lens through which we can explore personal growth and development. Initially, the participants in this study shared their concerns about passing their own body insecurities to their daughters. However, as our conversations unfolded, a remarkable transformation took place. Participants began to describe their haunting experiences as an opportunity—an opportunity to impart invaluable lessons to their daughters, nurturing a healthy relationship with their bodies. This realization prompted a fundamental shift in my understanding of the ghosts of body dissatisfaction. Rather than viewing them as adversaries, I now see them as potent catalysts for positive change. By delving deeper and embracing a more complete truth of their struggles, mothers can transform their ghosts into guiding forces for personal growth and development. They can draw wisdom from their past experiences, utilizing that knowledge to create an environment that nurtures their daughters' well-being. Ultimately, these ghosts, when embraced and learned from, possess the power to liberate mothers from the intergenerational cycle of body dissatisfaction, empowering both themselves and their daughters to forge healthier relationships with their bodies.

To conclude this interpretation, I believe it is important to embark on one final exploration into the captivating essence of the word "haunting" itself. Its etymological origins, rooted in Old English *hāmettan*, is an evocative term that speaks of bringing something home or cohabiting with it (Wiktionary, 2023). As previously discussed, these haunting ghosts embody the collective struggle of generations with body dissatisfaction. Rather than pushing them away, it is proposed that mothers extend a warm invitation, inviting these ghosts to dwell alongside them as trusted partners on their transformative journey. Just as ghosts can haunt us with their

unwelcome presence, they possess the astonishing power to ignite positive metamorphosis within ourselves and those around us when invited in. From the perspective of haunting as cohabitation, the ghosts of body dissatisfaction cease to be adversaries and become catalysts for growth.

Mothers who bravely open their hearts and homes to these ghosts unlock a profound truth—the power to redefine their own narratives, break free from the chains of intergenerational body dissatisfaction, and chart a course towards a brighter, more empowering future for themselves and their daughters.

Chapter 6: When Daughters Become Mothers

In September of 2021, I became a mother – an experience that profoundly transformed me and my perception of the world. My perspective expanded from solely understanding the world as a daughter to embracing the nuances of being a mother. These intertwined roles deepened my insights of my research topic. To begin, this dual perspective prompted a reassessment of the pervasive concept of mother-blame (i.e., the societal notion holds mothers wholly accountable for their children's successes and failures, asserting that any flaws in their children are reflections of maternal influence). Having stepped into the role of mother, I viewed these beliefs through a more compassionate lens. It prompted me to reflect on the resentment I harboured towards my own mother, faulting her for my body dissatisfaction struggles. As I navigated the complexities of motherhood, both personally and through my research, I recognized that I too had been ensnared by the mother-blame narrative and had mistakenly scapegoated my mother for my struggles with body dissatisfaction.

Ultimately, my personal experience and research findings shed light on the fact that my previous perspective of blaming my mother failed to consider the context in which she was immersed—an environment saturated with diet culture and the glorification of thinness. This cultural backdrop influenced my mother's attitudes and behaviours towards her body, as well as my own, making it challenging for her to recognize the unintentional harm she was inflicting. Looking back, I now understand that my mother was not solely responsible for my body dissatisfaction: it was a consequence of societal pressures that influenced her and, consequently, me. This realization allowed

me to perceive my mother in a new light, one where I acknowledge her struggles and challenges as products of the culture she was raised in.

The interplay between mothers and daughters, deeply rooted in responsibilities and societal expectations, has long been a focal point for scholars. Historically and cross-culturally, mothers have been seen as the primary nurturers and caregivers, tasked not only with the physical well-being of their children but also their moral and social upbringing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Particularly, in many Western societies, mothers often face expectations to raise their daughters to be both independent and nurturing, to excel academically and professionally, yet to also uphold traditional family values (Hays, 1996).

Given these broad expectations, a mother's influence is often touted to profoundly mold her daughter's self-view and emotional well-being. Within this realm, the concept of “mother-blame” emerges prominently, especially when daughters do not conform to societal norms regarding beauty and behaviour. This blame often unfairly spotlights mothers as the main culprits behind their daughters' body image challenges (Caplan, 2002). Yet, from the unique vantage point of one who navigates the dual roles of daughter and mother, as noted by research participants and myself, the dual perspective reveals more nuanced layers, challenging prevailing narratives and broadening our understanding. As such, this chapter delves into these complexities, examining the implications of mother-blame and its ties to body dissatisfaction through an interpretive lens that honours both the experiences of daughters and considers the perspectives of mothers (who were once daughters themselves).

The Historical Paradox of Motherhood and Scapegoating

In societies across the annals of history, the misunderstood and the unknown have often been met with a curious blend of awe, fear, and blame (Kearney, 2003). The way humans once

turned to myths and deities to decipher the unfathomable mysteries of natural phenomena or to make sense of personal tragedies, have similarly sought scapegoats to clarify intricate societal problems (Kearney, 2003). Paradoxically, just as deities like Zeus and Kali were seen as embodiments of power—simultaneously nurturing and awe-striking—mothers, too, have been positioned within a dualistic societal narrative. On the one hand, they are celebrated for their nurturing essence, and on the other, they find themselves susceptible to blame in the face of societal challenges.

As noted in the above reflection, when I began this research study, I possessed a rather simplified perspective: that the body dissatisfaction felt by daughters largely rested upon the shoulders of their mothers. However, as I dug deeper into the subject and embarked on my journey into motherhood, complexities began to emerge. Body dissatisfaction, as I have come to understand it, transcends familial dynamics; it is tightly interwoven with societal and cultural underpinnings. Through this research, as well as my personal experience of motherhood, I have come to recognize that my early beliefs could have perpetuated the enduring narrative of mother-blame, unintentionally framing mothers as the primary culprits for their daughters' body dissatisfaction. This insight steered me towards literature focusing on mother-blame and scapegoating.

Mothers or Monsters

When children flourish, mothers are admired as beacons of care, paralleling the reverence deities receive during times of societal abundance (Armstrong, 2005). However, in moments of adversity or societal discontent, just as deities become convenient scapegoats, mothers too bear the brunt of criticism. This fluctuating dynamic of admiration and censure reflects society's ambivalent relationship with influential figures, whether they be divine or maternal. Historically,

attributing the unexplained, be it fortune or calamity, to higher powers provided a semblance of understanding (Eliade, 1959). In a modern context, society often leans into this inclination, finding solace in blaming mothers for challenges like body dissatisfaction in daughters, sidestepping the more profound systemic and cultural forces at play. In essence, it becomes more palatable to cast mothers as the “monsters” who created/caused daughters' body dissatisfaction than to confront the broader societal paradigms that perpetuate beauty standards.

Mother-Blame

Throughout history, societies have often sought scapegoats, simplifying complex issues by assigning blame. Historically, the tendency to lay blame upon mothers has deep roots in psychological and psychiatric discourses. Freud, often regarded as the father of psychoanalysis, played a pivotal role in steering these narratives. His theories emphasized the integral role mothers play in shaping an individual's psyche, particularly in early childhood (Freud, 1927). As a result, deviations from what was perceived as "normal" psychological development were frequently attributed to the mother's influence or lack thereof. As such, mothers were often accused of "causing" conditions such as schizophrenia and autism due to being too involved or, conversely, not involved enough (Bettelheim, 1967).

In relation to body image, mid-20th century psychiatric literature epitomized the tendency to blame mothers for their daughters' body image struggles (Jackson & Mannix, 2004). This literature often sidelined the significant roles of societal and media pressures, focusing instead on painting mothers as "over-involved" and "enmeshed" (Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985; Minuchin et al, 1978). Such portrayals suggested mothers as the primary culprits behind severe conditions like anorexia or bulimia (Bruch, 1974; Guiora, 1967; Humphrey, 1989). Consequently, these perspectives laid the foundation for a prevalent trend in psychiatric

discourse, which marginalized broader societal influences in favour of attributing daughters' body image and eating concerns directly to their mothers.

Altogether, it is evident that this inclination towards mother-blaming is both systemic and pervasive in the realm of psychology. The poignant observation from Hosseini's (2007) "A Thousand Splendid Suns" underscores this trend beyond academia: "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always" (p. 230). The overarching theme suggests that when in search of a cause, especially when complexities arise, society, whether consciously or subconsciously, veers towards attributing the blame to mothers. Integrating this broader context provides a more comprehensive backdrop against which mid-20th century psychiatric literature's treatment of mothers, in relation to daughters' body image concerns, can be understood. The act of placing blame on mothers is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a consistent thread running through various psychological theories and societal norms.

Echoes of Ancient Rituals. As noted previously, the act of assigning blame solely to mothers is a reductionist approach, turning them into scapegoats for broader, multifaceted issues. In fact, the scapegoating of mothers in the context of body dissatisfaction is a contemporary reflection of the ancient scapegoating ritual from Leviticus 16, as described by Kearney (2003). Kearney (2003) noted that two he-goats were chosen for this ritual; the first goat met its end through sacrifice, its blood serving to sanctify the sanctuary and altar. The second goat, known colloquially as the "scapegoat," became the vessel of the community's collective transgressions. The sins of the Israelites were confessed over this goat, which was then released into the desert, bearing with it the guilt and wrongdoings of the people. Although this ritual may have provided the community with a sense of absolution, it failed to address the underlying issues that led to the sins and merely transferred the blame to a convenient target. This ritual serves as a poignant

metaphor for the societal pressure on mothers to bear the guilt and responsibility for their daughters' body dissatisfaction, even if they are not the root cause. Mothers, in this modern context, bear the weight of blame, and undue guilt and shame, for a societal issue that extends beyond their immediate control.

While the societal inclination to blame mothers is evident, this scapegoating serves a dual purpose (Kearney, 20003). First, it acts as an evasion strategy, diverting attention from the actual complexities of body dissatisfaction development. Second, it echoes an intrinsic human behaviour: projecting our unconscious fears onto others, avoiding confronting these deeply embedded societal anxieties and insecurities. Instead of challenging these damaging beauty standards, society finds it simpler to thrust mothers into the spotlight – either as the culprits behind their daughters' struggles with body dissatisfaction or the paragons passing down the “correct” beauty standards.

It is essential to understand that while mothers undeniably influence their daughters' body perspectives, society's deeply entrenched ideals also wield a substantial hand. Sunny poignantly captures this tension in her reflection:

I am really, really peeved with the society that my parents were brought up in that led to the way I was brought up. I am not angry with my mom at all. It is not her. She was doing the best she could with the societal tools she had.

Sunny's insight underscores the pivotal role that societal norms, which shaped both her and her mother's worldviews, play in this complex dynamic. She recognizes her mother's humanity, a woman doing her best within a societal context laden with such pressures. Perhaps without society's emphasis on the thin ideal, mothers would not feel the compulsion to perpetuate it.

In reevaluating this issue, it is paramount to acknowledge the intricate influences that shape body image perceptions and attitudes. Laying blame singularly at the feet of mothers not only does a disservice to them but also obscures the broader societal and historical factors at play. Keeping this in mind, I continue to delve deeper into the nuances of navigating dual roles—both as a daughter and as a mother.

Maternal Responsibility: Reframing Intentions

Armed with this more nuanced understanding of my mother's experience, I felt more comfortable broaching the topic of weight and body image with my mother. During our conversations, she candidly shared her own battles with body dissatisfaction and expressed her enduring wish to spare me from the pain she had endured. It became apparent that her seemingly critical comments were driven by a desire and responsibility to protect me. It was clear to me that my mother had always done her best to raise me. I understood that she was human, just as I am—trying her best to parent me but inevitably faltering at times. This realization helped me recognize that the resentment I held for so long was not only unfair to both of us but also hindered my ability to perceive my mother as a complete person, with her own unique experiences and challenges.

As noted previously, the mother-daughter relationship is complex and multifaceted. For this relationship to thrive, both parties must work to understand and appreciate one another (Secunda, 2009). As reported in my reflection at the outset of this chapter, it is not uncommon for daughters, amidst their growth, to misinterpret their mothers' actions, overlooking the broader backdrops that influenced these decisions. This oversight can often result in misunderstandings and strained relationships. Yet, as discovered in this study, when daughters transition into motherhood, they often uncover a deeper understanding of their mothers' intentions. This

revelation is akin to viewing the past through a newly polished lens, where emotions and motives are understood with newfound empathy.

Upon reflecting on discussions with participants, the nuanced notion of maternal responsibility and the inherent interpretive essence of motherhood stood out. While "responsibility" is conventionally tied to a duty or obligation, within the realms of motherhood, it evolves into a concept rich with layers and depth. Exploring the etymology of the word "responsibility" is relevant to understanding the interpretive nature of motherhood. The Latin root for "responsibility" denotes "to answer" or "to reply," suggesting a deep-seated reciprocity (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2023). For Sunny, maternal responsibility signifies a commitment to prepare their daughters for life's challenges, she explained: "That we gave her the tools she needed to be a successful adult. That is what our job is, to give her what she needs to be her own person." Though this core idea resonates widely, the ways in which mothers interpret and act upon this duty can be diverse, influenced by their own personal journeys, beliefs, and values. Moreover, given the reciprocal nature of the word's origin, the concept of responsibility can also be shaped by the cues daughters provide. Consequently, each mother's response to her daughter varies based on her own life and experiences, creating interactions unique to each mother-daughter pair.

Love Lost and Rediscovered through (Re)Interpretation

Motherhood is an inherently interpretive role that requires mothers to decipher their children's unspoken needs and desires, while navigating the complex social and cultural contexts in which they and their daughters exist. This role mandates reading between the lines, making well-informed parenting decisions, and providing what they deem best for their daughters. Such intricate interpretations stem from each mother's unique experiences and perspectives. As a

result, two mothers might embark on different paths while cherishing the same intention—ensuring their daughter's well-being. Emily's reflections beautifully encapsulate this dynamic:

I think she felt like somewhere it went wrong for her and she did not want that to happen for me. So, it is very similar to my intention to protect my daughter. It is just a different method. She was trying to protect me from the pain of weight, rather than, I would say I am trying to protect her from the pain of an unhealthy relationship with weight. They are very similar instincts, though.

Here, Emily compares two similar intentions, namely protecting daughters from pain and struggle in relation to the body, with different approaches for implementation. Despite the different methods, both Emily and her mother share the same desire to protect their daughters from body image concerns. Altogether, discussions with participants revealed that daughters who become mothers themselves frequently gain a fresh understanding of their own mothers' intentions, allowing them to re-evaluate past actions from a compassionate perspective. Lee expressed, “I think for all intents and purposes, they [Lee’s parents] had good intentions.” Through the lens of motherhood, daughters come to recognize the love their mothers had tried to express — a love previously misinterpreted — and rediscover it through their own experiences of motherhood and reinterpretation.

Reinterpretation and Healing. The process of understanding a mother's intentions often requires peeling back layers of past interpretations. Actions that may have previously seemed insensitive or indifferent can, upon closer examination, reveal themselves as driven by profound desires to guide and guard. Such a transformative shift in perspective, as noted by participants in this study, can lead to the healing of past wounds.

Often, our assessments of a mother's actions are confined by the limitations of our personal experiences and biases. My own experiences stand as testament: I once saw my mother's comments on weight and body image through a lens of bitterness. But a deeper exploration into our shared narrative revealed that her seemingly critical remarks stemmed from her own struggles with body dissatisfaction and an earnest desire to protect me from the anguish she faced. This revelation highlights the pitfalls of limited perspectives, which might lead us astray, especially when interpreting our mother's actions.

Altogether, our understanding is malleable, continually shaped by life's transformative milestones. For instance, embracing the role of a mother can offer a fresh viewpoint, widening our understanding. Emily's testimony illustrates this profound transformation:

It [motherhood] gave me so much empathy for my mother because I am like, oh, I get it. Especially since she did not know about pre-puberty weight gain. I know about this stuff and it was still hard. Yeah, it was still challenging to my biases in a way that I did not expect.

Such realizations not only deepen understanding but also reconfigure channels of communication, filling them with newfound empathy and compassion, and allowing for relationships to mend and thrive. The hermeneutic notion of the “fusion of horizons,” as described by Moules and colleagues (2015), captures this dynamic evolution of understanding. It highlights the interplay of our past, present, and future insights and promotes dialogues that tap into the wealth of diverse perspectives. This harmonizing process not only magnifies our empathetic capacity but also fosters a holistic appreciation of others' actions and intentions.

At the heart of this transformation lies the power of recognition. Drawing from its Latin roots, "recognize" means both "to know again" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2023). It is in this

act of re-knowing or re-acquainting ourselves with past situations that we experience epiphanies. Daughters, through the prism of their love for their own children, often reinterpret and recognize the depth of love embedded in their mothers' past actions. Lee's reflection aptly captures this sentiment of understanding and empathy, "I know what it feels like to battle that voice inside of my own head, and I would imagine that she has been doing it her whole life." Looking back with the wisdom of experience, she adds, "So now as an adult, I kind of look back and feel sad for her." This illustrates the profound shift in perspective, where daughters begin to recognize themselves in their mothers' struggles, empathizing with their parenting decisions even if they resulted in unintentional harm.

Ultimately, the journey of understanding maternal intentions is certainly not linear. Although it can be fraught with misunderstandings, as we accumulate experiences that widen our perspective, we are presented with opportunities to not just rediscover lost love but also to bridge divides, illuminating the ever-present, often unarticulated, love that binds generations.

Conclusion

Through reflecting on both my own experiences and my research, I find myself deeply impacted by the transformative essence of navigating the intertwined roles of being both a mother and a daughter. This dual perspective uncovers depths of empathy and insight that might remain veiled through a one-dimensional lens. Embracing our shared stories has empowered me to dismantle the enduring barriers of blame and shame, and in their place, foster understanding and compassion. Altogether, it is my hope that this renewed clarity will help shift our collective gaze towards the real culprits behind daughters' development of body dissatisfaction: the unrealistic beauty ideals imposed by society.

The relationship between a mother and daughter, shaped by love, care, societal influences, and individual experiences, continues to captivate and undergo close examination. Becoming a mother gifts daughters a revelatory viewpoint, providing unparalleled insights into their own mothers' intentions. This shift in perspective, propelled by firsthand experiences of motherhood, can catalyze a deeper understanding, allowing past actions to be viewed through a more compassionate lens. Such revelations can mend misunderstandings that have persisted for years, rejuvenating the bond between mother and daughter.

However, as this bond strengthens and evolves, it is important to not lose sight of the persistent societal pressures influencing perceptions of body image. Bolstered by this renewed connection and mutual understanding, it my hope that successive generations will rally to confront and redefine these detrimental societal norms. This collective effort will not only fortify familial ties but also pave the way for a society where every girl and woman feels valued, confident, and free from undue pressures.

Chapter 7: Discussion

As I sit in the quiet of my office, typing the concluding chapters of this dissertation, I am struck by the significance of my latest personal milestone: I am pregnant with a daughter. This development has not only shaped my perspective but also brought clarity to my research findings. It compels me to distill the essence of my scholarly work, moving beyond theory to uncover its meaningful insights with real-world relevance. This endeavour is more than an academic exercise; it is a quest to glean new understandings that can shape practice and influence lives, including that of my expected daughter, highlighting the true significance of my research in a practical, impactful manner.

To start, this research began with a deceptively simple question: “How might we understand maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters?” As this study nears its conclusion, it has become evident that this exploration is incredibly nuanced, interwoven with individual stories and struggles. Each mother, dealing with her own body image issues, perceives this task through a personal lens, shaped by unique experiences, societal pressures, and familial legacies. This research has illuminated the vast array of emotions and decisions embedded in each mother's experience.

Hermeneutics, the methodological foundation of this research, has facilitated a deep dive into the lived experiences of these mothers. This approach does not seek a single, universal truth; instead, it embraces the plurality of truths, acknowledging the diversity of perspectives and interpretations (Moules et al., 2015). As I reflect on my interpretations, I recognize that these accounts may not resonate universally. However, I hope that for many mothers and daughters, these interpretations will mirror aspects of their own realities.

As such, this discussion chapter aims to integrate these findings, consider their implications, question their limitations, and identify directions for future research. In doing so, I strive to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on body image, maternal influence, and societal pressures, offering insights that extend from the academic to the everyday. To achieve this, the chapter will begin by re-examining my research interpretations (i.e., *Origins of Intentions*, *Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts*, and *When Daughters Become Mothers*), setting the stage for a deeper analysis and reflection.

Revisiting Origins of Intentions

In re-examining *Origins of Intentions*, I was drawn into the interplay between societal standards of thinness and their ripple effect across personal, familial, and societal realms. At the heart of this exploration is the concept of maternal thin idolatry and its profound impact on mothers and daughters. This dynamic, where a maternal focus on thinness overshadows more substantial values, sheds light on the effect of societal beauty standards not just on mothers but, consequentially, on their daughters as well. Not only do these ideals shape mothers' perceptions and behaviours, but they also leave a lasting imprint on their daughters, weaving a complex, intergenerational narrative of expectations and a profound impact on self-worth.

Simultaneously, a recurring theme of shame emerged, anchored in daughters' struggles to conform to these societal beauty standards. This emotion, deeply embedded in their personal and relational experiences, casts a shadow of silence and isolation over the mother-daughter relationship. Shame, as echoed in the stories of participants, becomes a formidable barrier, impeding not only the internal battle with self-image but also obstructing the crucial lines of communication between daughters and their mothers. This barrier hampers their capacity to seek comfort and advice from their mothers, particularly in moments of vulnerability and self-doubt.

Revisiting Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts

In *Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts*, I explored the lingering influence of past experiences, recognizing them not simply as distant memories but as enduring forces actively shaping mothers' self-perception, identity, and interactions, especially with their daughters. I accentuated the vital need to engage with these memories, rather than sidestepping or ignoring them. Moving beyond the notion of detaching from or burying painful or challenging memories, I explored embracing and transforming these experiences into sources of strength and insight.

The theme of intergenerational transmission was particularly salient, highlighting how personal experiences, particularly unresolved traumas, extend their influence beyond individual lives, impacting future generations. This insight invoked an examination of the ethical obligation to face and proactively engage with our psychological "ghosts." The essence, or the "so what," of this interpretation lies in the transformative potential of confronting, comprehending, and redefining our haunting past experiences. It underlines the importance of memory, both individually and collectively, emphasizing the responsibility we hold not only for our own healing but also for the well-being of those who follow us.

Revisiting When Daughters Become Mothers

Upon revisiting *When Daughters Become Mothers*, I was struck by the transformation that motherhood can bring to one's perspective. It steers perceptions away from the simplistic narrative of mother-blame, directing attention instead towards the formidable influence of societal pressures (i.e., the thin ideal). This paradigm shift sheds light on how these societal forces not only affect individual self-perception but also influence the complex mother-daughter relationship. This newfound perspective serves as a compelling call to action, advocating for a

more holistic approach in addressing body dissatisfaction. It encourages us to expand our focus from the narrow confines of mother-blame to a broader examination of societal influences, urging the development of strategies that counter these external pressures to nurture healthier mother-daughter dynamics and self-perceptions.

Implications for Practice

As was previously noted, the strength of hermeneutic research lies in its potential to enhance practice. This interpretive methodology empowers researchers to transcend conventional practice paradigms, paving the way for innovative and dynamic approaches. In the following sections, I present implications for clinical practices and discuss their significance for both counselling psychology and the broader mental health arena.

In re-examining *Origins of Intentions*, *Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts*, and *When Mothers Become Daughters*, a common thread emerges: each interpretation grapples with the negative consequences of societal pressures (i.e., the thin ideal), the intricacies of the mother-daughter bond, and the impact of the past on present experiences. These narratives underscore the influence of societal beauty standards and intergenerational dynamics, as well as emphasize the significant role of personal narratives in sculpting self-image and their impact on parenting behaviours. The translation of these interpretations into clinical recommendations underscores the necessity for therapeutic practices to address these multifaceted influences. By acknowledging and working through these layers, therapy can offer a more nuanced approach, facilitating healing and fostering healthier mother-daughter dynamics, thereby mitigating the adverse effects of societal expectations and intergenerational traumas.

Challenging Societal Beauty Norms through Psychoeducation

In *Origins of Intentions*, as well as in *When Daughters Become Mothers*, I provide evidence outlining the urgent need for clinicians to embrace therapeutic approaches that effectively respond to socio-cultural dynamics, particularly those surrounding the pervasive influence and impact of the thin ideal on girls and women, and their relationships (e.g., the mother-daughter relationship). A key component in such approaches is the integration of psychoeducation, designed to highlight the detrimental effects of societal beauty standards and their impacts across generations (Levine & Piran, 2001).

Feminist Therapy offers a valuable framework for this integration. Central to Feminist Therapy is the acknowledgment and challenging of societal constructs and norms, especially those related to beauty standards (Brown, 2018). This approach aligns perfectly with the goals of psychoeducation aimed at exposing the harmful nature of these standards. By incorporating practices from Feminist Therapy, psychoeducation can be enriched with deeper insights into the power dynamics and cultural narratives that perpetuate and sustain these harmful beauty ideals (Brown, 2018).

Empowering Societal Change through Psychoeducation

Moreover, in *Origins of Intentions*, as well as in *When Daughters Become Mothers*, I draw attention to the critical need for both mothers and, more importantly, the broader society to adopt and champion healthier perspectives on body image. This task involves far more than simply equipping mothers with knowledge and tools for enhancing their and their daughters' body image; it represents a pivotal shift, an opportunity to disrupt the persistent cycle of body dissatisfaction through transformative societal change. This strategy would be designed to effect more than just individual change; it would lay a foundation for empowering future generations of women to lead and foster a societal evolution towards embracing healthier and more affirming

body image standards. By embracing the principles of the body positive movement outlined earlier, we can further empower this societal shift, ensuring that our efforts to promote healthy body image are deeply rooted in acceptance and celebration of all body types. Altogether, the goal would be to craft a world where body satisfaction evolves from a personal aim to a universally recognized and upheld norm.

Again, Feminist Therapy may offer strategies to achieve the above-described goal. Feminist Therapy redefines psychoeducation as an empowering tool that fosters critical thinking and awareness. Its methods extend beyond imparting information; they involve a nuanced understanding of how societal standards and systemic issues shape personal self-perception. This non-blaming approach helps individuals recognize that their struggles with body image are not personal failings but are deeply rooted in broader societal issues (Ballou & Brown, 2002; Worell & Remer, 2002). This recognition can be profoundly liberating and can foster a sense of solidarity and collective action among those affected.

Crucially, Feminist Therapy incorporates several strategies that emphasize the importance of advocacy and driving social change. A pivotal aspect of this is the concept that “the personal is political,” which empowers individuals by connecting their personal experiences to larger societal frameworks (Brown, 2018). This perspective is vital for understanding that individual experiences are often reflections of broader social dynamics. In line with the concept, Feminist Therapy often advocates for activism and community involvement as essential components for both personal growth and societal transformation. Engagement in advocacy groups and political movements is seen not just as a pathway to personal empowerment but also as a crucial mechanism for effecting social change. These strategies, underscore the potential role of Feminist Therapy not only in facilitating individual healing but also in its capacity to catalyze significant societal shifts. This holistic approach underscores the transformative power

of Feminist Therapy, both at the individual and societal levels, championing a future where personal struggles are acknowledged as part of a larger call for social reform.

By incorporating psychoeducation with Feminist Therapy methods, counselling psychology can provide individuals, especially women, with the tools to critically analyze and resist societal pressures related to body image. This approach may not only aid in individual healing but also contributes to a broader societal change, challenging and reshaping the harmful narratives around beauty and self-worth. Through this integrated approach, counselling psychology can play a pivotal role in fostering healthier, more empowering relationships with our bodies and selves, and in turn, contribute to the nurturing of a more inclusive and supportive society.

Re-Evaluating Values: Shifting Focus in Mother-Daughter Relationships

In *Origins of Intentions*, the critical impact of thin idolatry (i.e., prioritizing thinness over more profound, meaningful values) on mother-daughter relationships is thoroughly explored. Understanding the pervasive influence of thin idolatry in mother-daughter relationships illuminates the necessity for a fundamental shift from valuing external appearances to prioritizing meaningful, authentic connections that transcend societal expectations. Within this challenging dynamic, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is presented as a potentially transformative approach for mothers aiming to reassess and realign their values. Central to ACT, as highlighted by Hayes et al. (1999), is the principle of aligning actions with deeply held values, an approach that is particularly relevant for mothers confronting societal pressures related to their daughters' body image and self-esteem.

ACT offers a pathway for mothers to move beyond the societal focus on thinness, guiding them towards embracing more substantial values such as acceptance, love, and family.

This shift is vital in fostering relationships with their daughters that are rooted in nurturing and understanding rather than external appearance. The methods of ACT enable mothers to critically assess and challenge the pervasive influence of societal beauty norms, encouraging them to choose values that cultivate healthier attitudes towards body image. This conscious choice empowers mothers to model and instill in their daughters a sense of self-worth that goes beyond physical appearance, underscoring the importance of inner qualities and personal strengths.

By embracing ACT's principles, mothers can commit to value-driven behaviours, effectively counteracting the negative impacts of thin idolatry. This commitment could not only benefit the individual mother-daughter relationship but also contributes to a broader cultural shift towards healthier body image perceptions and values. Through ACT, mothers can play a pivotal role in shaping a more positive and accepting environment for their daughters, one where self-worth and connection are celebrated over societal ideals of physical beauty. Altogether, these methods could be instrumental in breaking the cycle of thin idolatry.

Re-Storying our Pasts for a Brighter Future

In *Welcoming Ghosts to Heal Intergenerational Haunts*, I discuss the transformative potential of reinterpreting haunting memories, not as adversarial ghosts but as guiding spirits that promote understanding, strength, and healing. By viewing haunting memories as narratives rather than immutable truths, we open the door to employing Narrative Therapy, a method that empowers individuals to consciously author their life stories with an emphasis on resilience and empowerment. As conceptualized by White and Epston (1990), Narrative Therapy recognizes the fluidity and adaptability of the stories we construct about our lives. It provides a therapeutic space for individuals to rewrite their life stories, placing an emphasis on resilience, strength, and empowerment. This approach involves a detailed examination and reassembly of internalized

narratives, often leading to the discovery of alternative perspectives and deeper meanings. This shift moves away from narratives steeped in pain and victimhood, towards those that acknowledge personal agency and the possibility of transformative change (White & Epston, 1990).

In sum, this re-storying process is not just about altering mothers' narratives but also about redefining the self. It could be used to enable mothers to see themselves not as passive victims of their past but as active agents in their life stories, capable of overcoming challenges and creating positive change. In essence, memories that once haunted them could be reframed as empowering guides, offering wisdom and strength in their quests to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters.

Focusing on the Family

Lastly, in all three interpretations, a common theme emerged: the necessity of addressing family dynamics to halt the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. In this context, family therapy emerges as an essential approach. This therapeutic model is centered on comprehending and enhancing family dynamics and relationships, a crucial aspect when tackling issues like societal beauty standards that collectively impact family members.

As articulated by Minuchin (1974), family therapy operates on the understanding that an individual's challenges are often intertwined with their family environment. It posits that changes in any single family member can ripple through and influence the entire family system. This perspective is particularly relevant in situations where mothers are striving to instill positive body image and self-esteem in their daughters. Family therapy not only focuses on the individual but also on the family as a unit, recognizing that patterns of behaviour, communication, and belief are often shared and reinforced within the family structure. This approach can be

especially effective in breaking the cycle of negative attitudes towards body image, as it allows for the exploration and modification of these shared beliefs and behaviours. By involving the entire family in the therapeutic process, it facilitates a collective understanding and a unified approach towards fostering healthier attitudes and practices related to body image.

In essence, family therapy could provide a powerful framework for families to collaboratively address and transform the deep-rooted dynamics that contribute to body dissatisfaction. This collaborative approach could lead to changes that are not only individual but also systemic, creating a supportive family environment that champions positive body image and self-esteem, paving the way for healthier intergenerational relationships.

Bringing It All Together

In conclusion, these findings call for a paradigm shift in how we approach body image issues, emphasizing the need for a holistic view that integrates individual experiences with societal influences. By adopting such approaches as Feminist Therapy, Narrative Therapy, ACT, and family therapy, counselling psychology can play a pivotal role in breaking down barriers of shame and miscommunication, nurturing stronger, more supportive relationships between mothers and daughters. It sets the stage for future generations of girls and women to actively lead and nurture a societal evolution towards healthier, more positive body image standards, ultimately envisioning a world where body satisfaction is not just a personal aspiration but a universally embraced norm.

Consequently, it is proposed that counselling psychology embraces therapeutic interventions sensitive to socio-cultural contexts, family dynamics, and core values to help mothers end the transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters. By integrating psychoeducation about societal beauty standards and employing methods from Feminist

Therapy, Narrative Therapy, ACT, and family therapy, practitioners can effectively break down existing barriers. This approach would enable the cultivation of relationships that are not just stronger, but also imbued with a sense of empowerment and mutual understanding (Brown, 2018; Levine & Piran, 2001; Thompson & Stice, 2001). This shift in therapeutic practice is more than just a professional adjustment; it represents a step towards fostering a legacy of empowerment and understanding for mothers and daughters, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

By embracing the complexities outlined in these interpretations, a way forward can be paved for a future where past experiences, societal pressures, and family legacies are not merely recognized but transformed into fuel for empowerment. These interpretations serve as more than academic findings; they are a call to action for a more empathetic, understanding, and nurturing society—a legacy that begins with the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

Rigor and Integrity of Hermeneutic Research

This research represents a significant shift in focus from traditional studies on maternal influence over daughters' body image. It uniquely centers on mothers' experiences of intending to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of body dissatisfaction, shining a light on experiences that have been historically underrepresented. Employing hermeneutic inquiry, this study explores maternal experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters, uncovering a rich tapestry of perspectives. The findings from this exploration highlight the critical need for a more comprehensive approach in both research and treatment of body image issues, bringing into focus the valuable but often neglected maternal viewpoints.

In this study, the application of hermeneutic research methods was pivotal in maintaining integrity and rigor. These methods facilitated a deep and immersive exploration of maternal experiences, capturing their complexity and depth in a comprehensive manner. The essence of hermeneutic research lies in its dynamic interpretative nature, which allows for a fluid and evolving understanding of the subject matter. This process starts with initial insights that are not seen as final conclusions but rather as starting points for a deeper journey of exploration. As Moules et al. (2015) articulated, hermeneutic methodology involves a meticulous process of deconstruction and reconstruction. This includes continuous reflection, active engagement with existing literature, and an iterative cycle of writing and revision. Such a rigorous approach is fundamental in hermeneutic research, enabling the evolution and maturation of understanding through thorough scholarly interrogation. The strength of this method lies in its adaptability, allowing researchers to refine and deepen their insights progressively. This approach ensures that the study not only captures the initial impressions but also delves into the nuanced layers of maternal experiences, providing a rich and evolved understanding of the topic.

Furthermore, the methodology's integrity is enhanced by its collaborative nature. Hermeneutic inquiry is not a solitary endeavour but a shared intellectual exercise, enriched through active and critical engagement with experts from related fields. In this study, consultations with specialists in eating and weight-related issues and hermeneutic methodology were instrumental, adding depth and complexity to the interpretations and highlighting the value of collaborative engagement in hermeneutic research.

Additionally, hermeneutic research is committed to effecting change, challenging established narratives and analyses to broaden perspectives. Rooted in phenomenology, it involves detailed description, critical examination, and contextual analysis (Moules et al., 2015).

The validity of hermeneutic research, as Moules (2002) suggested, is gauged by its lasting impact and its capacity to enlighten and provoke thought. In essence, hermeneutic research aims to remain open, dynamic, and influential, continually challenging and expanding our understanding of complex phenomena.

Limitations

This study, grounded in hermeneutic methodology, encounters what can be considered as inherent limitations that are reflective of the very nature of this approach. The personal nature of hermeneutic interpretations, a cornerstone of this research, means that the insights and conclusions drawn may not resonate universally. This is a fundamental characteristic of hermeneutic research, where interpretations are deeply individualistic and can vary significantly based on the interpreter's perspective. Rather than seeking to offer definitive, universally applicable conclusions, hermeneutic research thrives in exploring complex issues through a nuanced and multifaceted lens. As such, it is acknowledged that the findings of this study may not align with every reader's viewpoint or the perspectives of all researchers in the field.

Additionally, my role as an “interpretive vessel” carries its own set of constraints. My interpretations are shaped by my personal and professional experiences, which might be construed as a form of bias. While this personal infusion provides the research with depth and authenticity, it also implies that different researchers could interpret the same data in various ways. This diversity, often seen as a limitation in more traditional research paradigms, is considered beneficial in hermeneutic research, as it adds to the richness and depth of the subject matter exploration. In fact, for this study, I embraced Gadamer's (1960/2014) concept of prejudice, which refers to our pre-existing knowledge and expectations. Unlike other qualitative methods that aim to eliminate bias, Gadamerian hermeneutics views these prejudices as integral

to understanding. They are not seen as negative biases but as informative and inevitable in interpretation. This approach acknowledges that complete objectivity is unattainable, while also noting that subjectivity can actually enhance understanding (Davey, 2006). Therefore, while my interpretations are shaped by personal and professional experiences, this is not an inherent limitation but a fundamental aspect of hermeneutic research, adding depth and authenticity to the study.

In conclusion, the potential limitations of this study are linked to the essence of hermeneutic research - its inherent subjectivity, the impact of the researcher's experiences, and the intricate nature of interpretive inquiry. While these limitations are recognized, they also contribute to the study's strength, offering a rich perspective that aims to enhance the understanding of the research topic.

Strengths

A significant strength emerges from the depth of my pre-existing experience and knowledge of the research topic. As Gadamer (1960/1989) eloquently described, hermeneutics begins with an "always, already" – a stepping into a context that is already familiar. My personal and professional experiences surrounding this topic, as described in my personal reflections throughout this dissertation, have provided me with a deep understanding that I believe significantly enriched my research findings. Altogether, my extensive background and experience allowed me to perceive and interpret the data in a unique manner, potentially unseen by a researcher without such a background.

Moreover, the therapeutic nature of the interviews emerged as an unexpected but significant strength. For many mothers, these interviews provided a rare opportunity for reflection and pause in what is often a hurried and overwhelming experience of motherhood.

This space for deep contemplation allowed mothers to process their experiences in a way that was often overlooked in their interactions with others. The gratitude expressed by numerous mothers for being given a voice in this research highlights the therapeutic value and importance of this study. These findings resonate with existing literature on the therapeutic and interventive possibilities of research interviews (Costello et al., 2009; Lohani et al., 2018; Morecroft et al., 2004). It has been found that the act of participating in an in-depth interview can yield a diverse range of therapeutic effects. As noted by researchers such as Morecroft and colleagues (2004), these effects can surpass mere changes in perceptions and behaviours, fostering a deeper understanding and recognition of the participants' experiences. Overall, the value of these interviews can transcend data collection, offering a potential pathway for significant personal change and enhanced understanding among the participants. In this study, the therapeutic aspect was an unexpected but beneficial by-product of the research, offering participants a safe and reflective space to process their experiences.

In summary, this research demonstrates the strength of hermeneutic inquiry in tapping into the researcher's deep-rooted knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. My familiarity with the lived experiences of participants, combined with the therapeutic nature of the hermeneutic process, underscores the potential of this research approach to yield insights that are both profound and transformative.

Future Research Directions

Expanding upon the groundwork established in this study, there are numerous avenues for future research that promise to enhance our understanding of how parents might effectively disrupt the cycle of body dissatisfaction across generations. A critical area for exploration is the experiences of the male population in this context. Delving deeper into the roles and experiences

of males, both as parents and children, is essential for a more inclusive understanding of parental experiences of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to children.

Adopting a longitudinal approach in future research could also be valuable. By tracking mother-daughter dyads over extended periods, we could gain critical insights into the evolving nature of maternal efforts to disrupt the cycle of body dissatisfaction. This methodology would not only provide invaluable longitudinal data but also aid in the development of more effective, targeted interventions. Observing how these dynamics change and persist as both mothers and daughters age would paint a vivid and dynamic picture.

Finally, future research must also delve into the intersectionality of parental intentions to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction. In expanding upon this research, it would be crucial to explore how elements like race, socioeconomic status, and cultural background might influence the outcomes. For example, race can impact parental intentions and methods for addressing body dissatisfaction, as racialized experiences and representations of beauty standards differ significantly. These variations can shape how parents of different racial backgrounds perceive and tackle body image issues. Similarly, socioeconomic status could also play a pivotal role. Families from lower SES backgrounds might face unique challenges, including limited access to resources that promote healthy body image or greater exposure to environments with unattainable beauty standards. This disparity could affect how these families approach the issue of body dissatisfaction. Cultural background also has a significant influence. Diverse cultural norms and values around body image can lead to varied understandings and approaches to body satisfaction. For instance, some cultures may emphasize certain body types or have unique beauty ideals that profoundly affect parental attitudes and behaviours towards

body image.

Altogether, this broader perspective could provide a more holistic understanding of these experiences, contributing to more inclusive and effective strategies to combat body dissatisfaction across diverse communities. By examining how these multiple identities and social positions influence parents' approaches to body image, future research can uncover nuanced ways in which societal pressures manifest differently across various groups. Such a comprehensive approach will not only deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics at play but also pave the way for the development of culturally sensitive and intersectional interventions. These strategies, mindful of the multifaceted nature of identity, can be more effectively tailored to address the unique challenges and needs faced by different families, thereby promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to nurturing body satisfaction in the next generation.

Conclusion

As this hermeneutic journey draws to a close, I find myself stepping back, enriched not just with scholarly insights, but also holding a beacon of hope that lights the way forward. The findings of this research cast a new light on the mother-daughter relationship in the realm of body image, deeply interwoven with societal norms, and stand as a potential catalyst for transformative change. Delving into the complexities of this relationship and the societal forces shaping body image perceptions, this study opens new avenues for fostering positive body image. It envisions a future where mothers are empowered to instill healthier body image ideals in their daughters, challenging and changing the narrative of body dissatisfaction that has echoed through generations.

Beyond the academic realm, the essence of this study reaches into the heart of everyday life, offering practical, empathetic strategies to address the persistent challenges of body image. Altogether, this research transcends the boundaries of academia, guiding us towards a future where our daughters, including the one I eagerly await, can flourish free from the constraints of narrow beauty standards.

Chapter 8: Concluding Story

Metaphors have been widely acknowledged as an effective means for exploring and understanding complex issues, providing a unique perspective on the nuances of human experiences (Abram, 1996; Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Penson et al., 2004; Ricouer, 1975). Within the context of this study, the sorority metaphor emerged as a pivotal tool, not only framing the exploration of the mother-daughter dynamic and societal pressures on body image but also facilitating a deeper understanding of the impact of these pressures on individuals.

As such, this concluding chapter leverages the sorority metaphor to present the study's findings in a narrative format, aiming to foster a heightened awareness of the challenges and successes mothers can face in intending to end the intergenerational cycle of body dissatisfaction passed to daughters. By weaving the study's findings into a story enriched with authentic participant experiences, and framed within the sorority metaphor, the chapter seeks to evoke a final transformative shift in the readers' understanding of maternal intentions to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to their daughters.

Sisterhood Reimagined

Sorority

As a young girl, I dreamt of pledging to the sorority of THIN, Tau Eta Iota Nu. In my eyes, Tau Eta Iota Nu women had it all; they were thin, beautiful, and successful. All the women I admired most were part of this sorority, including my mother and grandmother. They were proud members of Tau Eta Iota Nu and advocates of their mission: "Thin over everything." From mother to daughter, they intergenerationally espoused the importance of thinness and sisterhood. I thought to myself: "If thinness is so important to them, perhaps I too should focus on attaining thinness." However, I needed help to do so. As such, I asked my mom to aid me in my pursuits.

She recommended, with great enthusiasm, that I join Tau Eta Iota Nu. I was thrilled at the prospect of joining this sisterhood, as I would finally become privy to the secretive practices that lead to their successes.

Pledging to an Illusive Ideal

Pledge week rolled along, and I met the other hopeful Tau Eta Iota Nu sisters. Some of the pledges had been recruited by advertisements in the media, while others had been enlisted by friends. Like me, many of the girls had come with their mothers and grandmothers, Tau Eta Iota Nu alums. It appeared that some of the pledges were there willingly, while others had been pushed by their recruiters to join. We all anxiously waited in the foyer of the incredible Tau Eta Iota Nu house to hear what sorority life would be like. "Hello, Tau Eta Iota Nu pledges and welcome to your new life!" said the main sorority sister as I looked at my mother and grandmother with excitement. "Here you will learn how to think and act like a Tau Eta Iota Nu sister! Are you ready for all your dreams to come true?" she asked, and the crowd cheered. "Our motto is thin over everything. If you follow this motto, it will serve you well as you will be loved and revered by all." She promised.

Trials and Tribulations

For months, the Tau Eta Iota Nu hopefuls were tasked with showing their dedication to the word of THIN by trying to embody the thin ideal. Driven by my own ambitious spirit, I dove headfirst into a rigorous regime of dieting and exercise, fueled by the unwavering support of my mother. I thought to myself: "I did it! I am finally thin! Sisterhood really does pay off!" Bursting with enthusiasm, I ran to my mother to show her my progress, thinking I had completed my mission. However, her response struck me with disappointment, her words marked with the faintest trace of approval. "It's a good start," she remarked. My heart sank, momentarily crushed

by the weight of unmet expectations. Yet, in the very next breath, that disappointment morphed into a wellspring of determination. I made it my mission to not only make my mother proud but to also earn the admiration of my Tau Eta Iota Nu sisters.

Rite of Passage

After several arduous months of proving our unwavering commitment to the pursuit of thinness, successful pledges were invited to participate in a “rite of passage,” a hazing of sorts, to see if we truly had what it takes to be a Tau Eta Iota Nu sister. All Tau Eta Iota Nu sisters had participated in this secretive hazing, and I was eager to prove myself.

The exact nature of this ritual remained shrouded in mystery, yet it revolved around the concept of “weight management” taken to extreme levels. We were left uninformed of the precise measures we were to undertake, but our sole objective was clear—to attain the thin ideal through any means necessary. Thus, I found myself resorting to drastic measures in pursuit of this goal. I swallowed laxatives, subjected myself to prolonged fasting that stretched for days, and pushed my body to the brink through relentless exercise. Never before had I endured such an experience.

As the days unfolded, a relentless fatigue gripped me, both physically and emotionally. I felt utterly drained and hollowed from within. Yet, amidst the haze of malnutrition and excessive exertion, I yearned for a glimmer of validation. I turned my weary eyes towards my mother, seeking her approval. Yet, her gaze fell upon me, and with chilling brevity, she uttered, “You could be thinner.” With those words, I was formally initiated into the ranks of Tau Eta Iota Nu—a stark realization that striving for the thin ideal came at an immeasurable cost.

Entering the Inner Circle

Upon entering the inner circle of Tau Eta Iota Nu, a profound realization began to dawn upon me—the facade of perfection that shrouded this sisterhood masked a deeper, more unsettling truth. Though their physical appearances conveyed an image of contentment, a palpable undercurrent of unhappiness permeated the lives of these seemingly flawless individuals. Time and again, conversations echoed with discussions of their dissatisfaction, a ceaseless lamentation over their own perceived flaws. I struggled to understand this paradox, for in my eyes, they were perfect.

Yet, in time, I found myself walking the same path of self-loathing and dissatisfaction. The relentless pursuit of the thin ideal had gradually eroded my own body image, leaving me profoundly unhappy with my own reflection. It became a shared experience, an unspoken bond forged through countless conversations revolving around our mutual dissatisfaction with our bodies. We forged connections, not in celebration of ourselves, but in the solidarity of our collective suffering. Misery sought solace in the company of kindred souls, and so we clung together, intimately entwined in our shared pain.

The Harsh Realities of Pursuit

Though I was aware that dieting was commonplace among the sorority sisters, I caught fleeting glimpses of far more extreme measures being taken. Whispered accounts reached my ears—a sister's muffled retching after a meal, a private struggle veiled in secrecy. Yet, rather than sparking concern or intervention, these actions were met with silent admiration, celebrated as symbols of unwavering dedication to the pursuit of thinness. Why did no one speak out against such practices? Why did we idolize the destructive?

Another disconcerting incident etched itself into my memory: a sister pushing her body to the point of collapse, falling unconscious from the sheer intensity of her workout. Instead of

alarm or medical attention, the response was dismissive, urging her to recuperate briefly before resuming her training regimen. It was as if her physical well-being held no weight compared to the “miracles” it wrought upon her physique. What kind of world had I become entangled in? Thin over everything, I murmured to myself, grappling with the implications of such a motto.

In the depths of my contemplation, I could not help but yearn for my mother's guidance. I longed for her to impart the truth about the pain that lay hidden beneath the veneer of the Tau Eta Iota Nu sisterhood. It was a realm veiled not only in hurt and dissatisfaction but also in shame, suffering, and profound loneliness. These were experiences, it seemed, reserved solely for the sisters to bear witness to, a shared knowledge that set us apart from the outside world.

Intending to Break the Cycle

As the years stretched on, my experience of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating persisted, a relentless struggle that left me trapped in a spiral of isolation and shame. Yet, within that desolate space, a flicker of resilience ignited within me. I grew tired of the pain and resolved to defy the toxic rhetoric that had been force-fed to me within the confines of Tau Eta Iota Nu. I made a choice—an unwavering commitment to love myself unconditionally, irrespective of society's imposed standards. The veiled reality of the sisterhood had been laid bare before me. In my quest for connection and love, I had unearthed the pervasive presence of shame and loneliness. It became abundantly clear: there had to be another way.

A New Vision

Reflecting upon my tumultuous experience within Tau Eta Iota Nu, a vision began to take shape—a vision of a new sorority, one that would serve as a haven for girls and women to unabashedly embrace their true selves. Within the walls of this sorority, they would find solace, shielded from the relentless expectations that dictate how they should look and behave. In this

sisterhood, they would be cherished and accepted in their entirety, just as they are. My aim was to empower these sisters, equipping them with the tools to critically analyze the detrimental messages that seek to undermine their worth. Together, we would dismantle the toxic narratives that plague our minds, replacing them with a resolute belief in our intrinsic value.

Above all, I yearned to foster an environment of safety and trust, where vulnerability could flourish without the specter of judgment. No longer would we bond over our shared struggles to conform to an unattainable thin ideal; instead, we would unite in the battle against the insidious forces that sow toxicity within us. Together, we would forge unbreakable bonds, embracing our imperfections and lifting each other up along the path to self-discovery and self-love.

This new sorority would be a sanctuary—a sanctuary where authenticity reigns, where the collective strength of sisters combats the destructive messages that threaten to diminish us. It would be a sisterhood built upon resilience, empowering every member to rise above the shackles of societal expectations and to embrace their unique beauty and worth.

Pregnant with Possibilities

In a miraculous turn of events, I found myself pregnant, my heart swelling with the weight of responsibility for the future of my unborn daughter. In the face of this immense task, I knew I had to rise above the cycle of pain and disillusionment. I had to chart a new course—one that would lead my daughter away from the perils of Tau Eta Iota Nu and towards a sisterhood of self-love and acceptance. I envisioned a sisterhood where true happiness could flourish, unburdened by the constraints of size or appearance. The cycle of suffering would end with me, for I was determined to instill in my daughter the truth about her worth and guide her towards a path of genuine self-acceptance.

Guided by the powerful vision that burned within me, I set out to seek kindred spirits—those who had traversed the treacherous terrain of unrealistic beauty standards and emerged with a shared determination for change. With hearts aflame, we united, pooling our collective strength to birth a sorority rooted in the principles we held dear: self-love, acceptance, and sisterhood without judgment.

Embody

In the depths of our souls, we recognized that the key to breaking free from the shackles of societal expectations lay in embracing our true selves—mind, body, and spirit. We yearned for a sorority that would honour and celebrate the inherent beauty found within each individual, regardless of their shape, size, or appearance. As our collective strength grew, we found solace in a single word: embody. Through researching its meaning, we found that embody encompassed the essence of what we sought to create—a union of mind and body, a harmonious integration of self. It represented our commitment to living authentically and honoring the unique beauty that resided within each of us.

With hearts ablaze and minds aligned, we christened our newfound sisterhood with the name Embody—a name that echoed with purpose, resilience, and a profound understanding of the transformative power that lies in embracing our true selves. Embody would be a sanctuary where every sister would be seen, heard, and valued for who they truly were. It would be a space free from judgment and comparison, where we could uplift and support each other on our individual paths towards self-acceptance and empowerment.

As such, the principles of Embody were woven into the very fabric of our sisterhood. We pledged to challenge the societal norms that perpetuated unrealistic beauty standards, to

dismantle the toxic messages that had haunted us for far too long, and to cultivate a culture of love, kindness, and inclusivity.

Haunted by the Past

As the concept of Embody took root within our hearts and minds, we realized that we needed a physical space—a home where our sisterhood could flourish, and our vision could manifest into reality. Filled with anticipation and determination, I set out on a search for the perfect place to house our new sorority. In doing so, I stumbled upon the old Tau Eta Iota Nu house up for sale, a mix of excitement and apprehension filled my heart. Could this be the place where our new sorority would find its home? With hesitant optimism, I submitted an offer, hoping that this would be the fresh start we all longed for. Once the papers were signed, and the house officially belonged to us, the energy within its walls began to shift. We set out to transform it into a space that would reflect our new vision—a sanctuary where girls and women could be accepted and celebrated as their authentic selves, free from the suffocating expectations of the past.

As our sorority gained momentum, however, we could not escape the lingering presence of the past. The house seemed to be infused with the memories of young women who had suffered under the weight of unattainable beauty standards. Whispers echoed through the halls, reminding us of the pain and struggles endured within these very walls. At first, we tried to push these haunting memories aside, determined to forge ahead with our mission. We focused on creating a supportive community, nurturing each other's self-worth, and dismantling the toxic beliefs that had plagued us for so long. But no matter how hard we tried to ignore the shadows of our past, they clung to us like a ghostly veil, demanding our attention. It became clear that we could not truly move forward without confronting the ghosts that haunted us.

Befriending the Ghosts

With a mixture of trepidation and hope, we gathered in the common room. In that sacred space, we resolved to embark on a soul-stirring endeavour—a séance—to bridge the divide between the ethereal realm and our earthly existence. As candles flickered around us, their gentle flames mirrored the anticipation that fluttered within our chests. The atmosphere grew heavy with anticipation, as if the very air held the whispers of the women who had walked these halls before us. In that charged moment, an otherworldly presence enveloped us, a congregation of spirits from the lineage of Tau Eta Iota Nu had joined us.

To our astonishment, these specters of the past bore no malice or malevolence. Instead, they yearned to share their narratives, to impart upon us the profound depths of pain and suffering they had endured in the clutches of toxic ideals. Their purpose was not to torment but to guide, to ensure that future generations of young women would not be shackled by the same chains of dissatisfaction.

As we listened to their spectral whispers, their words resonated within our souls, weaving a tapestry of heartache and resilience. They imparted upon us the importance of acknowledging the scars they carried and embracing the transformative power of their stories. In their ghostly presence, we recognized that by learning from their harrowing experiences, we could pave the way for a sisterhood steeped in compassion, support, and unyielding love.

Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future

With the help of our spectral sisters, we began to develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of unhealthy beauty standards. We incorporated their experiences into our workshops and support groups, using their stories as cautionary tales to help sisters recognize the dangers of pursuing an unattainable ideal. As we continued to grow and evolve, our connection

to the spirits of Tau Eta Iota Nu strengthened. They became our guides, helping us to navigate the complexities of self-acceptance and sisterhood. Together, we worked to heal the wounds of the past and to create a brighter future for generations of young women to come.

Changing the World, One Sister at a Time

News of Embody's transformative mission reverberated through the hearts and minds of young women far and wide. Drawn by the magnetic pull of authenticity and acceptance, girls and women gravitated towards our sanctuary, eager to partake in a movement that defied the constraints of societal expectations. As such, the impact of Embody was immense, not only for its members but also for those who witnessed the transformation of its sisters. As more and more young women joined our ranks, the message of self-love and acceptance spread. We became a beacon of hope and empowerment, challenging societal norms and helping to create a world where everyone could feel free to be themselves without fear of judgment or rejection. Embody's legacy lives on, proving that when mothers and daughters come together in support of one another, they have the power to change the world for the better.

Motherhood: A Legacy Redefined

As the years unfolded, we, the mothers of Embody, embarked on a profound journey that transformed not only ourselves but also the lives of our daughters. The transition into motherhood unveiled newfound perspectives, prompting us to reflect on the profound influence our own mothers had on us and the intertwined legacy of Tau Eta Iota Nu. In fact, through motherhood, we began to perceive our own mothers in a different light. We recognized the unwavering dedication they had bestowed upon us, driven by a genuine desire to provide the best for their daughters within the framework of their own upbringing. They, too, had traversed a

world that placed an exalted pedestal beneath the guise of thinness, believing that molding us into its image was an act of love and empowerment, despite its inherent negative consequences.

Our own experiences as mothers evoked profound empathy within us, unraveling the complexities our mothers had navigated while raising us. We acknowledged the societal web that entangled them, constraining their perspectives and perpetuating harmful beauty standards. Our experiences emboldened us to extend empathy towards our own mothers, recognizing them as fellow victims of a culture that dictated their actions. It was an awakening that allowed us to bridge the generational divide, fusing our compassion with a shared determination to dismantle the chains of harmful beliefs.

With resolute hearts and a fierce devotion to rewriting the narrative, we resolved to break the cycle that had perpetuated suffering across generations. Armed with the wisdom bestowed upon us by our ghostly sisters and the transformative power of Embody, we instilled in our daughters a resolute spirit of critical thinking. We guided them to discern the falsehoods embedded in societal expectations, empowering them to embrace their authentic selves and nurture an unshakable sense of self-worth beyond the constraints of physical appearance.

Weightless

In the sacred sanctuary of our nurturing embrace, we cultivated an environment rooted in unconditional love and unyielding support. We endeavoured to shield our daughters from the treacherous currents of self-doubt, fostering an unwavering belief in their inherent worth. Through heartfelt conversations and gentle guidance, we kindled within them the eternal flame of self-love, illuminating the path towards a future unburdened by the weight of unrealistic expectations.

Conclusion

This concluding chapter synthesizes the experiences of mothers, daughters, and previous generations within the conceptual framework of the sorority metaphor. Its objective was to elicit an elevated awareness of the potential challenges and successes encountered by mothers who strive to break the intergenerational cycle of body dissatisfaction. By presenting the research findings as a narrative inspired by authentic participant accounts, the aim was to catalyze a transformative paradigm shift in readers' understanding of the topic. The trajectory from anguish to empowerment, from the fictional sorority Tau Eta Iota Nu to the conceptualization of Embody, exemplifies the resilience, determination, and commitment to self-acceptance described by the study participants. Through this narrative, the chapter aims not just to inform, but to inspire a reimagined understanding of how we confront and overcome the deeply rooted issues of body dissatisfaction across generations.

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Appendix A

My daughter gets her eyes from her dad, hair colour from her grandmother; **I don't want to ever say that she gets her BODY DISSATISFACTION from her MOM**

Are you a mother who struggles with body dissatisfaction?

Have you ever thought or said something like this?

I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you are interested in talking to a researcher about your experience, please contact Isabel at ibrun@ucalgary.ca

Like mother, like daughter?

ibrun@ucalgary.ca

Appendix B

In line with hermeneutic inquiry, researchers do not follow a strict set of interview questions; instead, they allow the research conversation to unfold organically (Moules et. al, 2015).

Researchers may be guided by pre-determined interview questions; however, they must remain flexible in their use of guiding questions, as well as in their follow up probes and interpretations, to allow for the natural progression of the conversation to occur, while remaining topic focused.

Interview questions about intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters may include:

Tell me about your intentions to not pass down your body dissatisfaction to your daughter.

What motivated your decision to parent in this way?

In what ways have you followed through with this intention?

What would your daughter have to say about it?

What struggles have you encountered?

What successes have you had?

What is important for me to know, as a researcher, about your experience?

Appendix C

Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, & Email:

Isabel Brun, PhD Candidate, Werklund School of Education, ibrun@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew, Professor, Werklund School of Education, mkrussel@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Nancy Moules, Professor, Faculty of Nursing, njmoules@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Tanya Mudry, Assistant Professor, Werklund School of Education, mudryt@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project

Like Mother, Like Daughter? Understanding Maternal Experiences of Intending to End the Intergenerational Transmission of Body Dissatisfaction to Daughters

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our study is to better understand mothers' experiences of attempting to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. Understanding this topic from the previously unexplored perspective of mothers who struggle with body dissatisfaction has the potential to influence research and practice related to mother-daughter relationships and body image.

What does your participation look like?

We would like to have a conversation with you about your experience of intending to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters. We will be talking about things like what motivated you to parent in this way, how have you followed through with this intention, as well as what successes and challenges have you encountered related to your intentions. Altogether, in order to better understand maternal intentions of ending the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters, it is important for us to comprehend your personal experiences of this topic.

Participation in this study will involve participating in a one-on-one interview. We anticipate the interview will take about 1 hour. It will take place over the phone (at a time and number

convenient and prearranged) or in person (at a time and location convenient and prearranged). The conversation will be audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

It is possible that discussing intentions to end the intergenerational transmission of body dissatisfaction to daughters may be an emotional or anxious experience. As such, if you feel distressed at any point during the interview, please inform the interviewer. Suitable measures will be taken to address your distress (e.g., taking a break from the interview, terminating the interview, and/or referring you to the appropriate resources).

If partway through the interview you wish to stop, your request will be honoured and the interview will end immediately. Should you request that the data collected up until the point of withdraw be destroyed, it will not be used in the study. Otherwise, data collected to the point of withdrawal will be used. Consent may be withdrawn up until data analysis begins (typically one month after the interview).

No one except the researchers will have access to the data. Information from this study will not be made public in any form in which you personally can be identified as a participant.

Prior to the interview, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym. The name you choose will be used in transcripts and quotations in any publications and presentations to protect your anonymity and confidentiality.

The pseudonym I choose is: _____

The pseudonym I choose for my daughter(s) is(are): _____

What happens to the information you provide?

Anonymized data will be kept following the completion of the study for future analysis. All identifiable information will be stored in an encrypted password protected computer and/or in a locked filing cabinet of a locked office at the Werklund School of Education. Only summative anonymous results will be disseminated.

Data collected will be used by a graduate student to complete the dissertation portion of her degree requirements.

What are your rights?

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Please sign this form to indicate your consent to participate.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name (Please Print): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Graduate Researcher
Isabel Brun, MSc, PhD Candidate
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ibrun@ucalgary.ca

Graduate Research Supervisor
Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew, R. Psych.
403-220-8375
mkrussel@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at (403) 220-4283/220-6289; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Community Mental Health Resources (August 2019)

Clinical Services	Contact Information
University of Calgary Wellness Centre (counselling services for university students)	403-210-9355
Access Mental Health	403-943-1500
Calgary Counselling Centre	403-265-4980
Calgary Association of Self-Help	403-266-8711
Calgary Family Services	403-269-9888
Catholic Family Services	403-233-2360
Jewish Family Services	403-287-3510
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society	403-298-4111
Body Image and Eating Disorder Resources	Contact Information
National Eating Disorder Information Centre	1-866-633-4220
Distress and Crisis Resources	Contact Information
Emergency Services	Dial 911
Distress Centre	266-1605
Men's Line	266-HELP (4357)
Calgary Mental Health Crisis and Emergency Services Mobile Response Team	266-1605
Canadian Mental Health Association Suicide Services (available 8:30 am to 4:30 pm)	297-1744
Calgary Health Region Mental Health Line	943-1500
Organizations	Contact Information
Psychologists Association of Alberta (referrals)	1-888-424-0297
Canadian Mental Health Association (Calgary Office)	297-1700
Canadian Psychological Association	www.cpa.ca