MOTHER-DAUGHTER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT APPEARANCE:
BODY IMAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH JOINT PROJECTS

by

Emily L. Polak

B.A., Beloit College, 2003
M.A., University of Minnesota, 2008

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Abstract

In nearly two decades of research, objectification theory has provided a comprehensive sociocultural account of how women and girls internalize a sexually-objectified, critical lens of their bodies and appearance. Self-objectification and the associated behavioural and affective experiences of body surveillance and shame have been found to be related to a variety of mental health concerns for girls and women, including disordered eating, depression, and sexual risk-taking. While objectifying cultural messages are an omnipresent influence in body image development, there is evidence that the mother-daughter relationship has significant impact on this process. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how mothers and their adolescent daughters construct one another’s perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding their bodies and appearance, from the perspective of their joint, goal-directed actions. Using a case study design and the constructionist action-project method, the conversations about appearance and bodies of six mother-daughter dyads were analyzed. The daughters in these dyads were from 13 to 17 years old, representing pubertal onset, a turbulent time for navigating peer and media pressures. By tackling issues like make-up use, revealing clothing, cosmetic surgery, and athletic activities, these mother-daughter conversations and their individual recalled thoughts and feelings on viewing the video-playback of the conversation exhibited how both congruent and conflicting behaviors and values can be transferred within their relationships. Findings point to mother-daughter joints projects that range from mutual objectification, avoidance of vulnerability, to sharing values such as thinness or athleticism, and supporting one another with empathy. Action-project analysis of these
case studies revealed that many appearance-related projects were enacted within overarching identity and relationship projects. These cases provide evidence of the processes by which body image is socially constructed within the mother-daughter relationship.
Preface

The research reported in this study is original, unpublished work by the author, Emily L. Polak, and was conducted under the close supervision of Dr. Richard A. Young. The data collection and analysis reported in Chapters 3 and 4 were conducted with the assistance of a small team of volunteer research interviewers who were colleagues on another action-project study led by Dr. Young. These volunteers included Amy Green, M.A., Zhu Ma, M.A., Leah Wilson, M.A., and Aline Brauchli, M.A. This research was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board according to certificate number H10-03281.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii

Preface .................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents .................................................................................................. v

List of Tables .......................................................................................................... xii

List of Figures .......................................................................................................... xiii

List of Abbreviations .............................................................................................. xiv

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................. xv

Chapter 1 – Introduction ........................................................................................... 1
  Statement of the Problem .................................................................................... 1
  Social Context .................................................................................................... 4
  Defining Body Image .......................................................................................... 8
  Research Objective ............................................................................................. 9
  Overview ............................................................................................................. 11

Chapter 2 – Literature Review ................................................................................ 12
  The Study of Body Image .................................................................................. 13
  Body-Related Constructs ................................................................................. 15
  Cultural Considerations .................................................................................... 16
  Bio-psycho-social Development ...................................................................... 20
  Objectification Theory ....................................................................................... 25
  Objectification Theory Research ..................................................................... 28
  Mother-Daughter Communication .................................................................... 31

Gender and Identity Construction ......................................................................... 34
Presentation of the Findings........................................................................................................67
Within-Case Analysis..................................................................................................................68
  Pair 1 ...........................................................................................................................................68
    Interactional Pattern ................................................................................................................69
    Joint Project ..............................................................................................................................70
    Individual Projects ...................................................................................................................72
    Elaboration of Joint Project ......................................................................................................73
    Assertions .................................................................................................................................78
  Pair 2 ...........................................................................................................................................80
    Interactional Pattern ................................................................................................................81
    Joint Project ..............................................................................................................................82
    Individual Projects ...................................................................................................................84
    Elaboration of Joint Project ......................................................................................................84
    Assertions .................................................................................................................................90
  Pair 3 ...........................................................................................................................................92
    Interactional Pattern ................................................................................................................93
    Joint Project ..............................................................................................................................94
    Individual Projects ...................................................................................................................96
    Elaboration of Joint Project ......................................................................................................97
    Assertions .................................................................................................................................104
  Pair 4 .........................................................................................................................................107
    Interactional Pattern .................................................................................................................108
    Joint Project .............................................................................................................................109
Daughter’s Developmental Stage .................................. 156
Mother’s Confidence as Reinforcement ..................... 157
Nature of Mother-Daughter Relationship ................. 158
Mixed Messages Between Intentions and Action .......... 158
Relationship Ambivalence ..................................... 159
Internalized Standards for Beauty ............................ 159
Mutual Influence and Identification ......................... 160
Mothers Acting as Identity Agents ............................ 161
Daughters Acting as Identity Agents ......................... 161
Influence Associated with Identification ................... 162
Unique Processes ..................................................... 164
Distinct Coping Strategies for Objectification .......... 164
Relational Distress .................................................. 165
Distress for Pair 1 .................................................... 165
Distress for Pair 2 .................................................... 166
Adoptive Relationship ............................................. 167
Ethno-cultural Identity Development ....................... 168
Cross-Case Assertions ............................................. 169
Body Image in Mother-Daughter Relationship .......... 169
Body Image, Identity and Relationship ...................... 170
Mutual Investment and Impact of Body Image .......... 170
Modelling Body Image .............................................. 171
Chapter 5 – Discussion ..............................................................................................................174

Research Questions ..............................................................................................................174
Summary of the Findings ......................................................................................................175
Response to Research Problem ............................................................................................177

Illustration of Previous Findings .........................................................................................178

Pathways of Self-Objectification .........................................................................................178
Impact of Mother-Daughter Communication .................................................................180
Adolescent Development and Identification .......................................................................183

Novel Contributions to Understanding Body Image Development ...............................186

Body Image Co-Constructed in Mother-Daughter Relationships ................................186
Relationship and Identity ....................................................................................................187
Maternal Modelling and Incongruence ..............................................................................188

Theoretical Implications .....................................................................................................190

Contextual Action Theory ..................................................................................................190
Objectification Theory ........................................................................................................191

Methodological Implications ..............................................................................................193
Clinical Implications ..........................................................................................................194

Limitations of the Study ......................................................................................................199
Future Directions ................................................................................................................201
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................204

References ............................................................................................................................207

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster .......................................................................................227

Appendix B: Telephone Screening .....................................................................................228
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix C: Procedure Outline</th>
<th>230</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Consent Form</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Assent Form</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Follow-up Phone Interview</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G: Coding Dictionary</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H: Additional Follow-up Data</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1. Joint Projects by Pair ................................................................. 66
Table 2. Cross-Case Assertions by Pair ..................................................... 173
List of Figures

Figure 1. Procedural Timeline..................................................................................................................56
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Objectification Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Citation of mother participant in joint conversation or self-confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dtr</td>
<td>Citation of daughter participant in joint conversation or self-confrontation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Reference to citation from introductory interview</td>
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<td>CON</td>
<td>Reference to citation from joint conversation interview</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Reference to citation from individual self-confrontation interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Reference to the time of the joint conversation or self-confrontation citation</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every body is made with the intimate imprint of the familial body story (Orbach, 2009).

The vast majority of social science research on body image has focused on women, due to their elevated representation in clinical settings, and presentation with eating disorders (American Psychological Association, 2007). With 50% of American girls and young women reporting body dissatisfaction, it has reached normative levels (Grabe, Hyde & Ward, 2008). This ‘normative discontent’ is a core issue in Western women’s mental health, and has been found in girls as young as 7 years old. It is “one of the most robust risk factors for eating disorders… and a significant predictor of low self-esteem, depression, and obesity” (Grabe et al., p.460). Body image research has revealed that this type of dissatisfaction, as well as other body-related difficulties and disorders, are connected to objectifying cultural messages via self-objectification, and can also be transmitted between mothers and daughters (Grabe et al; Ogden & Steward, 2000; Roberts, 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013). The following in-depth examination of body image development within the mother-daughter relationship was conducted in an effort to further understand how mothers and daughters co-construct body image from a contextual action theoretical perspective. In pursuit of this goal, it is necessary to unpack the research problem and the ways the cultural context contributes to it. Subsequent sections of this chapter cover the definition of body image and explicate the research objectives.

Statement of the Problem

The literature on body image suggests that women and girls are susceptible for mental health concerns as they learn to self-objectify in cultures where the objectification of women and girls is socially sanctioned (Moradi & Huang, 2008, Tiggemann &
There is also evidence that parents, particularly mothers, may impact their daughter’s body image (Katz-Wise, Budge, Lindberg & Hyde, 2013; McKinley, 1999; Milkie, 1999). What is not yet clear is how body image evolves in the mother-daughter relationship within the objectifying North American cultural milieu. The extant research on body image and eating concerns has not yet clarified the processes by which mothers and daughters may jointly construct body image from goal-directed action.

Literature on the sexual objectification of women as it relates to body image difficulties, and some research on the communication of body image concerns within the mother-daughter relationship are described in the introduction of the research problem.

A fundamental concept in body image literature, self-objectification is based on objectification theory (OT; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). It characterizes the tendency for women and girls to view their bodies primarily from a critical observer’s perspective, which is learned through sexually objectifying experiences in cultures that sanction the sexual objectification of women’s bodies. Self-objectification has been found to be associated with the affective experiences of body shame and appearance anxiety which in turn are associated with disordered eating, depressed mood, impaired sexuality, reduced motivation, or ‘flow’ states, as well as a disconnection from internal states, like hunger and satiety; also referred to as interoceptive awareness (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Myers & Crowther, 2008; Tiggemann & Williams, 2013). Self–objectification is also related to decreases in both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008). Moreover, self-objectification, body shame and body surveillance are correlated with negative attitudes toward menstruation (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2005), breast-feeding (Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008), and menopause (McKinley & Lyon,
The internalization of an unrealistic thin ideal and body shame have been found to contribute to young women being less sexually assertive, and engaging in risky sexual behaviours (Impett, Schooler & Tolman, 2006; Schooler et al.).

While there is abundant research on the impact of media and peers on adolescent body image, there is also evidence that parents seem to influence the lenses through which their daughters view cultural standards for beauty, and accordingly, parents implicitly and explicitly impact many aspects of their daughter’s body image (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Daniluk, 1998; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Kichler & Crowther, 2001; McKinley, 1999; Neumark-Sztainer, Bauer, Friend, Hannan, Story, & Berge, 2010; Ogden & Steward, 2000; Roberts, 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013; Usmiani & Daniluk 1997). In a mixed methods study, Milkie (1999) surveyed 437 male and female adolescents about their media use and interviewed a subset of 60 adolescent girls to further explore their peer culture and values regarding media aimed at young women. This study found that even when girls acknowledged that a body type was unrealistic, they would strive for it if they believed that their parents preferred it. McKinley (1999) found that daughters’ body esteem was positively correlated to their perceptions of both parents’ approval of their mother’s appearance. The daughters’ perceptions of their fathers’ approval of their own appearance were associated with lower body shame. Their perceptions of their mothers’ approval of their own appearance were associated with lower body surveillance.

Additionally, research on disordered eating has shown that when mothers model body dissatisfaction or maladaptive eating attitudes and behaviours, they can significantly impact their daughters’ experience of similar concerns (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Kichler & Crowther, 2001).
Combined, these findings suggest that adolescent girls’ vulnerability for, or resilience to body image disturbance may be influenced by the processes of observing and interpreting the attitudes and behaviors of their parents. While children and adolescents may learn to identify with their parents’ values and behaviors for appearance via modelling (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), their parents may be attempting to teach them otherwise. Parents often send conflicting messages between the behaviours and values they prescribe and those they endorse in their own actions (Young, Logan, Lovato, Moffat, & Shoveller, 2005). Parents’ approaches to shaping their child’s body image are important to consider because, in addition to the potential for mixed messages between direct tuition and modelling, studies on mother-daughter communication about weight have suggested that comments about weight, instruction to diet, and especially teasing are associated with disordered eating (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010).

Social Context

When one looks at the broad North American picture, there are several interesting cultural trends that may be affecting women’s beliefs and behavior related to their bodies and appearance. Body size for models depicted in the media decreased dramatically in the 1980’s and 1990’s, while the frequency with which women’s bodies are objectified by the media has risen considerably (Sypeck, Gray & Ahrens, 2004). In short, the thin ideal has become thinner in recent decades, and the media has shown these thin bodies, more often. Similarly, the diet industry in the U.S. burgeoned since the 1970’s as of the last decade it became a nearly 60 billion dollar industry (Hareyan, 2007; Tribole & Resch, 1995). The growth of the diet industry has included a notable increase in media pressure to diet through commercials for both diet products and foods (Tribole & Resch).
Interestingly, the trend of increasing obesity in the U.S. parallels the growth of the diet industry, especially between the 70’s and the 90’s. It has been suggested in a variety of health disciplines that dieting does not lead to long term weight loss and may even lead to weight gain (Mann, Tomiyama, Westling, Lew, Samuels, & Chatman, 2007; Tribole & Resch, 1995). More specifically, a review of research on dieting provided evidence that one to two thirds of dieters regain more weight than they lost while dieting (Mann et al., 2007). As we are collectively shamed for our bodies with a bombardment of objectified images of thin or muscular ideals, and enticed to try different diet products and fads, the media’s use of bodies and the opportunistic diet industry may both be taking a toll on both our mental and physical health.

In recent years an increasing trend toward plus size models (Field, 2009) as well as more ethnic diversity represented among models has emerged (Membis, 2010). It seems plausible that these changes may reflect cultural progression toward more acceptance of body diversity, which could affect consumer behaviour, as well as individuals’ attitudes toward beauty. Changes in social ideals undoubtedly involve both the market and the consumer. However, much of the research reviewed in the following sections suggests that more than just the media influences women’s and girl’s body-related beliefs and behavior.

Another notable cultural change that has occurred in the last thirty or so years, and that could very well be affecting women’s experience of their bodies, is the more widespread acceptance of pornography (Leung, 2004). As technology has evolved, so too has the pornography industry. From magazines and videos, to cable television and the internet, pornographic images and films are more accessible than ever and have increasingly found their place in the privacy of viewers’ homes. In a report for “60
Minutes” from 2004 (as reviewed by Leung, 2004), Steve Kroft reported that Americans spent an estimated 10 billion dollars on adult entertainment. All the major cable operators such as Time Warner and DirecTV, as well as powerful subsidiaries like General Motors, are making millions from the lucrative pornography industry, but none of these companies were willing to discuss their involvement for this “60 Minutes” report (Leung, 2004).

It seems worthwhile to consider how the widespread availability of pornography, and the billion-dollar appetite for it, may be impacting our culture’s understanding of sex, sexuality and the female body. Despite the existence of blocks and controls that prevent children from being exposed to such pornographic material on the internet, it is plausible that they are still able to find ways to explore it. Regardless of whether young girls view pornography themselves, they are likely to be affected by it as their peers become more familiar with it. In a similar vein, in her chapter on the theoretical foundations of self-objectification, Roberts (2013a) offered an example of how sexual objectification is present in the day-to-day experience of children. She described the insidious nature of sexualized beauty ideals when she told a story of how her daughter’s beauty standards were impacted by Bratz dolls (i.e., a new generation of Barbie dolls that are similarly designed for young girls, but dressed in sexy clothing that one might associate with prostitution).

An additional North American cultural and economic trend is that cosmetic surgery has burgeoned in the last decade. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (2010), the total number of cosmetic procedures performed in 2009 increased by 69% since 2000. Cosmetic surgery is no longer an exclusive practice of the rich and famous. It is, however, a service that is sought by significantly more women than men. In the U.S.
women made up 91% of all cosmetic procedures in 2009, and this figure had not changed much since 2008 (ASPS, 2010). Slevec and Tiggemann (2010) studied body dissatisfaction, aging anxiety, media exposure and attitudes toward cosmetic surgery by surveying a sample of 108 women between 35 and 55 years old. The results from conducting a multiple regression analysis suggest that appearance investment, aging anxiety, and exposure to both television and magazine media predict endorsement of social motivations for cosmetic surgery. Moreover, they found that body dissatisfaction, appearance investment, and overall television exposure uniquely predicted actual consideration of surgery (Slevec & Tiggemann, 2010). These results are important to the proposed research as maternal body beliefs and behaviour seem to be very influential on daughters’ body beliefs and behaviour (Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Levine & Smolak, 2002; McKinley, 1999; Smolak, 2002; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997).

Could it be that women of all ages have become so preoccupied with the hyper-sexualized and thin ideals being sold to them by the beauty, fashion, pornography, and diet industries, that they are progressively becoming obsessed with appearance and losing touch with their bodies’ natural, balanced needs for food and exercise? The focus on dieting and fat has become a developmental issue, with children as young as 6 years old worrying about fat, dieting and increasingly being treated for eating disorders (Tribole & Resch, 1995). Another recent trend in consumerism that has insidiously targeted younger girls, likely affecting their body image, is an emphasis on sex appeal in clothing. Stores like Victoria’s Secret, Urban Outfitters, and Abercrombie & Fitch are profiting from adolescent girls’ desire to express an image through their appearance by turning symbols of girlhood into sex appeal (Lamb & Brown, 2006). In a review of clothing for younger
girls, Lamb and Brown (2006) describe the disappearance of a distinction between little
girl and pre-teen apparel, based on the tight, stretchy tank tops, miniskirts and other
revealing items, decorated in rhinestones and lace, that are made in girls’ sizes 4 – 16. It
may be the case that adolescent and young girls may be learning to adopt the cultural
preoccupation with the thin, sexualized ideal as a result of the objectifying nature of the
current available fashions.

While it seems that the media and marketing, as well as the influence of peers,
could significantly impact this body image learning process, this learning is also very
much driven by girls’ parents (Kaschak, 1992; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Lamb & Brown,
2006). Parents purchase their children’s clothing, as well as model body and appearance-
related behaviours. Given such pervasive cultural practices in sexual objectification,
standards for thinness, and evidence that parents can implicitly endorse such practices and
standards for themselves and their daughters, it seems critical that we learn more about the
role of parental beliefs and values in terms of daughters’ body image construction and self-
objectification.

**Defining Body Image**

Our lives depend on the substance and function of our bodies. However, as outlined
earlier, the space-occupying substance of the body can also be a source of constant
frustration, and even mental illness, for some. There are many biological, social, and
psychological factors that shape a person’s experience of their body (Daniluk, 1998).
Based on the numerous conceptualizations and assessments of body related concerns that
exist in the literature, it seems to be very difficult to characterize the individual and
changeable experience of one’s body. A commonly accepted definition of body image is
that it is a multidimensional construct consisting of one’s perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours regarding an individual’s physical appearance, as well as the impact that appearance has on one’s psychological and social health (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Grabe, Hyde & Ward, 2008). This inclusive definition captures the complexity of body image and its associated constructs. Because it attends to the varied underpinnings of the psychological experience of one’s body (e.g., perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours) it will serve as an overarching guide in the proposed research.

**Research Objective**

The purpose of this study was to examine how body image is constructed within the mother-daughter relationship. In addition to the abundant literature highlighting the ways in which women and girls struggle with body image concerns and disordered eating, there is also research that examines the ways parents are implicated in adolescent body image. The degree to which girls adopt cultural standards for beauty has been found to be mediated by the reflected appraisals of parents and peers (Milkie, 1999). A mixed methods, longitudinal study with 437 adolescents (boys and girls), and interviews with 60 girls, was conducted to examine the impact of reflected appraisals on 9th and 10th grade girls. Milkie (1999) found that, even when girls acknowledged that a body type was unrealistic, they would desire it, or strive for it, if they believed that their parents or peers (especially male peers) preferred it.

Research suggests that girls’ development of esteem for their bodies is influenced by their perception of both parents’ approval of their appearance (Kearney-Cooke, 2002, McKinley 1999). Girls can develop a tendency for shame and self-surveillance based on maternal modelling (McKinley 1999; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997). They may turn to dieting
and disordered eating in response to maternal pressures and appearance judgments (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Levinson, Powell, & Steelman, 1986; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010; Pike & Rodin, 1991). Thus, it appears through both social learning and explicit guidance, the family context provides a lens through which girls perceive and interpret socio-cultural messages about their bodies (Ogle & Damhorst, 2004). It seems that mothers in particular, may implicitly impact many aspects of their daughter’s body image (Katz-Wise et al., 2013; Ogden & Stewart, 2000; Pike & Rodin, 1991; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997). The primary objective of this research was to better understand the processes by which mothers and their adolescent daughters engage in goal-directed action to co-construct body image, which may include appearance-based ideals, objectifying attitudes, and tendencies toward body surveillance.

The literature regarding body image related concerns is expansive and predominantly comprised of quantitative studies based on the post-positivist paradigm. This literature contains numerous theoretical constructs and measures of women’s experiences of their bodies. Multiple studies have produced similar correlations and models using only slightly different constructs, definitions, and assessments. At the same time, there are many studies measuring the same, or similar, constructs with very mixed findings. Thus, an in vivo exploration of the interactive processes by which body image emerges and is maintained in the mother-daughter relationship, from a social constructionist epistemological lens, may further illustrate and clarify these previously defined constructs.
Overview

In this dissertation, the literature review of Chapter 2 includes an outline of the constructs and clinical concerns related to the body. The aims of this proposed study are further articulated in Chapter 2, through a discussion of the research on body image development, gender identity development, parent-adolescent interactions, and culture as they relate to objectification theory. In Chapter 3 the purpose and plan of this study are identified. The rationale for the use of the social constructionist action–project method (Young & Valach, 2000) is delineated through the examination of its philosophical and theoretical alignment with the research questions, and the procedure is outlined. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth account of the joint appearance-related projects enacted within each mother-daughter dyad as described through within-case analyses, as well as a review of the cross-case analysis which included the commonalities among the cases, the unique processes between them, and the overall cross-case assertions. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses how these cases illustrate previous research findings, and illuminates novel dimensions of body image development, and implications for theory. Limitations of the study and possible future directions are also considered in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature on body image is vast, with many different theoretical constructs related to the experience of the body that have emerged from a variety of disciplines. In the following chapter the literature on body image is first understood broadly, and then subsequent sections focus on specific issues pertinent to the present study. The first section considers the different disciplines, perspectives, and methodologies drawn upon to examine body image. The next section organizes the many body image constructs that have been conceptualized and measured into three main categories. This is followed by a review of cultural considerations that highlights research on the experience of the body for people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as from different parts of the world. A section on biopsychosocial development provides a summary of the many biological, psychological and social influences on body image over the lifespan. Further sections on objectification theory (OT), and OT research, outline this prominent conceptualization in body image literature, which draws connections between socio-cultural forces and one’s experience of one’s body. Then, post-positivist research on mother-daughter communication about issues of body and appearance is explicated in further consideration of the ways body image is socialized. Within this section on communication, subsections on theory and research pertinent to learning, gender identity development, and issues of agency and influence within the parent-adolescent relationship build the case for a social constructionist perspective. Finally, a section on contextual action theory explicates the theoretical foundation of this study as it provides a unique framework from which to explore and further understand the social and cultural nature of body image. This chapter concludes with an articulation of the research questions.
The Study of Body Image

Social psychological, and even sociological and communications literature have examined how numerous social forces like culture, religion, media, peers and the family influence a person’s experience of their body (Frederickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge 1998; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Milkie, 1999; Ogle & Damhorst, 2004; Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). In developmental psychology there have been many studies, especially longitudinal designs, of how body concerns develop over time and through different aspects of human development like puberty, sexuality, reproduction and health. This literature addresses the developmental span from early childhood to puberty and adolescence, a period which seems to be a primary focus, and on to adulthood and the later years (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008; Levine & Smolak, 2002; McKinley, 1999, 2006; Schooler, 2008; Smolak, 2002, Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001).

There is also an obvious and significant platform for the study of body image in health psychology where the experience of the body is understood in combination with a person’s health related behaviours like eating, dieting, sexuality, participation in athletic activities, and rehabilitation from illness and injury (Grogan, 2006; Pruzinsky & Cash 2002; Rybarczyk & Behel, 2002). Some recent findings within health psychology are particularly salient in the rationale for the present study, and offer guidance for counselling interventions. In a review of epidemiological data on families, eating and weight concerns, Neumark-Sztainer (2005) found that family communication and meals are vehicles for the transmission of influential and sometimes harmful messages about the body. Moreover, Neumark-Sztainer and colleagues (2010) have shown that parents’ weight related comments, dieting behaviours, and family weight teasing may contribute to disordered
eating in adolescents. Specifically, mother dieting was associated with girls’ endorsement of unhealthy and extreme weight control behaviours. Parent weight talk was also linked to their daughters’ disordered eating, and weight teasing was associated with a higher BMI, body dissatisfaction, unhealthy and extreme weight control behaviours and binge eating with loss of control for adolescent girls. She suggested that research findings can contribute to strategies like enhancing communication and modelling healthful behaviours to guide parents in the prevention of weight or eating problems in their children and adolescents (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005; Neumark-Sztainer, Bauer, Friend, Hannan, Story & Berge, 2010).

Additionally, the experience of the body has been researched from within the medical model by neuroscientists (Orbach, 2009). In recent years, psychologists have included neurological research in developing their understanding of body image, as the neural pathways forming our emotional and physical experience of, and reaction to, our bodies have been found to be shaped in infancy and early childhood (Crucianelli, Metcalf, Fotopoulou & Jenkinson, 2013; Orbach, 2009; Rizzolati, 2005; Rizollati, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2001).

Finally, feminist research has been a catalyzing force in the examination of body concerns. Feminist literature on this topic is expansive, with papers and books focusing on theory, social and developmental influences, and clinical issues (Bordo, 1989; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Orbach, 2009). Both feminist and counselling literatures examine the ways body concerns are correlated with mental health concerns, as well as the prevention and treatment of disorder (Bowling, Zimmermann, & Daniels, 2000; Bradford & Petrie, 2008; Grabe, Hyde & Lindberg, 2007; Grabe, Hyde & Ward, 2008; Neumark-
Sztainer 2005; Troisi, et al., 2006). It is important to note that the consideration of social influences on various aspects of body image is threaded throughout the research of each of these disciplines, illuminating the significant social nature of body related constructs. The body-oriented research from social, developmental, health and feminist psychology, as well as from the neurosciences has significance for counselling psychology as it contributes to our understanding of the origins, influences, and remediation of body difficulties and eating disorders.

**Body Related Constructs.** As the experience of the body has been studied from many different disciplines, a multiplicity of different operational constructs has emerged over time in various efforts to understand and measure women’s and men’s perceptions and experiences of their bodies. In order to fully appreciate the dynamic nature of body image, it is necessary to consider the fragmented lenses that have contributed to its conceptualization. According to a meta-analysis by Grabe, Hyde and Ward (2008), body-related psychological constructs can be organized into four larger descriptive categories. The first category is *body dissatisfaction* which reflects a continuum from satisfaction to dissatisfaction representing an individual’s subjective and global evaluation of his or her body. The second category of measurement, referred to as *body consciousness and self-objectification*, represents the distorted cognitive schemas that occur with a preoccupation on the body, and the adoption of an observer’s perspective of one’s body. The third category, *the internalization of thin ideals*, characterizes the degree to which one incorporates the socio-cultural appearance ideals into their own goals or standards. Finally, the fourth category proposed by Grabe and colleagues, is the *behavioural* category, which identifies the various disordered eating (binging, restraining, dieting), purging and exercise
behaviours related to the psychological experience of the body, as well as the beliefs and attitudes a person has about these behaviours. Because there are so many theoretical constructs, and the scope of their assessments is so multifaceted, it is useful to organize them within these overarching categories. The experience of the body as conceptualized within the category of *self-objectification*, and manifested through body surveillance has been particularly informative to the present study. As described in Chapter 1, the experience of self-objectification poses unique risks to women’s and girls’ mental health – risks that will be further delineated in subsequent sections.

**Cultural Considerations**

The definition of culture embraced in the present study is informed by contextual action theory as it constitutes the basis of the action-project method implemented. Contextual action theory has a holistic, social and dimensional conceptualization of human behavior; its authors adopt Boesch’s definition of culture as a “field of action” (as cited in Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007, p.9), suggesting that action informs culture and culture informs action. This definition coalesces well with the social psychological perspective of OT on how Western culture impacts gendered experience (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). According to the tenets of OT, rigid standards of beauty and the culturally sanctioned objectification of women lie at the foundation of women’s self-objectification. The role of culture, as communicated via Western television media, in a girl’s body image development was made blatant in a very well-known mixed methods study on eating behaviours and exposure to television. ‘The Fiji study’ has informed the area of body research about the impact of the media on body image and disordered eating (Becker, Burwell, Gilman, Herzog & Hamburg, 2002). The researchers assessed the impact of the
introduction of prolonged exposure to television, on disordered eating for a media-naïve population of adolescent girls in Fiji. This study had a prospective cross-sectional design that compared 2 waves of Fijian schoolgirls. The first sample of 63 girls from Grades 5 -7 was examined with mixed methods, using both interviews and surveys, in 1995, within a few weeks of the introduction of television, and the second sample of 65 girls from Grades 5 - 7 was tested in 1998. Fiji was selected due to its minimal incidence of eating disorders and lack of exposure to television until mid-1995. Participants completed the Eating Attitudes Test (Garner et al., 1982). Some additional survey questions about their beliefs regarding their own and others’ weight and size were added to the second wave questions. A purposive sample of participants with a range of disordered eating and behaviours as well as television viewing habits participated in open ended semi-structured interviews on their attitudes and practices around weight and dieting, compared to local tradition (Becker et al., 2002).

The results demonstrate a significant increase in the prevalence of disordered eating and self-induced vomiting to lose weight following exposure to television (Becker et al., 2002). Moreover the ‘narrative data’ exhibited that the girls had admiration for the characters seen on television and had explicit interest in emulating them. Of the 30 purposively sampled interview participants, 83% thought that television influenced themselves or their friends to think differently about, or want to change their bodies, and 72% said that it had influenced their body image. Additionally, 30% described their desire to lose weight as a means of improving career prospects or being valued at home (Becker et al., 2002). These findings are of considerable consequence in that they depict fairly clear changes in individual values, possibly reflecting a larger cultural change, after just 3 years.
of prolonged television exposure. Considering the interdependent asymmetry in the parent-child relationship (Kuczynski & Lollis, 2004), and the ways parents can serve as cultural monitors for their children it would be interesting to understand the role they may have played in their daughters’ interpretation of their new experiences with television and Western culture.

In a previously mentioned social psychological study of girls’ social comparisons and reflected appraisals in regard to mass media, Milkie (1999) used mixed methods to survey 210 girls from grades 9 and 10, and then interview a subsample of 60. She found that the impact of the thin ideal depends on girls’ perceptions of the preferences of their parents, and peers. An interesting cultural difference emerged between racial groups in this study. The African American girls who believed that African American males preferred larger women were less affected by the thin ideal in the mass media, in this case suggesting that cultural differences associated with race may provide a buffer for the internalization of the thin ideal (Milkie, 1999). There is burgeoning literature examining differences in body related concerns among different ethnic groups. The intertwining influences of ethnicity and cultural ideals were illustrated in a study of body image and television viewing habits among 81 Latina adolescents, ages 11 to 17, in the U.S. The findings suggest that acculturation to the privileged, White, North American beauty standards was associated with a decline in body satisfaction related to media consumption (Schooler, 2008). Interestingly, the girls who watched more television oriented to the Black community had higher levels of body satisfaction (Schooler, 2008). In a quantitative study, Rogers, Wood, and Petrie (2010) hypothesized that the internalization of white beauty ideals would heighten body image concerns which in turn, would increase internalization in a reciprocal
process, increasing over time. They had 322 African American women from five different universities complete measures on racial identity, societal pressures for thinness, internalization of beauty ideals, body image concerns and disordered eating. Women who endorsed higher levels of racial identification had lower levels of internalization of the thin ideal. The more these women experienced societal pressures for thinness, the more they expressed internalization of ideals, as well as body image concerns. Moreover, the participants with higher levels of internalization of ideals and body image concerns were also more likely to disclose disordered eating. These findings build on the earlier studies as they provide further evidence that African Americans do experience body image concerns and disordered eating, and that racial identity may mediate the degree to which these difficulties emerge.

Further clarity of the role of racial identity can be found in the following grounded theory study that examined the role played by racial identity in the development of disordered body image (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). These researchers conducted focus groups, and individual interviews with 78 African American girls between the ages of 9 and 18. This study was also longitudinal in the sense that respondents were often interviewed multiple times over several months, making it possible for them to expand on their feelings and experiences. The data were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1995), which is inductive in that concepts and themes are derived from the data (Hesse-Biber et al. 2004).

Hesse-Biber and colleagues (2004) found that racial identity development served to protect African American girls from the thin ideal promoted in the media. The Black community was described as more egalitarian in their beauty standards. “Thick women”
(Hesse-Biber et al., p. 55) were desirable and beauty was more a matter of presentation and character than weight. Importantly, mothers and fathers of the participants in this study were both described as encouraging girls to value their appearance. Mothers played a particularly significant role in bolstering their daughters’ self-esteem through the process of ‘armoring’ them against the racist or oppressive attitudes of the white culture. This ‘armoring’ process also facilitated their disregard for the thin ideal. The one area that was a source of self-consciousness for these girls was hair and skin color. With respect to these two features, the girls seemed to harbor insecurities about not reaching the socially valued attributes (i.e. lighter complexion and long soft hair). The results from this study provide further perspective on the ways race is understood and enacted in different socio-cultural contexts, and how it may affect the degree to which young girls internalize unrealistic beauty ideals. Even more important to the present research, the girls in this study were more affected by their parents’ supportive values than by the mainstream ideals, placing emphasis on the need to understand how body image ideals are communicated within the mother-daughter relationship.

**Biopsychosocial Development**

As suggested by its complex definition, body image intertwines biological, psychological, and social elements and can be understood from the combination of these perspectives. Body image has been characterized as having both core and fluid dimensions (Daniluk, 1998). From infancy through childhood girls develop a set of perceptions about their bodies which serve as a core body image, and which is revised in light of the physical and sexual changes of puberty. The fluid aspects of body image reflect the lived, day-to-day experience girls have with their bodies, which are particularly affected by external
messages from culture, peers and parents, as well as by their physical health and body (Daniluk, 1998).

According to her clinical work and review of neuroscientific research, Orbach (2009) described how certain aspects of body image are likely formed in infancy and can be central in psychological development as well as disorder. Orbach (2009) cited neuroscientific research by Rizzolatti and colleagues that essentially described how we learn to inhabit our bodies by imitating action as navigated by our mirror neuron system. Thus, the ability to move one’s body, an arguably important aspect of our body image, begins before one can remember and is likely notably impacted by early caregiving (Orbach, 1999; Rizzolatti et al., 2001). Interestingly, recent neuroscientific study has produced evidence that the coding of the self as spatially situated within the human body is associated with brain activity in the temporoparietal junction (TPJ), and the extrastriate body area (EBA; Arzy, Thrut, Mohr, Michel & Blanke, 2006). The TPJ also codes for several aspects of self-processing like agency, self-other distinction and mental body imagery. The EBA has been shown to respond to images of the human body, and body parts, as well as to imagined and executed movements (Arzy et al, 2006).

In further support of Orbach’s (2009) theory about body image transference in early childhood, research has established the relevance of early attachment, and affectionate touch, in our experience of our bodies as adolescents and adults (Rodgers, 2012). In her dissertation research, Sira (2003) found that females’ attachment to mother and satisfaction with physical appearance were positively associated. Also, in a study of adult attachment and subclinical eating disorders, Derhy-Snijders (2007) found that women with insecure attachment styles had lower appearance control beliefs and more body shame than women.
who endorsed more secure attachment patterns. Furthermore, the vital role of touch in the secure mother-infant attachment has been clarified in clinical research. Nurturing touch is necessary for infant thriving (Feldman, Weller, Sirota & Eidelman, 2002) and is inherent to many aspects of basic infant care such as feeding, changing, bathing (Sullivan, Perry, Sloan, Kleinhaus & Burtchen, 2011). Recent neuroscientific studies of touch have built upon our understanding of the brain’s internal spatial image of the body by elucidating the role of motor and tactile neurons (Duke Medicine News and Communications, 2013; Maravita, Spence & Driver, 2003). Light affective touch has been found to contribute to body ownership via interoceptive signals (Crucianelli, Metcalf, Fotopoulou & Jenkinson, 2013). Safe and nurturing touch of a caregiver is essential in infant survival and secure attachment, and it appears to literally shape body image on a neurological level. These findings reflect initial steps toward a more intricate understanding of how our brains bridge our perceptions of our primary caregivers, and the world around us, with our internal experience of our bodies.

Body image development in childhood continues to be shaped by biologically based factors like height, size, skin colour, and temperament, as well as sociocultural influences from parents, siblings, peers, the media and the toys with which children play (Smolak, 2002). Body Mass Index (BMI) is posited to be an indirect factor that operates through social psychological factors. Certain characteristics of temperament like susceptibility for depression or anxiety may predispose a child to be more vulnerable to body image disturbances and eating disorders as the body may become a source of anxiety and efforts to control the body can be a coping strategy for difficult emotions. Parents impact body image development through their children’s clothing, nutrition, and comments
on their weight, exerting an influence that appears to be related to body dissatisfaction. Moreover, some research suggests that parents affect their children’s body image through modelling their own weight concerns or dieting struggles (Kichler & Crowther, 2001; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010; Smolak, 2002).

Although peers are less influential in early elementary school, social comparison is still a factor at that age, allowing children to be aware of both the negative stereotypes associated with being overweight and how they measure up (Smolak, 2002). Similarly, teasing from peers and siblings has been clearly related to body dissatisfaction and weight concerns (Smolak, 2002). In addition, teasing can reinforce the culturally sanctioned objectification of particular attributes of the female body. Thus, it can resemble sexual harassment. This objectifying evaluation has been found to be negatively associated with body esteem for girls only (Smolak, 2002). As mentioned earlier, weight related teasing within the family is also linked to higher BMI, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating for adolescent girls (Neumark-Sztainer, Bauer, Friend, Hannan, Story & Berge, 2010). In a review of body image patterns in childhood, Linda Smolak (2004) describes how there is a pronounced gender difference whereby girls are much more worried about fat. This dissatisfaction stems from the fact that they are more likely to judge themselves as fat even when they are average or under-weight. There have been some studies that suggest body esteem becomes more stable in adolescence, but the evidence is conflicting and based on small, limited samples. Therefore, it is still unclear when exactly body image becomes stable (Smolak, 2004).

Adolescence is a crucial stage in the development of female appearance-based identity because it is when peers and parents exert the greatest influences on gender role
adherence and embodied meaning (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Kaschak, 1992; Roberts, 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013). Given pubertal development, and the significant identity development that occurs during adolescence, gender identity development is implicated in adolescent body image development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Roberts 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013). In “The Invisible Woman,” Jane Ussher (1989) described how when girls reach menarche in Western cultures, they are taught about the biology of their reproductive cycle and the importance of feminine hygiene, while simultaneously being encouraged to be proud of their womanhood, creating a paradox of pride and secrecy. What they learn about their bodies is devoid of personal meaning and social context, perpetuating their experiences of shame and confusion (Ussher, 1989).

Daniluk (1998) explicates that adolescence is a time of particular struggle for girls because their body development physically requires weight gain, but cultural standards of beauty demonstrate an ideal figure that represents the thinnest 5% of the population. This discrepancy between real and ideal likely explains why adolescence is the period of conflict and for the genesis of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

It appears that young women struggle with difficulties related to body and appearance as they enter into adulthood, but that this changes over the course of adult development. Emerging adult women perceive more negative messages about their bodies than do men (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2009). A 10-year longitudinal study examined objectified body consciousness, body esteem and weight related attitudes and behaviours for two cohorts of women: 74 middle-aged, and 72 young women. It was found that women endorsed more body surveillance and shame as undergraduates than they did 10 years later (McKinley, 2006). These same participants’ body esteem increased over time as
well. These findings are consistent with an age-related change model. Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) conducted a cross-sectional study the body images of 322 women between the ages of 20 and 84 years. They found that body dissatisfaction remained relatively stable, but that self-objectification, habitual body monitoring, appearance anxiety and eating disorder symptomatology significantly decreased over time (Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Given the gradual improvements in women’s experience of their body it would be valuable to understand body image concerns in adolescence, and whether they correspond to identity development.

Reproductive health events are also intertwined with women’s body image. As described earlier, self-objectification, body shame and body surveillance are correlated with negative attitudes toward menstruation (Schooler et al., 2005), breast-feeding (Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008), and menopause (McKinley & Lyon, 2008). Overall, it appears that some dissatisfaction lingers with age, but as the age-related change model suggests, developmental priorities shift and lead to decreases in many body-related difficulties (Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001; McKinley, 2006). This information places emphasis on the value of studying young girls’ experiences. As the research suggests, later childhood and adolescence are a crucial period for the development of body related concerns that carry over into early adulthood, and may have some impact on later adult development, especially with reproductive events (Daniluk, 1998; Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008; McKinley & Lyon, 2008).

**Objectification Theory**

Objectification theory (OT, Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) might be said to fall within a post-positivist philosophy of science as it was developed and initially tested from
a social psychological perspective. Due to its theoretical focus on, and empirical support for, the social and cultural influences on body image, it could be argued that OT has a significant conceptual overlay with social constructionism, and therefore supports the rationale for further body image research from a social constructionist framework. OT was developed in the late 1990’s as social psychologists Barbara Frederickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997) reviewed and compiled theory and psychological research from feminist, social, developmental, and clinical perspectives. They built upon the philosophy of Bordo and Foucault, the cultural anthropological views of E. Martin, the sociological views of K. Martin and Shilling, as well as the work of hundreds of psychology researchers and theorists, some of the more prominent being Karen Horney, Carol Gilligan, Janet Shibley Hyde, Ellyn Kaschak, and Jane Ussher. The resulting conceptualization seeks to explain the bodily and psychological experiences for women and girls of living in cultures where females are sexually objectified.

OT posits that heterosexually saturated cultures have evolved a socially sanctioned objectification of women. Sexual objectification is defined as the separation of a woman’s body, body parts, or sexual functions from her person, reducing them to the status of mere instruments, or regarding them as if they were capable of representing her. The authors stated that sexual objectification occurs in many conditions including sexual violence, harassment, or being subjected to others’ evaluative gaze. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) describe sexually objectifying gazes as being insidious because they are culturally accepted and subtle, but demeaning. Beyond being accepted, the sexual objectification of women is maintained and omnipresent in the media. OT theorists cite relevant research findings that women are objectified more than men in every form of visual media and communication.
Moreover, they describe how sexual objectification is particularly an issue for women of color, with media representations of black women focusing more on their bodies such that they have the least facial prominence of all groups.

Objectification is hypothesized to be internalized as females are socialized to self-objectify, which is thought to lead to both habitual body monitoring, or body surveillance, and a set of subjective experiences that might be necessary to consider in understanding the psychology of women (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). This process of internalization is aligned with the core social psychological view of self, that an individual’s sense of self is a construct that reflects the ways that others view and treat the individual. Frederickson and Roberts cite Cooley as capturing this idea with the phrase “looking-glass self.” This process is epistemologically and theoretically aligned with social constructionism. The OT authors describe research findings supporting this concept that physical appearance is the most important domain contributing to children and adolescents’ sense of self-worth. Women’s body image satisfaction is most positively related to their sense of self. For women, positive self-concept is related to perceived physical attractiveness whereas for men it is based on perceptions of physical effectiveness (Frederickson & Roberts).

This self-objectification occurs through two routes: the first is the more indirect and insidious sense of objectification through interaction and objectifying cultural images, and the second is the direct experience of abuse and sexual victimization through rape, battering, incest or harassment. OT proposes that through these two routes of internalized objectification women are more vulnerable to deleterious mental health outcomes. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) theorized that self-objectification contributes to experiences of shame, anxiety, limited awareness of bodily states, and limited peak
motivational states. They proposed that self-objectification and these related experiences lead to the development of depression, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction. At the same time, they also acknowledge that women’s experiences with self-objectification and the related consequences vary both among women, and individually over time, depending on socialization and contextual factors. These OT postulates have been supported in research that is described in the following section.

**Objectification Theory Research**

In a quantitative examination of the role played by sexually objectifying experiences in the internalization of standards of beauty and eating disorder symptomatology, Moradi, Dirks and Matteson (2005) surveyed 221 undergraduate and graduate women on their experiences of sexual objectification, attitudes toward appearance, body surveillance, body shame, and eating attitudes. They found that the internalization of beauty standards, self-objectification manifested as body surveillance, and body shame mediated the link between objectifying experiences and eating disorder symptoms. Self-objectification manifested as body surveillance describes the act of consistently measuring oneself against an internalized or cultural standard, and is comprised of both cognitive (i.e. self-objectifying thoughts and beliefs about own appearance) and behavioural components (e.g. surveillance or evaluation of one’s own body or appearance). The authors describe body shame as the emotion resulting from measuring oneself against such a standard and perceiving that it cannot be met. These findings suggest that self-objectification manifested as body surveillance represents the process by which sexually objectifying experiences become internalized and psychologically significant (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005).
Similarly, a study of body objectification and depression in adolescence by Grabe, Hyde and Lindberg (2007) also found that self-surveillance predicted negative consequences of self-objectification. In this study, 299 participants, 158 female, from 5th and 7th grades, were surveyed on self-surveillance, body shame, rumination and depressive symptoms. Girls reported higher levels of surveillance, shame, rumination, and depression than boys. Self-surveillance predicted general rumination which may indicate a tendency toward seeking control, but feeling powerless. Lastly, self-objectification and its related consequences were already present in girls as young as 11 years old. These results, specifically regarding the cognitive process of rumination, suggest that girls’ psychological investment in appearance increases their vulnerability for depression (Grabe, Hyde, & Lindberg, 2007).

OT research has produced hundreds of studies, many of which were reviewed and critiqued by Moradi and Huang (2008). They evaluated studies by methodology, summarized the findings, and reported them by the following groups: self-objectification and its posited consequences, sexually objectifying experiences as a purported precursor, and disconnection from bodily functions. The authors identified several pathways between constructs. Firstly, sexually objectifying experiences have been generally supported to be related to both the internalization of cultural standards of beauty, and self-objectification. Secondly, the internalization of cultural standards has a strong association with self-objectification and greater body shame. Thirdly, self-objectification has also been found to significantly correspond to greater body shame, as well as greater appearance anxiety, reduced flow experiences and task performance, lower internal bodily awareness, and a disconnection from bodily experiences. Of those consequences, body shame was more
generally supported as being a factor in eating disorder symptomatology, depressive
symptomatology, as well as disconnection from body functions (Moradi & Huang, 2008).

In a more recent evaluation of OT, Tiggemann and Williams (2012) tested the
specific mediational pathways between multiple constructs associated with self-
objectification. Their findings provided additional support and clarification for the
pathways proposed by OT as the cognitive experience of self-objectification was primarily
associated with the behavioural experience of body surveillance, which in turn was
associated with the affective experiences of body shame and appearance anxiety.
Furthermore, their analysis revealed that these affective experiences of the shame and
anxiety were significantly associated with disordered eating, and depressed mood.
Appearance anxiety was also associated with impaired sexual functioning.

The growing body of research on OT has reinforced its theoretical
conceptualizations and suggests the need for changes at the societal level, as well as
strategies for reducing psychological distress on the individual level. Also, these findings
illuminate the overlap and interrelationships among several body constructs. Given the
aforementioned research describing how daughters seem to learn to body esteem or
dissatisfaction from their parents’ attitudes about their daughter’s and their own bodies, it
seems logical that parents would affect their daughters’ ability to navigate sexually
objectifying experiences. Perhaps parents and daughters influence one another’s
experience of, and attitudes toward bodies and the objectifying milieu, contributing to the
development of healthful or maladaptive beliefs and behaviours.
Mother-Daughter Communication

The research and theory related to body image and identity outlined thus far in this chapter suggest that parents can have a notable impact on children’s and adolescents’ body image development (Daniluk, 1998; Kaschak, 1992; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Levine & Smolak, 2002; McKinley, 1999; Smolak, 2002; Ussher, 1989). Although studies suggest that mothers are both role models and important sources of information regarding body comfort and acceptance, many mothers also often have difficulty communicating with their daughters about menstruation and sex (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Daniluk, 1998; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010; Ogden & Stewart, 2000; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997; Ussher, 1989). In many cases, mothers inadvertently reinforce unrealistic standards of beauty because they themselves are acting complicity on their own internalized standards (Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997; Ussher, 1989). An example of this can be found in the tendency for women, including mothers and daughters, to bond over activities that are centered on appearance management, like applying make-up, trying on clothes, or getting their nails done (Kaschak, 1992). When mothers are critical of their own bodies, daughters identify with this behaviour (Kearney-Cooke, 2002).

It is important to note that although this dissertation, like much of the literature on body image, focuses on the role of mothers in body image, fathers are also important in adolescent girls’ body image. Fathers can be a source of support and attention regarding their daughters’ maturation. Fathers’ reactions to their daughters’ bodies and appearance can shape the daughters’ feelings about both their bodies and becoming women. Fathers are in a unique position to contribute to their daughters’ body esteem as they are one of the few men in a girl’s life who can offer non-sexual approval of her appearance. Fathers’
ideals and attitudes towards women’s bodies in general, as well as towards their daughters’ bodies, can influence their daughters’ body image in positive and negative ways (Kearney-Cooke, 2002). This social learning is also affected by their relationship, as fathers can either be controlling or distance themselves from their daughters’ changing bodies and emerging sexuality (Daniluk, 1998).

To date, there are some empirical studies using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, mostly within a post-positivist perspective, that examine the communication between mothers and adolescent daughters about bodies (Benninghoven, Tetsch, Kunzendorf, & Jantschek, 2007; Cooley, Toray, Wang, & Valdez, 2007; Hesse-Biber, Howling, Leavy, & Lovejoy, 2004; McKinley, 1999; McKinley, 2006; Ogle & Damhorst, 2004; Phares, Steinberg & Thompson, 2004; Rodgers, Paxton & Chabroi, 2009), but there do not appear to be any studies that use a constructivist perspective to specifically examine the transmission of values and behaviours related to body image between mothers and their adolescent daughters. The research on parent-daughter communication about bodies has focused on how parents, mostly mothers, communicate to their adolescent daughters about weight (Abraczinskas, Fisak & Barnes, 2012; Kichler & Crowther, 2001; Ogden & Stewart, 2000) menstruation (Cooper & Koch, 2007; Lee, 2008), or sexuality (Fox & Inazu, 1980; O’Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001, Pluhar & Kuriloff, 2004).

There have been a number of studies identifying associations between mothers’ and daughters’ body image in an effort to clarify the roles of communication and modelling. Modelling is a term used in social learning theory that characterizes the process by which a person learns behaviours, attitudes and values by observing them (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The tenets of social learning theory have recently been embraced in the
development of a sociocultural theory of body image development, which considers the impact of beauty standards conveyed by the media, as well as the influences of modelling and explicit messages from family and peers (Rodgers, 2012). However, there are conflicting results about the impact of modelling. In an examination of various influences on body image, McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001), found that media influences to alter weight, as well as feedback from mother, father, and peers, were greater for females than males. In a study of self-objectification in the mother-adolescent relationship, Katz-Wise and colleagues (2013) placed emphasis on adolescents’ experience of individuation from mother moreso than on identification with mother, because they did not find evidence for modelling when they compared body surveillance scores. Interestingly, within the same study the authors had potentially conflicting results as maternal endorsement of body shame was associated with heightened body surveillance in their adolescent offspring. Additionally, adolescents who positively rated the quality of their relationship with their mother also endorsed higher body esteem and lower body shame. These results suggest that the quality of the mother-adolescent relationship, and the mother’s attitudes about her own body, may be more impactful on her children than the behaviours she models. It will therefore be valuable to further explicate how mothers and daughters engage with one another with regard to appearance and body image.

In the development and evaluation of a composite measure of parental influence, Abraczinskas and colleagues (2012) found that both direct influence and modelling from parents were significantly associated with daughters’ eating disturbance. This association was strong even when the media and peer influence were statistically controlled. Additionally, modelling was specifically associated with body shape dissatisfaction for the
daughters (Abraczinskas et al., 2012). In Kichler and Crowther’s (2001) study of maternal modelling and communication within families, they found that mothers’ modelling dissatisfaction, dieting or maladaptive eating was particularly impactful on their daughters’ maladaptive eating attitudes and body dissatisfaction in families where communication was generally more negative in general.

Another study of communication within the mother-daughter relationship found that weight concerns were partly explained by the quality of the mother-daughter relationship (Ogden & Steward, 2000). More specifically, these researchers found that when mothers held low beliefs about their own autonomy, their daughters would endorse more dieting. Also, mothers’ low belief in their own, and their daughter’s autonomy, and higher belief in projection, that is enmeshment with daughter, were associated with heightened body dissatisfaction for their daughters.

A study by Usmiani and Daniluk (1997) revealed further complexity in the interaction of mother-daughter relationship dynamics with body image, self-esteem and gender identity. In this research, regression analyses suggested that menstrual status impacted the association between gender identity and body image. Higher degrees of femininity were associated with more positive body image for pre-menstrual daughters, as well as for mothers of menstrual daughters, whereas for daughters who had already reached menstrual status positive body image was associated with masculinity (Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997). These findings point to the interplay of the significant developmental differences between mothers and daughters, as well as the complexity of gender identity.

**Gender and Identity.** By representing the overlay between actual physical bodies (e.g., sex, size, ability) and corresponding, central features of identity (e.g., gender,
appearance, self-esteem), core body image is inherently tied to both gender and identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Cash, Ancis, & Strachan, 1997; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Piran & Cormier, 2005; Roberts, 2013b; Wolf, 1991). Many psychological and sociological theories characterize the process of gender identity development including psychodynamic conceptualizations, cognitive developmental theory, social construction, as well as social comparison, looking glass, and objectification theories (Bem, 1983; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Eagly, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Roberts, 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013). While each of these theories provides a valuable perspective on the processes by which gender identity develops, some are more empirically supported and relevant to the focus of this study.

Regarding body image and identity, Kearney-Cooke (2002) summarized prior research in a characterization of two important processes by which girls learn about their bodies from their parents. These processes are internalization, in which parents shape their daughter’s experience and understanding of her body through modelling, feedback and instruction; and secondly, identification, in which the daughter identifies with and incorporates her mother’s body image into her own. This learning happens continuously throughout a girl’s development, but adolescence is a particularly salient period, as it is marked by heightened strain between daughters and their parents (Kearney-Cooke, 2002).

Since the literature on body image has placed emphasis on the concepts of identification and internalization, some foundational psychodynamic concepts related to identification will be reviewed, as well as the process of internalization as it relates to the social cognitive theory on gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).
The processes of attachment in early development, as outlined earlier in Orbach’s (2009) conceptualization of infant body image development, represent the early stages of identification within psychodynamic theory. Kearney-Cooke (2002) refers to original psychodynamic theory in her description of how children identify with the characteristics and qualities of their same-sex parent in response to conflicting fears and jealousies resulting from a fundamental attraction to the opposite-sex parent. This theory has not had much empirical support, but it was significantly influential in the inchoate development of the field of psychology (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Erikson reformulated psychoanalytic theory as he articulated developmental stages that reflected social influences outside of Freud’s deterministic biological and familial foci (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson’s developmental stages, which are a widely researched bedrock of personality and identity literature, adolescence is a period of transition marked by physical, cognitive and social changes, and the major task of this stage is the development of a coherent sense of identity (Roberts, 2013b; Tiggemann, 2013). This emphasis on adolescence as a pivotal period of identity development aligns with the theory and research on body image development highlighted in the conceptualization of the present study.

With regard to the concept of internalization, the social cognitive theory of gender development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) provides a comprehensive account of both direct, and indirect pathways by which gender identity is socially learned in the parent-child relationship. This theory builds on many of the other perspectives described in the body image literature (e.g., cognitive developmental, gender schema, identification). Social cognitive theory is aligned with and supplemental to OT (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). According to this theory, social learning is biologically
adaptive for expanding knowledge, and modelling is omnipresent from birth. Identity is understood within a model of reciprocal causation whereby personal factors (e.g., cognitive, affective and biological events), behaviour factors, and environmental factors (e.g., imposed, selected, constructed) interact and influence each other bi-directionally. Gender is learned via three major modes of influence: modelling, enactive experience, direct tuition. Modelling is simply the process of gathering information by observing someone modelling a behaviour. Enactive experience involves performing an observed behavior based on one’s own interpretation of the modeled behavior. Enactive experience is informative to one’s identity as one gains perspective based on other’s reactions to one’s performance of the behaviour (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Interestingly, these perspectives on how individuals learn to enact gendered identity are illustrated in an aforementioned study that has significantly inspired the present study. In a comparison of mothers and daughters, the first wave of McKinley’s (1999, 2006) longitudinal research surveyed 151 undergraduate women and their mothers on objectified body consciousness, body esteem, and weight related attitudes and behaviours (McKinley, 1999). McKinley (1999) found that daughters’ body esteem was positively correlated to their perceptions of mothers,’ and their mothers’ partners’ approval of the mother’s appearance (McKinley, 1999). Moreover, the daughters’ perceptions of their fathers’ approval of their own appearance was associated with lower body shame, and their perceptions of mothers’ approval of her own appearance was associated with lower body surveillance (McKinley, 1999). These findings lend support to the interpretation that adolescent girls’ experience of their bodies was shaped via internalization and identification. The daughters’ vulnerability for body shame and surveillance was related to
whether their mothers approved of their own appearance, as well as the degree to which their fathers approved of both the daughters’ and mothers’ appearances. These findings also reveal how these attitudes can be socially learned through the interpretation of the attitudes and behaviours of both parents.

Influence and Agency in the Parent-Child Relationship. Just as the concepts of gender, identity and social learning in the parent-child relationship have informed the rationale of the current study, there are also conceptual frameworks that specifically account for influence and agency within the parent-child relationship as it relates to identity development. Children may learn to identify with their parents’ values and behaviors via modelling, but they also act according to their own agency and motivation, while their parents may be acting as identity agents in an effort to shape them.

Recent conceptualizations of youth identity development emphasize the social contexts that support and impede healthy identity formation over time (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). From within contextual research and theory on identity development, the concept of an identity agent has emerged to address the ways significant relationships shape youths’ identities (Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Identity agents are defined as individuals who actively participate with youth in an effort to contribute to the formation of their identity. Research on identity agents has examined how parents (Schachter & Ventura, 2008; Von Korff, Grotevant, Koh, & Samek, 2010), teachers (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010), and peers (Sugimura & Shimizu, 2010) seek to influence a youth’s identity development through active engagement, encouragement, transformative pedagogy, and shared values and goals. Further articulated, the elements of identity agency include concern, and goals for identity formation, actions taken to achieve
those goals, an implicit theory about development, assessment of the young person within their context, and reflexivity for the agent’s goals and actions to improve them. This theory is relevant in further understanding how parents intentionally engage with their children to influence their identities as they relate to body and appearance (Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

In their conceptualization of children’s agency within the parent-child relationship, Kuczynski and Lollis (2004) describe how influence was thought to be unidirectional, meaning that the parent, being more powerful, influences the child who is compliant, and not the other way around. By delineating the various forms of child agency and power, and drawing on the philosophy of Vygotsky, these authors claim that children and parents influence one another in a bi-directional model (Kuczynski, 2003, Kuczynski & Lollis, 2004). According to this theory, children’s agency lies in their autonomy, their construction and their action (Kuczynski & Lollis, 2004). Autonomy is shaped by the child’s natural tendencies toward self-determination and self-preservation. Construction characterizes the child’s capacity to create new meaning from social information through a process of internalization, interpretation and externalization. The child’s action is the behavioural part of their agency. Action is thought to be determined by the child’s temperament and is strategic, based on individual needs (Kuczynski & Lollis).

Furthermore, Kuczynski (2003) considered the power dynamics of parent-child relationships in light of the close, interdependent, long-term nature of these relationships wherein each member has particular expectancies based on their past history and their anticipation of the future (Kuczynski & Lollis, 2004). The closeness of this relationship both promotes and restricts the agency of both individuals. Mutual influence is a product of
a high degree of conflict and cooperation. Children choose the degree to which they cooperate with parental demands through negotiation and accommodation, as opposed to direct compliance. Because parents have more experience and more mature cognitive capacities, their implicit authority is understood as being dependent on their child due to these various aspects of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the power within the parent-child relationship is described as interdependent asymmetry, in which both parent and child influence each other with the asymmetry of the parent having more authority.

The degree to which children exercise their agency and influence the parent-child relationship was described in Harach and Kuczynski’s (2005) study of the construction and maintenance of parent-child relationships. Twenty-four parents responded to open-ended interview questions about which behaviours strengthen, temporarily damage, and repair the parent-child relationship were coded and categorized. The findings revealed that parents perceived both their own, and their children’s behaviours, as contributing to the relationship in an ongoing way. Notably, parents’ reports attest to the agency and influence of the child as they reflected on how the child’s various behaviours served to strengthen or damage the relationship. These findings provide support for Kuczynski’s (2003) conceptualization of the child as an active agent in the co-construction of the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, Dawber and Kuczynski (1999) found that mothers asserted more power, employed more teaching and reasoning strategies, and had future-oriented goals and more emotional reactions to their own children compared with their reactions to transgressions by their child’s friend, or an unfamiliar child. These findings support the relevance of interdependent asymmetry, and “ownness” of the mother-child relationship. This characterization of the nature of influence, and the significance of history, and future
connection, in the parent-child relationship, is important for the current research program. This conceptualization places emphasis on the value of considering the parent-child relationship from a mutually constructed and impacted, social constructionist perspective.

**Contextual Action Theory**

The most notable limitation in the body image literature is that it has primarily sought to explain a multi-faceted, social, and developmental experience with post-positivist studies drawing inferences from correlations between a few variables at a time. Therefore, this dissertation study was established with contextual action theory (Young, Valach & Collin, 1996) as it provided a unique holistic and constructionist perspective from which to understand the complexities of body image development. Contextual action theory is a social constructionist perspective on human behaviour that emerged within vocational psychology to account for the complex nature of career development, and it is the basis of the action-project method that is employed in the present study (Young et al., 2005). As much of the extant literature on body image is based on post-positivist studies in which variables are identified a priori and then tested, contextual action theory and the action-project method have the capacity to contribute a novel framework from which to understand the construction of body image within particular relationships. By examining how body image is constructed through the goal-directed actions of mother and daughter, it is possible to characterize how body image issues are interwoven with other mother-daughter projects. Moreover, the action-project method has been used to understand health-related projects between adolescents and their parents (Young, Logan, Lovato, Moffet, & Shoveller, 2005; Young, et al., 2001). One example of how the action-project method was implemented to explain goal-directed joint action and projects that occur
between parents and adolescents was a study focused on conversations about health (Young et al., 2001). Young and colleagues analyzed the goals, intentions, behaviours, relationships and meaning evident in the conversations of 32 parent-adolescent dyads and were able to differentiate 5 different categories of joint action. These categories included sharing and exploring information, values and beliefs about health; negotiating and struggling about aspects of adolescent’s independence; providing and receiving guidance; adjusting to family and home issues; and fostering joint understanding by giving voice to the adolescent (Young et al.).

Contextual action theory and the action-project method are rooted in the perspective that human behaviour is made up of goal-oriented, although not necessarily rational, actions, and groups of actions can be constructed across time to form mid-term projects and long-term careers. Within this approach, career is conceptualized as the long term construction of various projects, and is therefore defined broadly as a construct that organizes behaviour over the long term (Young & Valach, 2000). Specifically, this theory is based in the idea that human behavior is made up of actions that are intentional, and the intent of actions can be understood through various aspects of behaviour like self-regulation, attentional processes, values, attitudes, emotions, communication, and language (Young et al., 2005). Actions are the basis for the organization of this theory and its corresponding research method.

A three-dimensional conceptual framework was proposed by Young, and Valach (2008). The first dimensional category delineates the levels of action organization. Actions are organized into elements, functional steps and goals. Elements are observable, systematic, and defined behaviours, like verbal and non-verbal behaviours. These elements
make up a sequence of functional steps that exhibit the flow of action and are directed at a
goal. Goals are the overarching meaning of these actions. Goals can be understood through
customs, insight, and actor-observer agreement. The second dimension of this framework
is categorized as action systems, which are divided into joint action, project and career.
Individual and joint actions are everyday short-term tasks or actions that are cognitively,
socially or environmentally based. Combined into a series, these actions contribute to
certain common goals, which can be identified as projects. Construction of projects within
a meaningful organization in the long term is described as a career (Young, Valach &
Collin, 1996). The third dimension of this model is characterized as perspectives on action.
These perspectives are made up of manifest action, social meaning, and internal processes.
Manifest action is made up of the units of goal-directed behavior that can be systematically
observed. Internal processes are the emotions or cognitions that either guide or are
associated with action. Lastly, the social meaning is related to the intentionality of the
action as well as the shared social understanding (Young & Valach).

Synthesized, this three dimensional action-project framework portrays a
comprehensive conceptualization of the goal-directed nature of human behavior, as it
characterizes the multiple layers of intention and meaning that facilitate human behaviour
in short, mid and long-term processes (Young et al., 2005). According to contextual action
theory, any group encounter involves a coordination of participants’ contributions, as well
as the dynamics of agreement or disagreement. The inter-subjective process in group
interaction is referred to as joint action which is driven by individual and joint goals that
are shaped by internal processes, social meaning and interpretation of one another’s
behavior (Valach, Young, & Lynam, 2002). Thus, in parent-adolescent interaction both
verbal and non-verbal messages can convey meaning. This was evidenced in an action-project study of sun protection behaviors (Young et al., 2005) in which some parents were ambivalent about sun protection. They conveyed paradoxical messages by expressing concern for their children’s sun protection, but engaging in risky sun tanning behaviors themselves. In the action-project method, behaviour is viewed as being made up of goal-determined actions, including those that become interdependent in joint projects. This conceptualization fits well with Kuczynski’s (2004) descriptions of the interdependence between parents and their children.

A person’s body-based beliefs and behaviour are shaped by many socially constructed variables (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008; Swami, Hadji-Michael, & Furnham, 2008) and daily lived experiences that can be conceptualized as both mid-term projects and long-term themes (Tempest, 1993) which are thought of as a career. For example, it may be possible to witness self-objectification being learned and practiced in goal-directed actions and projects like when a mother tells her daughter “You can’t wear that to school, it shows too much cleavage.” This type of comment may contribute to a body image project as well as it may be part of a gender identity project between them. Another example may be that an adolescent’s decision to wear certain clothes to make herself attractive to boys may be evidence of self-objectification within the context of a boyfriend-seeking ‘relational project.’ Given the relevance of the mother-daughter relationship in body image, as well as the social underpinnings of many body-related concerns, especially self-objectification and its associated difficulties, contextual action theory and the action-project method provide an important, holistic framework for this study.
Research Questions

Because North American women and girls live in an objectifying cultural milieu where body image concerns, like self-objectification have been found to be associated with many adverse consequences, and because the mother-daughter relationship appears to play an important role body image development, the action-theoretical research questions that guided my research were: What are the processes by which mothers and their adolescent daughters co-construct attitudes and behaviours toward their appearance and bodies? Within what superordinate joint mother-daughter projects are these body or appearance-related processes embedded? Furthermore, this data will allow me to discuss how the appearance-oriented projects between mothers and daughters may reflect the extant literature and post-positivist findings related to self-objectification (McKinley, 1995; Moradi, Dirks & Matteson, 2007; Noll & Frederickson, 1998).
Chapter 3: Methods

The present study was carried out using the qualitative action-project method, which is anchored within contextual action theory (Young et al., 2005), in order to answer two primary research questions: What are the processes by which mothers and their adolescent daughters co-construct attitudes and behaviours toward their appearance and bodies? Within what superordinate joint mother-daughter projects are these body or appearance-related processes embedded? To address these questions, the individual and joint actions and projects engaged in by mothers and daughters were observed and analyzed as they emerged through conversations about appearance and body image over the course of approximately six months. In the articulation of the selected methodology, this chapter first articulates the rationale for the design of the study, including subsections on the paradigm, the action-project method, and instrumental case study design used to examine the research questions. Secondly, the steps for recruitment and nature of the sample are outlined. Then, the procedures for the three phases of data collection, as well as the data analysis, are described in depth. Finally, this chapter concludes by addressing standards of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Design Rationale

The impetus of this study was to gain perspective on the processes by which body image takes shape as mothers and their adolescent daughters engage with one another in conversations about appearance. The aim was to better understand how joint action between mothers and daughters contributes to body image in general, and more specifically to understand how conventions or practices in the mother-daughter relationship might either promote or challenge self-objectifying attitudes and the tendency
for body surveillance. The action-project method was selected to examine how body image was constructed within the mother-daughter relationship in an effort to highlight the interactional nature of self-construction and knowledge regarding bodies and appearance. The action-project method allows for the examination of the social processes and communication between the mothers and their daughters from within a social constructionist paradigm (Young & Valach, 2000). This method is uniquely equipped to capture dynamic and interactive social processes, allowing for a more sophisticated understanding of the development of body related concerns, like self-objectification and body surveillance, which have been posited to stem from the North American cultural milieu that sexually objectifies women. This method has the potential to clarify the processes by which goal-directed action may contribute to joint projects about body or appearance within the mother-daughter relationship.

Paradigm. In her review of feminist discourse on the body, Bordo (1989) purports that the symbolic expressions of femininity through the body (weight loss, make-up, corsets, hijabs, etc.) are gender constructions based on coercive and homogenizing ideals with both political and historical bases. Given the magnitude of the impact of culture and social influence on body related concerns, it seemed intuitive to research this topic from a constructionist perspective. Constructionism is an epistemology that critiques the objectivist view that there is an objective truth awaiting discovery and instead proclaims that truth exists as a result of our engagement in the world (Crotty, 1998). Meaning is constructed, not discovered, the knower and known interact, and there is no meaning without consciousness. From within constructionist philosophy a specific theoretical position for social constructionism emerged (Crotty).
According to social constructionism, the physical world exists around us regardless of our conscious awareness of it, but that through consciousness, interaction, language, and interpretation, we construct and uphold its meaning. Given the socialized nature of body image, particularly how the objectifying cultural milieu can impact mental health via self-objectification (Moradi & Huang, 2008), the tenets of social constructionism suit this area of research well. In social constructionist thought, humans are all born into a world that has already been interpreted and imbued with social meaning. This extant meaning is communicated within the language, practices and traditions of our families, communities, and larger social spheres (Crotty, 1998). There has only been one study that seems to claim these perspectives in their methods and reporting, and that was Hesse-Biber et al. (2004) grounded theory study with African American adolescent girls.

**Action-Project Method.** As evidenced by the studies described in Chapter 2, to capture the dynamic and multi-faceted experience of the body with quantitative methods is to present a few facets at a time in a static way, like photographic images. In contrast to this fractured portrayal, it was proposed that the social constructionist action-project method (Young & Valach, 2000), with its attention to context and the layers of manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning, is a particularly well-suited foundation for examining body image development. It is representative of such an experience, like a film (Young, Valach & Collin, 2002). The action-project method is based on contextual action theory which addresses the goal-directed, intentional behaviour of human beings (e.g., Young, et al., 2005). This method is situated in an interpretive, social constructionist paradigm, as well as a relativist ontology which proposes that there are multiple, equally
valid realities. The action-project method has been used for both construct-oriented, and practice-oriented purposes (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Young et al., 2005).

The contextualist perspective of the action-project method allows for events to be understood and valued for their wholeness (Young et al., 2002). This contextualist explanation is holistic and encompasses cultural issues related to diversity, including ethnicity and gender. As mentioned earlier, the contextual action theory definition of culture is that it is a “field of action” (Young, Marshall & Valach, 2007, p.9), suggesting that action informs culture and culture informs action. This interactive process extends to career (Young et al., 2007). The action-project authors refer to ethnography in their view that the observation of actions is crucial in understanding and describing actions and careers within cultures. They also describe how ethnographic observation is often criticized because it is filtered through the researcher’s perspective. The action-project method addresses this concern with the use of video self-confrontations. The self-confrontation interview is central to this method as the participants are video recorded communicating with one another, and then they are invited to meet individually with the researchers to view the recording of the conversation and share what they were thinking and feeling at the time of each minute of the conversation. This self-confrontation procedure allows the participants themselves to articulate their internal process, providing information on the intention behind their actions (Young, et al., 2007). By allowing participants to offer their own interpretations of their behavior the methodology proposed, and its underlying theory, are culturally sensitive.

The action-project method has been used to study the career-oriented communication between adolescents and their parents (Young et al., 2006). It has also been
used to study health, suicide, rehabilitation, and counseling relationships (Young et al., 2005). This method has the potential to uncover layers of meaning informing individual’s behaviour, as well as social interaction (Young et al., 2005). This method has the potential to trace the ways two actors, in the case of this study mothers and daughters, read, interpret and communicate social meaning. It allowed participants a unique opportunity for reflection on their experience of interaction and communication with others. The action-project method was implemented to illuminate the goal-directed and social nature of behaviour via interaction and communication.

**Instrumental Case Study.** In the current study, the action-project approach was employed within a multiple case study format. Dyadic cases provided the data, while the action-project method provided the procedures for data collection and analysis. Case study is a qualitative research approach involving in-depth explorations of individuals, groups or events. Case study is a commonly used method in social anthropology, education, sociology and political science that allows for rich data illustrating social phenomena (Mitchell, 2006). Case studies typically involve the collection of multiple sources of data, including interviews, researcher participation and observation, and even video and photographic documentation. Additionally, analysis involves a degree of interpretation (Stake, 1995). For these reasons, case studies are well aligned with the action-project method.

The instrumental case study design fits well with social constructionist theory in that it is an advantageous approach to explore questions of ‘how’ a contemporary event or phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2009). Some methodological strengths of case studies include: the potential for high conceptual validity, procedures for developing new hypotheses,
utility for exploring the hypothetical causal mechanisms in single cases, and the capacity for accounting for causal complexity (George & Bennett, 2005). The limitations of case studies involve case selection bias, the inability to claim representativeness, and a limited capacity for determining causal effect (George & Bennett, 2005). When employed within the action-project method, in-depth case study data is collected and analyzed using the action-project framework (Klaassen, Graham, & Young, 2009). Within this framework, the case study limitations were managed as they would be with any case study in that the findings and interpretations were understood to be illustrative, case specific, and were not generalized to a larger population.

**Researcher Relationship to Research Topic**

As is the case for most qualitative paradigms in social science research, it is important to clarify the researcher’s relationship to the topic of study. This practice of reflexivity attends to the investigator-participant interaction in the research process (Hall & Callery, 2001). Reflexivity also involves an acknowledgement and examination of the power and trust between the researcher and participants that has the potential to enhance the validity of qualitative research. Reflexivity in the current study involved an ongoing process of purposeful dialogue between the researcher, research supervisor, assistants and participants.

**Personal Relationship.** My personal relationship to the topic of body image has been informed by my own story, as well as the stories of close friends and family. For as long as I can remember I have always been interested in understanding bodies from a biological perspective as well as the psychological experience of them. I witnessed the transmission of values and behaviours related to body image between the generations of
women in my family. Some of these body-based attitudes and behaviours were objectifying, critical, and a source of struggle. My curiosity about body image rapidly unfolded as I experienced my own frustrations through my adolescent development. In high school I became a competitive swimmer which facilitated a sense of appreciation of my body’s function, as well as appearance. As a graduate student in psychology, my coursework and training have further informed my understanding of body image development, promoted my self-awareness regarding my own body image, and facilitated many informative and rewarding conversations about body image with my mother, and other important women in my life. Altogether, these experiences have undoubtedly coloured my interpretation of the conversation and reflections of my participants.

**Professional Relationship.** The combination of my personal and professional interests led me to explore body image development in depth through my graduate work. I embraced Objectification Theory (OT; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) as it fit well with my social constructionist and feminist lenses. Although I have studied evolutionary and social psychological perspectives that posit that it is human nature to objectify one another, regardless of gender, as part of attraction and reproductive strategy, I embrace the tenets of OT which suggest that objectification can be damaging. Evolutionary studies of human sexuality have provided evidence that humans generally objectify one another including facial features, body shape and size, in order to determine reproductive fitness (Gilovich, Keltner, & Nisbett, 2006; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1997). Research in this area has also shown that men typically place more emphasis on appearance in their attraction to women than women do in their attraction for men (Thornhill & Gangestad). Based on these perspectives it would seem inevitable that women are objectified, but considering the
power held by men in Western societies, the sexual objectification of women has been shown to be particularly disempowering and damaging in such a context (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Szymanski et al., 2011; Tiggemann & Williams, 2013).

While evolutionary and biological perspectives are important in understanding human behaviour, my social constructionist lens places emphasis on how knowledge, including self-knowledge, is informed by our social context. This view lends to my belief that the degree to which women are sexually objectified by the media inevitably impacts their socially constructed identity, including body image, and this is precisely the line of reasoning that was theorized and supported in OT and its supporting research. Thus, in my work with the participants of this study, as well as in my analysis of their individual and joint projects, I was influenced to consider how objectifying messages were internalized and transmitted within the mother-daughter relationships.

**Recruitment of Participants**

Six mother – adolescent daughter dyads were recruited for this multiple case study. Recruitment targeted an age group from 12 to 15 years old, representing pubertal onset because this is a particularly turbulent time for girls and their parents, during which mothers attempt to guide their daughters in their navigation of peer and media pressures (Daniluk, 1998; Kearney-Cooke, 2002). In order to effectively collect and analyze data, one of the inclusion criteria was that the daughters and their parents needed to be fluent in English. Since the aim was to recruit those who may represent the general population of girls facing body and appearance concerns, recruitment excluded girls with physical or mental difficulties, like disabilities or diagnosed eating disorders since they may have presented with more complicated developmental issues than the general population.
Recruitment was focused to increase the likelihood of reaching girls who were negotiating self-objectification or body surveillance. Advertisements were posted in places where there were community activities or services that involve a focus on the body or appearance, like particular sports or dance classes, the university pool deck, community centres, or beauty salons. The study recruitment posters (Appendix A) described the research as a study of feelings and beliefs about appearance, and body image development, in order to provide potential recruits with a basic understanding of the focus. Recruitment efforts also included an advertisement on Craigslist.org, word of mouth among university faculty, as well as the assistance of a school counsellor within a local all girls’ high school who advertised the study on the school’s website.

The interested recruits were all mothers who contacted the author via email, or telephone. They each participated in an individual telephone screening interview (Appendix B) to ensure that they and their daughters met the criteria for participation. Subsequent telephone screenings were also held individually with the daughters in order to explain the study and confirm their interest and eligibility. Within four months of beginning recruitment, six potential mother-daughter dyads expressed interest, were screened, and were found to be eligible for participation.

**Nature of the Sample**

The ages of the daughters in these dyads ranged from 13 to 17 years old, and the ages of mother ranged from 39 to 60 years old. The nationalities represented by these dyads included Canadian, Iranian, and American. Although there was likely some variation in socio-economic status among these dyads, based on their residential addresses, and levels of education and employment in the family, it seems that they were all relatively
privileged and living within middle to upper classes. Furthermore, all participants presented as well-groomed, and many of the daughters attended private schools and were engaged in multiple activities outside of school.

There was also some variation in the family structure of the dyads in this study. Pairs 1, 2, 4, and 5 came from households in which the biological mother and father were married and living together. However, this shifted for Pair 5 partway through the study as the father had to work overseas for several months. This dyad began to function temporarily in a single-parent household. Additionally, the biological father and mother for Pair 3 had divorced when the daughter was very young and the mother remarried in her later childhood. Pair 6 also provided a different familial perspective as the mother was single and had adopted the daughter from an Eastern European orphanage when she was in her mid-forties. They explained that it had always been just the two of them in the household. Moreover, given this study’s focus on body and appearance, it is important to note that all participants were relatively attractive with balanced features. They endorsed that they were able-bodied and healthy. While they represented a range in body shapes and sizes, they all fit within a range of healthy weights as no participant was extremely underweight or showing medical signs of starvation, nor was anyone excessively overweight.

Procedure

Data collection for this study involved three distinct phases (see Appendix C: Procedure Outline). The first phase included an initial interview, and a videotaped conversation between parent and daughter, followed by a separate, individual, video self-confrontation. The video self-confrontation is an individual recall procedure based on the
videotaped mother-daughter conversation. The second phase involved a follow up in-person interview with both participants a few months after the initial interview, in which they were provided narrative summaries of their conversation and interaction in their first interview. Finally, approximately two to three months after the follow-up interviews, the dyads were contacted for a brief, follow-up telephone interview (see Figure 1).

**Fig. 1 Procedural Timeline:** Recruitment was ongoing and the time of the initial interview varied depending on scheduling. Second interviews took place approximately 3 months after initial interviews, and final follow-up phone calls took place approximately 2 to 3 months after the second interviews.

**Phase One.** Once recruits agreed to participate, an initial interview meeting was set by phone and daughters were invited to bring artistic illustrations of their feelings about appearance and beauty if they felt inclined to be creative. The rationale for the invitation for the daughters to provide illustrations was simply that an alternate form of expression may be engaging for the adolescents, and that the illustrations might serve as an icebreaker, facilitating the generation of discussion in the introductory interview.
At the outset of the initial interview, consent was obtained from parents, and assent from the daughters (Appendices D and E). The initial interview was conducted to provide orientation to the study, as well as to explore participants’ thoughts related to the issue being researched in order to identify a topic for the forthcoming conversation between the mother and daughter (Valach, Young, & Lynam, 2002). The daughters’ illustrations were discussed with both parent and adolescent during the introductory interview and facilitated the generation of conversation ideas related to body image or appearance that might reflect topics they have broached in the past. Then, for the next part of this first meeting, the dyads were asked to have a conversation about the topic they selected for 15 minutes while being videotaped. It was clarified that they could terminate the conversation at their discretion.

Immediately after the conversation, participants were invited to view the video of the conversation separately with the researcher or a research assistant. These self-confrontation interviews required the participants to separate in to private rooms where they watched the video of their conversation in brief one minute increments, and were asked to describe what they were thinking and feeling with each behavior or interaction. The self-confrontation interviews were conducted by both the researcher, and one of the research assistants (i.e., there were 4 volunteer assistants who were previously trained in this procedure; See Preface). The first phase ended with these individual self-confrontations (Young et al., 2005; Young et al. 2006).

**Phase Two.** The data from the first phase was analyzed to identify individual and joint projects which informed the development of brief narratives for the adolescent girl, her mother, as well as for the dyad. These narratives summarized the participants’
individual and joint goals, and identify a joint project, in order to convey the researchers’ initial understanding of the meaning of their conversations as they relate to their manifest behaviours and internal processes. In the second phase of data collection, the dyads were invited to meet with the researcher again. During the second meeting each participant had their individual narrative read back to them separately and was invited to suggest changes or additions. Then, they reconvened to read the joint narratives together and offer feedback as a pair. This ‘member-checking’ assured that participants contributed in the analysis and a distinct joint appearance project was identified for each dyad at this stage in the procedure (Young et al., 2005).

**Phase Three.** The final stage of data collection involved a phone call about two months after the second interview in order to follow-up with both parent and adolescent participants individually (see Appendix F for phone-call protocol). The primary researcher called each participant to ask a brief set of open-ended questions regarding the experiences of their bodies and their family relationships, as discussed in the interviews. These questions were designed to explore how the mother-daughter appearance projects may have been maintained or changed over time (Klaassen, Graham, & Young, 2009).

**Data Set.** These dyadic cases generated a large data set via action-project data collection. The introductory interviews were typically about 20 minutes and the joint research conversations were 15 minutes on average. The self-confrontation interviews for each participant were approximately 45 minutes. Then, the follow up interviews lasted about 60 to 90 minutes during which the individual participants read and reflected on their narrative summaries for 30 to 45 minutes, and then convened to review their joint summary for a similar amount of time. Finally, the follow-up phone-calls lasted about 15
minutes per participant. Combined, the joint research conversation and individual interviews add up to over 3.5 hours of data per dyad which approximates over 20 hours of total interview data. There is no absolute standard by which to claim data sufficiency with this approach. However, as data collection progressed, the different types of data gathered within each case set (e.g., research conversations, self-confrontations, follow-up interviews), combined with the large amount of data collected altogether allowed for the conclusion of recruitment with 6 dyads. The data from the introductory interviews, joint conversations, and individual self-confrontations were transcribed by the author with some assistance from a paid transcriptionist.

Analysis

The analysis for this study applied an action-theoretical lens to the individual case studies. Using this approach, the analysis of actions and projects involved a back and forth movement between the data and the action theory framework, a process that resembles hermeneutics (Young et al., 2005). The purpose of the analysis of the conversation data is to identify and describe the joint action that the mother and daughter are engaged in in the conversation. The identification of this joint action is based on the analysis of the participants' manifest behaviour in the conversation (i.e., what they said and did), the sub-goals, or functional steps, that this manifest behaviour contributed, and the overall goals or meaning of the conversation for the participants. This analysis took place within top-down and a bottom up procedures.

The first step in analysis involved a review of all the interview data for each dyad, followed by a closer examination of the participants’ actions through line-by-line coding of their conversation transcriptions. This initial analysis of actions incorporates the three
dimensions of the action-theoretical framework using a top-down perspective. Beginning with a general understanding of the dimensions of the participants’ social meaning, and their goals or intentions in the conversation, the sequences of their actions were then analyzed. More specifically, the participants’ actions were identified and the subjective relevance was estimated by attempting to understand what the participants were doing, or trying to do, based on their words, the content of the conversation, and the intention they endorsed in the self-confrontation. These units of behaviour that made up the action within the research conversation were coded according to previously established action-project codes (see Appendix G for coding dictionary). This phase of analysis has been referred to as a procession from description to organization (Young et al., 2005).

Once the conversations were coded, the next step of analysis involved working from the bottom-up to identify the hierarchical action steps involved in the action (i.e., functional steps, goals, projects). The function of the coded action steps was understood in relation to the intentions endorsed by the participant in order to identify functional steps and goals. Finally, the multiple stages in this analysis were considered in a comprehensive description of the action being analyzed. The steps in this analysis made it possible to attend to internal processes, as expressed in the self-confrontation interviews, and observed behaviour, which contributed to an understanding of the whole system of action. This comprehensive understanding made it possible to infer and describe mid-term projects for each individual, as well as for the dyad (Young et al., 2005). The individual and joint projects inferred via this procedure of examining the intentionality and internal processes associated with participants actions formed the basis of the narrative summaries for each participant and for each pair of participants.
Within the second interview, these individual and joint summaries were subjected to a member-checking process as they were reviewed by the participants. Then, the follow-up telephone interview provided further information as participants offered confirmation, or re-evaluation, of the ongoing relevance of their identified projects. Once all stages of data collection were complete, the data for each dyad was comprehensively reviewed through the within-case analysis. Within-case analysis in the action-project method facilitates an in-depth elaboration of the joint projects, as well as the identification of emerging constructs. Further consideration of these projects and emerging constructs informed the drawing of conclusions and assertions regarding individual cases. Stake (1995) described the process of identifying new meanings, or drawing assertions, in instrumental case study based on two strategies: researcher organization and interpretation of their observations, and the aggregation of data. Both of these processes were used as the action-project within-case analysis outlined above involved the systematic examination and organization of meaning within each dyadic case, but also recurring goals, projects and emergent constructs were aggregated within and across cases.

Cross-case analysis is the final stage of this analytic procedure. In a review of projects and assertions across cases, commonalities among cases were clarified and unique processes were identified. In the analysis of this data, the OT constructs of self-objectification and body surveillance were not explicitly sought after. Rather, they made up one conceptual template within which the findings of the action-project analysis of these cases were further considered during the later stages of analysis. Extant theory related to objectification and mother-daughter interaction influenced my description of emergent constructs, as well as the processes that were common or unique among the cases.
For readers who may be unfamiliar with the terms encountered in action-project studies some clarification regarding the terminology may facilitate the comprehension of the findings in the next chapter. To the author’s knowledge this dissertation is the first application of contextual action theory, and the action-project method to the topic of body image. It is possible that the term “project” may be misunderstood as being a planned activity with a specific aim. However, the action-theoretical definition of “project” includes actions and intentions that may vary in the degree to which they are within the immediate, conscious grasp of the individual (Valach et al., 2002). Similarly, the word “goal” represents intentions that may or may not be accessible to consciousness. For this reason the author primarily uses the word “intention” which suggests more of an aim, or attitude, rather than a conscious plan, outcome, or object. Finally, as mentioned earlier, there is a multitude of conceptual constructs within the body image literature, for this reason, and for the purposes of being inclusive of body, as well as detailed aspects of appearance, in my analysis, I refer to the mother-daughter joint projects as “appearance projects.”

**Trustworthiness**

Contextual action theory authors (Young et al., 2005) cite Lincoln and Guba’s (2000) standards for authenticity and trustworthiness in qualitative research as they relate to the action-project method. These standards require that a method is applied with rigor and precision, and that interpretations of the data are made with defensible reasoning. The action-project method has built-in procedures to ensure that it is applied rigorously. The procedures for gathering and analyzing data are thorough and systematic, and data represents three different perspectives on each action. As with the cases in this study,
participants were involved in data analysis through their participation in the self-confrontation interviews, as well as through the review of initial analyses within the second interview, and telephone follow-up. The involvement of participants ensured that the researcher’s interpretation of the data fit with the participants’ experience. Additionally, through the process of coding and organizing these data, the findings of this study were repeatedly discussed and scrutinized, with challenges made by the research supervisor, as well as by the research assistant involved with the data collection for each individual case. These evaluative steps, and the attainment of consensus, contributed to the defensibility of interpretations and the overall trustworthiness of the analysis.

The interpretations made within this method are justifiable and reasonable because the findings resonate with the participants’ experience (Young et al., 2005). The findings from this action-project oriented study adhere to principles of everyday thinking, and they reflect the language participants used to describe their behaviour. In considering the full breadth of action from manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning, these findings were consistent with the participants’ interpretations of their own experience.

Finally, the action-project method is grounded in contextual action theory which has been supported by an array of studies on different experiences and relationships (Young et al., 2005).

**Ethical Considerations**

This study was reviewed by the University’s ethics board, and it was found to be ethically sound. In addition to obtaining informed consent from the parents, the adolescent girls’ assent was sought. The privacy of the participants has been ensured by keeping all documents confidential and removing identifying information from the data. Their
autonomy was protected throughout the research process by confirming that they understood that their participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from participating at any time with no consequences. Additionally, the participants’ wellbeing was safeguarded in the use of sensitive approaches to facilitating mutually directed conversations, and self-directed disclosure, in dyad and individual interviews. If any distressing conflict or issue were to have emerged as a result from the parents’ or adolescents’ participation in the study, a plan was in place to offer them guidance while debriefing them. The participants would have been offered referrals for counselling services should they have desired more assistance. No apparent conflict or issues emerged and the participants did not request further guidance or assistance. In an effort to maintain privacy between participants, more specific and personal data from their self-confrontation interviews was not referred to in a direct manner in this dissertation.
Chapter 4: Findings

This in vivo study of mother-daughter conversations was conducted in pursuit of further understanding of how the experience of body image is socially constructed within such primary relationships. The research questions were as follows: What are the processes by which mothers and their adolescent daughters co-construct attitudes and behaviours toward their appearance and bodies? Within what superordinate joint mother-daughter projects are these body or appearance-related processes embedded? This chapter includes the following summarized answer to the research questions, including an introduction to the main findings, followed by a detailed review of the within-case findings for each mother-daughter dyad. After these within-case descriptions, the cross-case findings are outlined with a focus on commonalities and unique processes across the dyads. This chapter concludes with three key assertions that represent a concentration of the central findings of this study.

Summarized Answer to Research Questions

As the six mother-daughter dyads studied in this research explored their perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to appearance and their bodies, the various processes by which body image was co-constructed through the mother-daughter relationship became evident. The key findings emerged through the cross-case analysis: 1) body image was co-constructed between mothers and daughters through various appearance-oriented projects; 2) these mothers and daughters were affected by and invested in one another’s body image; and 3) modelling seemed to play a role in body
image identification just as much as, and in some cases more than, prescriptive messages offering explicit instructions or guidance.

Each dyad’s joint project informed these cross-case assertions. The projects generally served to connect, align in values, and preserve and promote one another’s wellbeing, suggesting that the participants’ appearance-based projects were tied to overarching identity and relationship projects (see Table 1). Although some projects involved avoidance and disagreement, the underlying intentions expressed were still about promoting understanding and aligning in values, so even those mother-daughter projects were about their relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Joint Projects by Pair:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 4</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 5</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pair 6</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pair 1</strong></td>
<td>To avoid sharing their personal thoughts and feeling about body and appearance; to become more comfortable sharing about this topic</td>
<td>To promote daughter’s healthy body image via the development of a mutual conceptualization of daughter’s socialization, and shared values for athleticism</td>
<td>To protect one another’s healthy body image development</td>
<td>To align their values related to body image (e.g., fashion, exercise, eating); to bolster their appearance-based identities</td>
<td>To preserve and promote daughter’s youth and wellbeing; to deepen their connection with open and honest communication</td>
<td>To improve their relationship by spending time together and finding common ground over their disagreement regarding daughter’s clothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Summarized joint projects by pair for each mother-daughter dyad.

In depth analysis of the individual and joint projects for each dyad facilitated the identification of emerging constructs, which aided in the development of within case assertions. Examples of some common within-case assertions include: “alignment of values,” “mutual confidence and pride,” “mother acting as an identity agent,” “appearance project as part of an overarching relationship project,” and “intergenerational patterns.”
Combined with each pair’s goals and projects, these within case assertions were further examined within the cross-case analysis, which revealed commonalities and unique processes among these cases. Five commonalities, including the presence of overarching relationship and identity projects, as well as four unique processes were identified among these cases. Based on these findings it appears that, to some extent, body image is socially constructed, particularly within closely identified mother-daughter relationships.

Presentation of the Findings

The action-project (Young et al., 2005) analysis within this study was framed by Stake’s (2005) instrumental case study design. This design contributed to the researcher’s conceptualization of each case as inherently valuable and relevant in the illustration and advancement of extant research and theory on body image development. The outline of this chapter follows the actual steps of the analytic procedure for the action-project method (Young et al., 2005), beginning with the within-case analysis for each dyad, proceeding to the between case analysis, and concluding with the overall assertions. Within-case analysis involved a full review of all interview data for each dyad, incorporating conceptualizations from the narrative summaries into a full summary of the internal processes, manifest actions, as well as individual and joint goals and projects for the pair. The within-case analyses conveyed in this chapter are organized in sections on the dyad’s background and context, their interactional pattern within the research conversation, the joint project, their individual projects within the conversation, further detail on their joint project and relationship, and a section with assertions summarizing the ways in which the particular case addresses the research question. These within-case descriptions are followed by a review of the cross-case analysis in which perceived commonalities and differences in the
joint appearance-related projects are identified. The assertions also offer tentative postulates for theory and further research on the joint projects that contribute to the construction of body image in mothers and daughters.

**Within-Case Analysis**

The following sections provide summaries of the within-case analysis for 6 mother-daughter pairs as outlined above.

**Pair 1.**

The first dyad was composed of 48-year-old, white, European-Canadian mother, whom I have assigned the pseudonym Diane, and her 15-year-old biological daughter, also white, European-Canadian, whom I am calling Stacy. During both interviews these two were living together with Stacy’s biological father and younger brother in the same household. English is the language that is spoken in the home. Diane was working full time. Stacy was in grade 10 of a private school and busy with school, friends, her boyfriend, as well as swimming competitively on the school’s swim team. Diane described that her motivation to participate stemmed from her own interest in the topic, as well as her curiosity about her daughter’s experience since she sees her as quite fashionable. While the mother was relatively thin, the daughter had a more athletic build from competitive swimming, and they were both average in height.

During the warm up conversation these two seemed to have some initial difficulty identifying relevant conversation topics and shared activities. Diane described how they were “both pretty busy with our own stuff. (Mom, Intro).” She did identify that together they were involved with a couple different volunteer projects. For example they had
participated in a charity group for children, and events to support women living in an impoverished neighborhood of the city. Stacy mentioned twice during the warm-up conversation that they don’t talk much. It is important to note that, despite the author’s effort to provide information about the study procedure during the screening, Stacy did not fully realize that she would have a conversation about appearance with her mother. She was interested in participating because she wanted to talk to somebody else about the topic. This misunderstanding likely contributed to her noticeable resistance in the conversation. Within the introductory warm-up interview they decided to discuss some of Stacy’s peers who have seemed to have eating disorders, as well as the general topic of food, for their joint conversation.

**Interactional Pattern.** The initial joint conversation between Diane and Stacy was characterized by avoidance and resistance, but also perseverance. Although the conversation covered a variety of subjects, Stacy’s discomfort with disclosing her feelings or perspectives on body image ended up being the focus. They discussed Stacy’s friends’ experiences with eating disorders, the absence of body image curriculum at her school, and the nature of her discomfort for talking about these things with her mom. Between the uncertainty both participants expressed in the introductory interview, as well as the difficulty they encountered within the research conversation, it was evident that they had not shared many of their thoughts or feelings about their own appearance or body image with one another.

Within this conversation a pattern emerged in which Diane asked Stacy questions and encouraged her to disclose about her friends,’ or her own body image, while Stacy responded with minimal answers, and progressively expressed her strong sense of
discomfort for sharing anything about this topic with her mom, as well as her frustration with her mom’s attempts to talk about the topic. Within the first five minutes of the conversation, Stacy fully resisted her mom’s efforts when she said “Because I don’t talk to you.” (Dtr, CON, Min 5) and sat in silence. In response to Stacy’s resistance, Diane was ready to give up and asked her daughter if she wanted to “call it quits” by giving up participation in the study. However, Stacy insisted that they continue in the conversation because she felt it was unfair to the researchers if they quit. She expressed interest in talking with an interviewer during the subsequent individual interview. Toward the end of the 15-minute conversation, Diane asked Stacy why she wouldn’t talk with her, and Stacy responded with the dismissive comment “‘Cause I don’t like you.” (CON, Min 14). The remainder of the conversation followed the earlier pattern in which Diane asked Stacy clarifying questions about the reasons Stacy is uncomfortable talking to her, and situations in which Stacy does talk about body image or appearance. Stacy provided minimal responses and explained that her feelings of discomfort for talking with her mom are due to her status as a parent.

**Joint Project.** Through Diane’s and Stacy’s struggle to converse about topics related to body and appearance it was apparent that their joint project was to avoid sharing their personal thoughts and feelings about their own, as well as others’, bodies or appearances. This was evident in their resistance to sharing their own experience of their bodies with one another and in their self-confrontations where they each endorsed some level of discomfort with their bodies. They also seemed to be searching for a way to become more comfortable talking about this topic. Their mutual avoidance of the topic is apparent in the way the conversation was often focused on either specific others, or
generalizations about other people. For example, when Diane asked about the situations in which Stacy will talk about body image, Stacy responded by saying “Everybody thinks about it, nobody wants to talk about it with their parents” (Dtr, CON, Min 8). Diane responded “I see. So it’s not just that it’s me, it’s that nobody wants to talk about it with their parents?” (Mom, CON, Min 8). The intention to avoid sharing was evident in the expression of uncertainty about how to participate in the conversation, and their consideration of quitting. This avoidance was also apparent in the many long pauses during which they both seem to be frustrated. Lastly, Diane avoided self-disclosing by focusing on analyzing the nature of Stacy’s resistance and discomfort within the conversation. Diane asked Stacy many questions about hypothetical situations in which she would talk about appearance or body image, like when she asked “So under what circumstances would you participate?” (Mom, CON, Min 12). It is clear that she wanted to understand Stacy’s resistance, but by talking about how to talk about the topic, she also avoided being vulnerable by sharing her individual perspective or experience.

Through their efforts to participate in the study they both seemed to share the intention of becoming more comfortable with the topic. For Stacy this meant tolerating the discomfort she felt during the conversation with her mother, which she did by providing brief, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers to Diane’s questions, in order to have a chance to talk to the researchers about the topic. This aim was made explicit in the conversation when Diane explained that the next step of the study was to talk to the researchers individually and Stacy said, “Yeah, but then you’re not here” (Dtr, CON, Min 15) to which Diane asks “Is that okay?” (Mom, CON, Min 15) and Stacy confirmed “Yeah” (Dtr, CON, Min 15).
For Diane, the intention to become more comfortable talking about this topic was evident in her many attempts to explore the topic with her daughter. “Um there I was just kind of scrambling, trying to think of ways to get into talking about body image” (Mom, SC, Min 3). Some of these approaches were to ask whether Stacy ever talked about body image topics (e.g. with friends, with her boyfriend, at school, in swimming, etc). Diane went on to ask Stacy further questions about hypothetical scenarios in which she would be comfortable sharing. Finally, by sorting out Stacy’s belief that adolescents don’t share personal things with their parents, and explaining what she imagined to be the purpose of the study, Diane seemed to be acting on the intention to understand whether it is possible for her daughter and her to feel comfortable with this topic: “Ok, well I don’t see a way around it Stacy. I think it is an uncomfortable situation and that’s why they’ve tried to set it up this way…” (Mom, CON, Min 13). Overall, these two struggled to have a conversation about a topic that they have both appraised as being an uncomfortable subject between mothers and daughters. They seem to have experienced some dissonance as they intentionally tried to endure an uncomfortable situation that they would rather have avoided. The way in which their projects reflect a simultaneous approach and avoidance of the subject of body image attests to the degree to which Diane and Stacy were struggling to know how to be in relationship with one another. These projects therefore likely contribute to overarching projects about their identities and their mother-daughter relationship.

**Individual Projects.** Diane took an active role in trying to draw out her daughter’s participation by asking her many questions about her friends’ and her own experience of body image/appearance. She was direct in addressing her own frustration with her daughter’s resistance to the conversation. However, she was also active in her efforts to
understand her daughter’s avoidance of the topic and succeeded in clarifying that a possible developmentally-based explanation is that teens don’t talk to their parents.

Diane’s main intentions in this conversation were to better understand how to talk to her daughter about topics related to body image, while avoiding sharing much about her own thoughts and feelings on the topic. Stacy was passive in the conversation, and occasionally dismissive of her mother’s attempts to make conversation and draw out her perspective. When she was tolerant of the conversation she provided minimal replies. However, at other points she refused to answer, expressed her discomfort verbally, or just sat in silence.

Stacy’s main intentions in this conversation were to resist discussing her perspective on body image topics with her mom, to express her discomfort with the conversation, and to tolerate the research conversation in order to discuss this topic with someone else.

Elaboration of Joint Project. The primary project for this mother-daughter dyad in the initial stage of this study was to avoid sharing their personal thoughts and feelings about their bodies and appearance. Both Diane and Stacy had adopted the same strategy of avoidance. Their mutual discomfort may be somewhat attributed to the research setting, but based on their individual self-confrontation interviews, it was clear that they both felt some degree of discomfort with their bodies and don’t know how to share in this vulnerability. According to Diane’s individual self-confrontation and follow-up interviews, she has experienced some difficulty and dissatisfaction with her own body. She described feeling uncomfortable talking about body or appearance with her own mother, and expressed a similar avoidance and sense of hopelessness talking about it with her daughter. This avoidance for sharing personal thoughts and feelings about the body may represent an intergenerational career. Interestingly, this dynamic was reflected in her daughter’s
experience, as Stacy expressed her desire to be able to talk to her mother about these things, but also clarified that her aversion to do so is related to her mom’s dissatisfaction with her own body and avoidance of the topic.

The second part of this pair’s project was to seek a way to become more comfortable talking about body image and appearance with one another. Despite their mutual avoidance and the standoff that seemed to occur between them, their perseverance in the conversation reflects their joint effort to find a way to discuss these topics. Diane approached this project in a direct manner, by asking and speculating about ways Stacy might feel comfortable talking with her. At the same time, Diane did not model comfort with disclosing her own experience of these topics. Stacy participated in this project more passively by accommodating Diane’s questions about her discomfort with minimal answers, or by resisting and dismissing her mom’s efforts to talk about this topic, with the intention to connect with the interviewer later. Her refusal to disclose her own feelings seemed to reflect her resistance to being the focal point of the conversation, as well as her frustration with her mom’s own avoidance of vulnerability. However, her willingness to tolerate her mom’s questions, and her interest in continuing to participate in subsequent stages of the study reflect her intention to better understand how to have such conversations.

It seems that Diane and Stacy’s appearance-related projects were founded on their belief that calling attention to appearance or bodies within the mother-daughter relationship is inherently uncomfortable. Within the conversation, as well as their individual self-confrontations, they both described situations in which they make
appearance-related judgments with friends, suggesting that they both have learned to view women’s appearances, as well as their own, with a critical lens.

I’m remembering when I was, you know, sort of late teens early twenties, umm, one friend that I used to hang out with that’s a lot of what we did, we’d sort of watch other girls and say “Oh God, what a loser” or “Look at her,” you know, or whatever. Generally critical, rather than complimentary, yeah. And so I’m thinking well maybe that’s what Stacy is meaning about, you know, talking about it with her friends? (Mom, SC, Min 8)

Additionally, the conviction in Stacy’s resistance peaked right after Diane tried to provide her daughter with an affirmation about her appearance. Diane had asked about whether Stacy ever thinks about how she looks, or about how Diane looks. Stacy answered “no” to both questions. Diane went on to say: “Well I think you look very pretty” (Mom, CON, Min 5), to which Stacy quickly and angrily, replied “I don’t care” (Dtr, CON, Min 5). This was followed by a stretch of silence. Then, Diane asked why it was uncomfortable for her to talk with her mom. Faced with further resistance, she subsequently suggested they quit the study. It appears that Diane’s attempt to compliment her daughter, followed by Stacy’s reactive dismissal, brought the conversation to a halt. This exchange is revealing of the degree to which this mother and daughter were not comfortable with acknowledging vulnerability, including any desire to exchange affirmations about appearance. Thus, it might be interpreted that their mutual avoidance of self-disclosure and vulnerability reflects a high degree of defensiveness around the issue.

Importantly, Diane’s compliment facilitated Stacy’s further reflection on their relationship in her self-confrontation interview, and was revealing of other variables factoring into their joint appearance project. After watching that moment in the self-confrontation interview, Stacy reported that she did want to continue to talk about body
image, but she felt like she didn’t know what to say. In watching and reflecting on the end of the conversation, when Diane drew out, and built upon, Stacy’s conceptualization that teens don’t talk to their parents, Stacy revealed feelings of frustration, longing, and powerlessness within their relationship. She shared that she loves her mother, but also does not like her sometimes. Stacy explained that she does not see her very often, but when she does they often fight. She was feeling badly for saying that she “doesn’t like” her mother in the research conversation, and then attributed her ambivalence to the fact that her mother is never around. Thus, Stacy’s resistance may have been due in part to her sense of her mom being away so much, as well as her feelings of helplessness and uncertainty about how to start connecting when it feels quite foreign within their relationship. However, because it seems that Stacy is unsure of how to fully articulate and communicate these frustrations and needs to her mom, toward the end of the research conversation she offers the more general rationalization that adolescents don’t talk to their parents. This rationalization allowed Diane to feel vindicated and possibly serves to protect and justify their project of mutual avoidance.

And I’m thinking “Oh, it’s not me personally.” It’s almost like a badge of honor that she doesn’t like me ‘cause it’s sort of her version of success. So I’m feeling pretty good. (Mom, SC, Min 16)

Within the follow-up interview both Diane and Stacy agreed with the conceptualizations of their goals and projects presented in their individual, as well as their joint narrative summaries. During her individual follow-up interview Diane expressed the realization that her own inhibition to talk about the topic may be a factor in their mutual avoidance. She also described increasing frustration with her daughter’s adolescent attitudes. In Stacy’s individual follow-up interview she agreed with the conceptualizations
and descriptions of the conversation and her goals in her individual interview. Stacy had also visibly lost weight since the last interview.

Finally, two months after the follow up in-person interview, the participants were called for a follow-up telephone call. During the phone interview Diane reported that they had some recent conversations about the topic that were not necessarily an outright attempt to become more comfortable with the subject, but she noted that neither of them avoided the subject or dismissed one another. She stated that: “If I had asked her about it she might have retreated. It was still about her friends, but a couple times she has commented on her own body, but comments were made in passing” (Mom, phone-call). Diane described how some of the passing comments included her effort to compliment her daughter on her school photo, Stacy’s expression of dissatisfaction with a dress she tried on while preparing for a party, and comments on how poorly other people see themselves. Diane also admitted to having uncertainties regarding how to accept her shape as she ages. She said that she desires to stay fit and wondered how women can feel good when they are bombarded with images of cosmetic surgery. Alternatively, Stacy did not have much to add in her telephone follow-up. She said it was good to be able to talk to the interviewer about it, and described one recollection of the topic coming up with her mom, in which she felt dissatisfied because she needed a patch on jeans that tore because they were too tight. Her mom reassured her that nobody would notice. Overall, it seems their project to avoid self-disclosure had shifted in subtle ways as they were more comfortable making passing comments, both positive and negative, with one another, although the examples given suggest that the comments are still mostly focused on Stacy.
Within-Case Assertions. Through in-depth examination of the conversational and interview data for this pair, six unique relational themes were articulated and make up the within-case assertions for this case. The first assertion is the aforementioned observation of reciprocal avoidance. Their strategy of avoidance seemed to be mutually reinforced as they reciprocated one another’s use of it. Avoidance allowed them to manage their feelings of dissatisfaction with their appearance and discomfort for revealing this vulnerability with one another. They both seem to be appraising the conversation topic as being too uncomfortable to discuss with one another. They each seem to believe that the other does not want to talk about appearance or body image, and they both turn to other people to discuss body dissatisfaction. Thus, their perspective that it is uncomfortable to talk with each other is reinforced in a reciprocal way.

Another assertion is based on the emergent theme of intergenerational patterns within this dyad. Diane relates to her daughter’s discomfort with the notion of discussing body and appearance with her mom by reflecting on her own discomfort with this topic within her relationship with her mother. It seems as though, within her relationship with her daughter, Diane is still operating on beliefs and patterns about appearance and vulnerability that were instilled within her relationship with her mother.

Another theme that became apparent between this mother and daughter is that of project dissonance. The main area of agreement between them is that parents and adolescents don’t talk about these things, which likely served as a justification of their project of mutual avoidance, but it is also a point of dissonance with regard to their interest in participating in the study. Their simultaneous projects of coping by avoidance, and efforts to approach the topic come into direct conflict within these interviews. This
dissonance seems to stem from a felt sense of ambivalence between these two. Therefore, it seems both Diane and Stacy are experiencing ambivalence about whether they want to share their vulnerable feelings about appearance. Perhaps they sense that this would bring them closer in a way that they have not been previously, which feels uncomfortable to navigate.

The reciprocal avoidance within their conversation and relationship seems to reflect some degree of identification with one another as they are both coping with similar dissatisfaction by using the same strategy. At the same time, the dissonance in their project, and their apparent ambivalence, suggest that there are limitations to their identification. In describing her ‘dislike’ for her mom, Stacy reasoned that Diane is annoying because she’s always there, which perhaps reflects her developing independence from her mom, but in her self-confrontation she also described feeling like her mother is not around much. She shared her longing to be able to talk about these things with her mom, and frustration that they usually only talk about shallow things. She seems to be experiencing some internal conflict regarding her needs from her mother. Stacy’s ambivalence and limited identification may stem from an experience of tension between the needs to identify with and individuate from her mother.

A fifth assertion is that this pair seemed to experience a gradual increase in openness over time. Based on Diane’s comments during the follow up interviews it seems that her daughter had been offering her thoughts about her body or appearance a little more freely. Diane also noted that she had been able to compliment her daughter recently. This shifting is likely related to having participated in the study as Diane described how it
facilitated her awareness of her own avoidance. Nevertheless, she reported the experience of openness as a positive outcome.

Altogether, within their research conversation, Diane and Stacy seemed to be mutually defending themselves and one another from feeling vulnerable and uncomfortable by avoiding talking about body image, but this project of avoidance was coming in to conflict with a simultaneous project to learn how to talk to one another about body image and appearance. Based on their individual interviews, it seems they each had some critical thoughts and feelings of dissatisfaction that they felt they could not express with one another, but their mere participation in the study, as well as the gradual opening over the course of their participation reinforce the latter goal to become more comfortable sharing in their vulnerability. The increasing openness over time reveals an investment to move in the direction of vulnerability and closeness. It therefore suggests that a final assertion could be drawn, that Diane and Stacy’s project is about repairing and promoting their relationship, and falls within an overarching mother-daughter relationship project.

**Pair 2.**

The second dyad interviewed for this study was a 42-year-old white, European-Canadian mother whom I have named Rebecca, and her 13-year-old, biological daughter who is also white, European-Canadian, and whom I am calling Claire. At the time of the study Rebecca was working full time, and Claire was nearing the end of 7th grade and swimming competitively. Claire is Rebecca’s only biological daughter, and she also has a younger son. Rebecca was married to Claire’s biological dad at the time of the study and the four of them lived together. English is the primary language spoken in the home.
During the introductory interview, Rebecca explained that her interest in participating in the study stemmed from her curiosity about whether swimmers would have a unique experience of body image due to the fact that they spend a lot of time being viewed while wearing only swimsuits. She also mentioned that her daughter is still pre-pubescent and wonders whether her attitudes will change with her body. Claire reported being interested in participating because she enjoyed participating in research in the past, and likes to contribute. The main conversation topic that they identified as being familiar and relevant between them was sports. Rebecca also described her daughter as a healthy eater as a result of being an athlete, so they considered her eating habits as another possible topic to discuss. They both appeared to be average in height and weight. Both mother and daughter initially rejected the idea that they were directly influenced by media-imposed beauty standards, however Claire articulated that the images in magazines and on television have influenced her to not want to be ‘bulky.’ They carried on in this conversation about the influence of beauty standards on eating behaviour within their videotaped research conversation.

**Interactional Pattern.** Based on the introductory interview it seemed that Rebecca and Claire do not talk about body image in a direct way very often, yet much of the content covered in this conversation was familiar and comfortable, like reflections about Claire’s fellow swimmers, and her gym class runs. This pair’s conversation covered a variety of subjects, but Claire’s athleticism and socialization with regard to body image were the main topics. They discussed the conversations Claire has with her friends about body and food, her perceptions of the differences between body-related values held by her
Montessori classmates, other peers and swimming friends, her physical ideals and role models, as well as their shared appreciation for athleticism.

The conversation started with Rebecca asking Claire questions about her perceptions and beliefs about her peers’ and her own appearance. Rebecca was the leader throughout the conversation, consistently asking questions to gather information about her daughter’s experiences and values. Claire closely followed her mom’s lead by readily sharing her perceptions and beliefs. At times Rebecca’s questions seemed to potentially be leading her daughter. For example, when she asked “And do you think you have like unconscious models of what your ideal body shape would be? Like are there athletes when you look at them you think that’s what…” (Mom, CON, Min 5), either she already knew, assumed, or wants her daughter to idealize an athletic body type. Generally the pattern in this conversation resembled an interview in which Rebecca asked many questions to inquire about, as well as possibly guide, Claire’s feelings, beliefs and views of her friends. In response, Claire provided fully descriptive and clarifying explanations of her interactions, and perceptions. Rebecca would then further break down Claire’s answers to clarify values, or in some situations, she built upon Claire’s answers in a confirming way.

**Joint Project.** Throughout this conversation it seemed that this pair was actively engaged in a joint project to promote Claire’s healthy body image through the development of a mutual conceptualization of the social influences on her developing body image, and by sharing values for athleticism (i.e. body health and functional performance) over appearance (i.e. beauty standards). This project to develop and share in a mutual value system for appearance also seemed to bolster both Claire’s and Rebecca’s appearance identity because it de-emphasizes the media’s beauty standards and their perceived
inadequacies in meeting such standards, and yet it supports their mutual investment in meeting a socially accepted athletic ideal. This value system thereby reinforced their shared sense of pride in Claire’s athleticism and likely protected their shared identification with one another’s appearance, and could therefore be contributing to superordinate identity project and mother-daughter relationship projects.

The aim to promote Claire’s healthy values while deepening their mutual understanding of Claire’s body image development was evident in the way Rebecca encouraged Claire to explore numerous social factors that may impact her expectations and values related to the body. An example of this emerged when they considered how Claire and her peers view one of Claire’s thinner friends:

Rebecca: And is that seen as something the other girls wish they had? Or is that seen as bad because she’s not as mature looking as…
Claire: We don’t really talk about her skinniness though, but she’s just like really skinny and tall though.
Rebecca: Right
Claire: So, I guess if anything she’s seen as either too skinny, ‘cause she’s like this skinny (gestures with hands to indicate a thin torso; CON, Min 2).

Rebecca also reinforced Claire’s value for performance over appearance by commenting on the benefits of small shoulders for swimming breast stroke during the following exchange: Claire: “Well, well no, my friend was talking about how she had like skinny shoulders and how…” / Rebecca: “But she’s a breast-stroker right?” (CON, Min 7).

Finally, this mother and daughter seemed to bond over a shared value for athleticism when Rebecca asked about Claire’s peers’ fitness levels which led to Claire telling the story about how she and a friend out-ran other kids in gym class. They both appeared to have a natural, modest confidence about Claire’s athletic capabilities.
Individual Projects. Rebecca seemed to lead this conversation as though she were informally interviewing her daughter. Her main intention in this conversation seemed to be to more fully understand the possible social influences on her daughter’s perspectives, expectations, and behaviours related to her body and appearance. In addition to better understanding her daughter’s experience, Rebecca also seemed to be seeking to promote her daughter’s values through a deeper understanding of her daughter’s experience and through their mutual appreciation for athleticism. Taken together, these goals represent an active effort to further articulate a shared conceptualization about body image and appearance by identifying and evaluating her daughter’s beliefs about her friend’s and her own body image, as well as the contributing social influences. Claire’s project within this conversation was to fully engage with her mom by sharing her thoughts about her peer’s and her own attitudes toward bodies and fitness, and by joining with her mom in a mutual appreciation for athleticism. Her intention in this conversation was to follow Rebecca’s lead by responding to her questions with disclosures about her peers’ and her own perspective on appearance, and by comparing and contrasting different social groups. She also seemed to be joining with Rebecca through their mutual value for athleticism by listening to and learning from Rebecca’s perspectives about various aspects of body image.

Elaboration of Joint Project. By thinking analytically about the various social influences outside of the home, including fellow swimmers, classmates, teachers, magazines and the media, and how they affect Claire’s body image, these two seem to be jointly conceptualizing the factors that may influence Claire’s body image development. In addition to representing one of many areas of convergence between Rebecca’s and Claire’s values, this joint conceptualization of body image may serve to guide and protect Claire’s
development. Altogether there appeared to be many ways in which their beliefs were already quite similar and their values aligned. For example, they both seem to tend toward pragmatic and scientific interpretations of societal messages. Claire disclosed her practical approach to viewing magazines and interpreting the messages from the beauty industry, which echoed her mother’s sentiment and pragmatic lens. She explained that she only looked at fashion magazines for tips on external, changeable aspects of appearance such as hairstyles, or clothes, and not body shape or size. Another striking example of how their values are aligned can be found in their similar reflections about Claire’s Montessori classroom culture. Rebecca was surprised to realize that the Montessori culture may be positively impacting Claire’s body image through other aspects of self:

She’s in a Montessori program, and has been since 4th grade here, and has been before we moved. And her class is a really happy, really well integrated class. So I was just thinking that I was surprised that she was identifying their relationship with each other and their relationship with the teacher as the reason that the kids feel they can be more like who they are... I’m still thinking about the fact about how that can play into a lot of other teenage issues so if they feel like they’re accepted for who they are in school, and that their teacher is interested in what their strengths are, and all that, that would relate to body image… (Mom, SC, Min 4).

Within Claire’s self-reflection on the same moment of conversation, she describes the same postulation:

I’m in a Montessori class, so the… it’s more about being who you are and like working at your own level and everything like that and the other classes, they’re just a regular program so for them, the teacher is always trying to get them to do what she wants them to do, so maybe in that sense it transfers over so that they want to try to fit into what other people are…but it’s kind of the same thing in a way it’s just like a different topic (Dtr, SC, Min 4).

Moreover, Rebecca and Claire also seemed to be sharing in a foundational value for athleticism and taking pride in Claire’s athletic ability. These shared aims appeared to contribute to an overall project to jointly shape and bolster Claire’s healthy body image.
Rebecca seemed to play an active role in guiding her daughter’s self-exploration and value identification. This process was evident in the way Rebecca both asked her daughter about her sense of her body, and described her own perception of her daughter in the same breath when she says “Do you ever have times when you don’t, aren’t happy with your body? Like when you think… well I always assume you’re happy with your body because you’re so healthy and…” (CON, Min 12). Claire then explained that she wishes she didn’t have “little bits of like chub” (CON, Min 12), and after Rebecca expressed her understanding, Claire expressed her perception that the chub is “…not really my fault? Well it is but, it’s not at the same time” (CON, Min 12). Rebecca was, perhaps not consciously, further shaping her daughter’s sense of identity by offering her a practical and reassuring conceptualization of her body’s processes when she replied “Well it’s not, because it’s biology right?” (CON, Min 12). She then elaborated on how nature is not very helpful because it causes girls to store fat during puberty. Claire fully agreed with this explanation and then built on it to say:

Yeah, but um, I figure that if I keep exercising, I’ll be fine. And if I keep, well, yeah, ‘cause the thing is I don’t… really find myself like that much of a skinny person, but as long as like, I’m just trying to keep like a flat stomach, and then I’ll be fine. As long as I’m not like (holds arms open widely to indicate a larger body; laughs; CON, Min 12).

Her mother laughed with her and confirms her sentiment by saying “Two meters wide” (CON, Min 12). By sharing her perception of her daughter, offering her scientific understanding of Claire’s body and development, and agreeing or confirming her daughter’s sentiments, Rebecca seemed to actively shape her daughter’s values and sense of self.
It appears that, through a sense of identification with one another, this project is mutually beneficial because it promotes both mother’s and daughter’s success. Rebecca takes pride in her daughter’s healthful development and feels strongly about her values for athleticism over appearance. This is particularly evident in Rebecca’s self-confrontation when she reflects on Claire’s gym class story:

I was thinking about how her self-image is really tied up with um, being healthier than the rest, sort of, like at school. She and her friend B*, who she mentioned, are both sort of the athletes in the class and it’s really evident, they’re both like taller than everyone, including the boys. They’re both really strong and healthy looking, like it’s true that when they do sports at school they really shine (Mom, SC, Min 9).

Claire similarly feels strength and pride in her own values for athleticism, as well as in her mom’s confidence about her development and health-oriented values. This was evident in her self-confrontation when she described feeling comfortable having this conversation with her mother:

‘Cause I am comfortable with myself and my body, so, I guess if I wasn’t comfortable with my body image then it would have been less comfortable (talking about it), but I think I’m fine with that stuff. See that’s the other thing that she’s good with however I am okay with my body… she’s not trying to make me be a certain way she just, as long as I’m happy and content and, I guess if I was like obese she’d probably try to do something with it, or like chubby… (Dtr, SC, Min 12).

This last quote is revealing of Claire’s sense of comfort with her body, and her experience of acceptance from her mother. However, her comment about the possibility of her mom intervening if she were to gain weight, suggests that more noticeable body fat might make her less comfortable with her body, or might be considered unacceptable by her mother, or both. Thus, their shared value for athleticism seems to be about function and health, but it also seems to reflect a preference for a slender, athletic appearance. In
describing her perception of swimmers’ aging bodies, Rebecca suggests that fat is less desirable than muscles, presumably for swimming performance:

I often wonder about when swimmers stop swimming they often tend to, like the muscles kind of, if they’re not careful, the muscles sort of go back to… like fat… so when you see swimmers in their thirties often they’re no longer perfect specimens of… but that’s a long time from now (Mom, SC, Min 5).

Moreover, later in her self-confrontation interview Rebecca describes her daughter’s baby fat as not being a problem because it is not that visible. Claire echoes her mother’s sentiment in her reflection on this point in the conversation. She describes her understanding of her “little bit of baby chub,” and reframes it positively for herself:

Um, that was okay too, ‘cause I don’t really have that many problems with my body, that much. Like as I was kinda saying there I don’t really, like I have like a little bit of baby chub still, but it’s not my fault, well, it is my body’s fault, but that’s ‘cause it’s faster like that, so there’s not anything I can really do about it and I’m just kind of going with whatever happens there, as long as it’s not negative… If it, as long as like, if I like stopped exercising and I like got heavy? Then I’d have a problem but I don’t think I have any plan to do that so I’m currently pretty happy in just like the way I am, just how I am (Dtr SC, Min 11).

Even though both Rebecca and Claire consistently returned to the belief that Claire has a healthy body and body image, their internal processes seem to outline the limits of their acceptance of visible fat. It seems as though they mutually benefit from the value for athleticism because it offers attainable, functional and individual goals, which Claire has proven herself capable of achieving. At the same time, it also might be the case that by fitting within their perception of cultural standards for beauty, the athletic body ideal allowed them to feel confident in Claire’s appearance, as well as her athletic performance.

In the follow-up interview, Rebecca and Claire agreed with most of the conceptualizations put forth in the narrative summaries. They also both found points of disagreement on which they articulated themselves further. Claire expressed her
disagreement with the use of the word ‘goal.’ She clarified that if she is learning from, or connecting with, her mom it is happening passively and not ‘her goal.’ The meaning of the word ‘goal’ as it is used in contextual action theory to reflect the underlying intention within behaviour, was explained during her individual follow up interview, as well as during the joint narrative follow up. Claire reiterated that their conversations are purposeful (e.g. to analyze or discuss) and less about connecting.

Rebecca expressed concern with the following description in her individual narrative:

Moreover, during the individual interview it seems apparent that you don’t fully relate to the idea of developing body/beauty ideals based on the media when you said: “…however you do that, looking at t.v. or looking at singers, or whatever, and thinking ‘she’s really beautiful, I wish I looked like her’ (Mom SC, Min 11).

She clarified how she does relate to the tendency to internalize the media’s ideals, but that she doesn’t feel it has impacted either her or her daughter’s sense of self. Moreover, like her daughter, she wasn’t sure that ‘connecting’ was a conscious intention, and instead preferred to emphasize that they were hoping to keep the conversation going for the sake of the research. Upon inquiry about her basic interest in participating, she said that they liked participating in research and wanted a little extra cash. Altogether, her feedback emphasized that she steered the conversation in the direction of fitness because she thought it was relevant for the study, but also because she is proud of her daughter and wanted “to focus on health and positive development” (Mom, Follow-up Interview). Lastly, this dyad was contacted for the final follow-up phone interview, but after three attempts to contact them with no reply, this final step was abandoned. This dyad was the only case in which the phone interview was not completed.
**Within-Case Assertions.** Six unique relational constructs emerged within this dyad’s conversation, reflections and joint project. One, this was the first pair for whom a body ideal was articulated within their project, as part of their joint conceptualization of the daughter’s body image. As evidenced by the previous quotes about swimmers’ bodies in general, and Claire’s body specifically, it is my assertion that this pair embraced the *athletic body type as an ideal* and that they shared this value.

Moreover, this dyad had a very clear *alignment in many of their values*. In addition to sharing an ideal for athletic bodies, these two seemed to also be aligned in their appreciation for individualized education in Claire’s Montessori classroom, and seem to share a very practical disinterest for the appearance-based ideals imposed by pop culture. One example of this pragmatic lens and disinterest for messages from pop culture became clear within the first minute of the conversation when Rebecca was describing her understanding of the theories about how culture affects women through the media, and how she does not see Claire being impacted in those ways. Claire agreed that she doesn’t try to ‘make herself’ into another person.

Building on their shared values, another emerging construct within this dyad’s data is that they *shared confidence and pride* in the daughter’s athleticism and capability of achieving the ideal athletic body. These sentiments seemed to emerge as a function of the shared sense of success and efficacy that Claire met, or soon would meet, their ideals for the competitive, athletic body. Rebecca repeatedly approved of her daughter’s adoption of the athletic body as an ideal because she endorses that it is an attainable goal. Claire acknowledged feeling a bit insecure about reaching the ideal swimmer body, but also described feeling hopeful. She expressed confidence about her goal and abilities during the
conversation with her mother when she said “Yeah, it’s ideal for someone in swimming to be shooting for, but it’s not like an unrealistic goal, or it’s not like something that’s bad for me it’s a good goal I think” (CON, Min 5).

Another interesting theme for this pair is that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Rebecca was actively attempting to shape her daughter’s developing identity with regard to her appearance and body. Thus, by promoting her daughter’s healthy value system *Rebecca was acting as an identity agent.* She did this by guiding her daughter’s self-reflection and analysis of others through questions and building on her daughter’s thoughts to promote her athletic values. It was as though Rebecca was giving voice to her daughter’s values and sense of self. This process represented an important drive within their joint project and overlaps with the next assertion. Moreover, the messages Rebecca conveyed and modeled in her behaviour may have been congruent. She took pride in her daughter’s intellect and athletic skills within the interviews, but because she did not disclose much about her own appearance-related behaviour this congruence can only be hypothesized through her conversation and interview disclosures.

Additionally, there was a clear sense that through Rebecca’s efforts to influence her daughter mentioned above, Claire was *learning to identify* with her mother. This process seemed to emerge within most of the previously cited examples: as Claire adopted her mom’s pragmatic and analytical lens, as she shared in her mother’s conceptualization of her strengths, as they both experience pride for Claire’s athleticism and healthy development. The moment when they both enjoyed Claire’s story about being able to outrun her classmates portrays a shared investment in one another’s success which would suggest a bi-directional identification.
Overall, it seems that this dyad’s joint projects to shape Claire’s body image through the development of a conceptualization of her development, and to share in values for athleticism served a myriad of functions. They were also articulating an ‘attainable,’ athletic body ideal that is healthy but also protects them against negative social judgment, they were aligning several of their values, they shared in confidence and pride for Claire’s health and athletic performance as well as more generally identified with one another’s beliefs and successes in mutually beneficial ways. The degree to which these two were aligning and identifying with one another in their athletic-oriented appearance projects might be further interpreted to contributing to their overarching projects about identity and their mother-daughter relationship.

Pair 3.

The third dyad interviewed for this study was made up of a 43-year-old white, European-Canadian mother whom I have called Anna, and her 17-year-old, white, European-Canadian, biological daughter whom I refer to as Laura. At the time of the study, Anna was parenting full-time, raising her younger child from her current marriage, and Laura was busy with her last year of high school. Laura is Anna’s only biological daughter. Anna was separated from Laura’s biological dad when Laura was very young, but remarried during her later childhood. Anna, her current husband, Laura, and her pre-school aged sibling were living together in Vancouver at the beginning of the study, but by the time the follow up phone-call was conducted, Laura had left the home to attend university in another province. English is the primary language spoken in the home. While they each had different shapes, both mother and daughter appeared to be average in weight, and somewhat below average height.
Anna expressed interest in participating in the study because she had concerns about her own body image, as she saw herself as having a long history of difficulties, and wanted to be sure her daughter would not experience similar challenges. Anna also described how she liked to occasionally volunteer for research because she found the experience interesting and rewarding. Laura expressed interest in participating because she was headed off to university and intrigued by research, but also because she found that she and her mom had a lot of similar thoughts and beliefs about body image and wanted to explore them. These two described their relationship as very close and reported that they talk about everything. According to Anna, “there’s not much that we don’t talk about together…” (Intro, Mom). She also described how she and Laura have a lot of the same opinions about appearance and beauty, “For the most part we are kind of on the same page about things” (Intro, Mom). They both appeared to be of average size with seemingly healthy weights for their heights. After considering different possible conversation topics they identified that they often discuss including weight management (e.g. diet and fitness), Laura’s upcoming dance, clothes shopping, and television. Anna elaborated that body or appearance related topics come up frequently between them and they are “pretty conscious of body image” (Intro, Mom, Min 7). They decided to begin their research conversation by talking about Laura’s upcoming graduation dance and her feelings about her dress.

**Interactional Pattern.** Anna started the conversation by asking Laura about her graduation dress. The conversation took off from there with a high degree of mutuality and back and forth. The pattern that seemed to shape their communication was characterized by mutual, empathic self-disclosure. Laura seemed to take the lead in identifying topics to discuss when there were lulls, but their conversation was mostly collaborative. Laura also
initially disclosed more about her frustrations, beliefs or memories. Anna listened, acknowledged and affirmed her daughter’s disclosures, and occasionally responded with stories of her own as she related to what Laura described. Thus, there were multiple points when they exchanged roles of listening and disclosing.

They covered topics related to clothing (e.g., grad dress, clothes shopping), developmental transitions (e.g., their move to Calgary, the change in family dynamics with Anna’s marriage), and hurtful social interactions (e.g., criticism from a stranger, peers’ behaviour, hurtful games). Although they each offered their own stories and considered how those events impacted their sense of self, the focus tended to be on Laura’s experiences, both developmental and current, as well as their shared experiences regarding appearance. They conversed in a balanced way, and often built on one another’s story, or continued one another’s statements.

Joint Project. Within their conversations and individual reflections over the course of the study, it became apparent that Anna and Laura were enacting a joint project to support and protect one another’s healthy body image development. They did this by acting on a goal to relate to one another while exploring the various social influences that have impacted their experiences with objectification and body shame. It seemed that by contributing their painful experiences in response to one another’s description of difficulty, they expressed their understanding of how they imagined the other may have been feeling. Sharing and expressing understanding were functional steps in the enactment of their goals to relate to one another. The difficult experiences they disclosed to one another were primarily the result of interaction or relationships with other women and girls. Laura shared her story about friends who excluded her from a pretend fashion show based on her
body size which caused her to feel rejected and ashamed. “They shouldn’t make me feel bad for being a different body type it’s not like bad to have, I would love to have that body type too, but I don't, you shouldn’t make me take pictures of you in your fashion show. They were kind of mean” (Dtr, CON, Min 12). Laura also described how the same girlfriends’ parents were judgmental of her when she lost weight later on.

The painful experiences Anna shared were descriptions of growing up with competition and criticism from her own mother with regard to weight, size and beauty standards, as well as several instances of rude questions from women she didn’t know. “…For me, one of the hugest thing was like always getting asked if I was pregnant like I think that like psychologically that was the hardest…” (Mom, CON, Min 13). During this exchange of stories these two listened to, acknowledged, defended and validated one another. Moreover, they both seemed to examine how certain events impacted their individual body images when they critically evaluated comments, expressed the resulting distress, and considered aspects of their development. An example of this can be found when they share a sense of disapproval for comments made about Laura’s stress-based weight loss by the parents of her friends:

Anna: Yeah and she said something to me about that like "We gotta watch our girl" alluding that you had some kind of eating disorder...
Laura: Which I mean I didn’t, I didn't have…
Anna: I know that.
Laura: Well you know I didn't (CON, Min 11).

They each seemed to build on one another’s thoughts frequently in this conversation by continuing one another’s statements, which portrayed the closeness of their relationship and the degree to which they relate to one another. Building on one another’s statements was a functional step in their goal to relate to one another, and indeed seemed to promote
closeness and attunement. This step in bonding may have contributed to a sense of identification with one another’s experience and is evidenced within multiple points in the conversation. Another example of their attuned understanding of each other was when Laura finished Anna’s sentence in agreement about how much better she feels about her appearance after she has exercised.

Anna: “Yeah, no, like I have to say, even just from the exercise in the last week...” Laura: “I feel better putting stuff on even if I don't necessarily look better, even in my head, I feel like I look better” (CON, Min 10).

Overall, their main joint goal in this conversation was to supportively relate to one another in the process of exploring and trying to understand how various social influences, like experience with objectified criticism and body shame, have impacted their sense of their appearance and bodies. This goal seemed to serve a larger joint project of protecting one another’s healthy body image development. On multiple occasions, Anna expressed the explicit intention to prevent her daughter from developing the difficulties that she has experienced. It also appeared that Laura was seeking to shield Anna from her own difficulties by sharing her healthier, scientific perspective. Additionally, at several points in their conversation, as well in her self-confrontation interview, Laura empathized with her mother’s pain resulting from critical comments on her size and protectively came to her mother’s defense. The degree to which their individual goals and joint project reflect an investment in one another’s wellbeing and their relationship suggests that they are part of an overarching, enduring relationship project.

**Individual Projects.** Anna’s main intentions in the conversation were to connect with her daughter through shared experiences of negative body judgment, to convey her difficulties with body image in an effort to guide Laura differently, and to learn from her
daughter’s scientific perspectives. These aims contributed to her enactment of a project to promote her daughter to be healthier than herself by trusting Laura’s authority on the topic of healthy body image. Laura’s goals in this conversation seemed to be to support her mother with her concerns, and to better understand how different social influences have impacted her own body image. Laura enacted these objectives as part of a project to lead her mother in the mutual endorsement of a healthy body image. Overall, they both seemed to be attuning to one another’s experience in a supportive way, but also differentiating in an effort to promote one another’s adoption of a healthy perspective.

**Elaboration of Joint Project.** By reminiscing about social events that were psychologically or emotionally difficult Anna and Laura considered the ways in which others have impacted their feelings toward their bodies and appearances, as well as their core sense of body image. The process of reminiscing also allowed them to empathically relate to one another, which seemed to serve the purposes of enacting their project to support and protect one another’s healthy body image development, as well as maintaining their relationship bond. Although their functional steps and goals ultimately contributed to their relational, appearance-based project, there were some inherent conflicts between their projects and the internal processes they described.

While Anna expressed her investment in promoting Laura’s healthy development, and offered her daughter a lot of praise and validation for being healthier than she is, the behaviours she modeled conflicted with her prescriptive messages for her daughter. She encouraged her daughter to be balanced by eating healthy meals and staying active. However, the solutions she endorsed for feelings of appearance-related anxiety, like skipping breakfast or lunch, or having cosmetic surgery, revealed the current nature of her
own struggle and suggested that she is coping with a negative experience of her body in ways that may not align with the healthy perspectives that she was encouraging in her daughter. “Well I mean we started out feeling good because we’d gone to our fitness thing right? Then we had lunch. You know what? I think we cannot have lunch. (laughs) No, I think that’s what, well we were tired and then, it just became, um…” (CON, Min 3). Also, Anna’s action within the conversation revealed a bit about her lens for her body, as her contributions in the conversation were predominantly critical thoughts about herself, and reflections on negative experiences. She identified that the criticism and negligence from her own mother, as well as critical judgments from other women, impacted her tendency to obsess about appearance and to evaluate herself negatively. Thus, Anna’s self-awareness and concern revealed her belief that she is not able to provide her daughter with a healthy perspective. She made it very clear to Laura that she has tried to do a better job of bringing her up than her own mother did with her and she instructed Laura to not be as ‘neurotic’ or unhealthy in her thinking and behaviour as she has been. Her explicit instructions and support for her daughter to embrace healthier perspectives were notably incongruent with the beliefs and behaviours she was endorsing and modelling.

While Laura similarly related stories that were hurtful in consideration of the factors that have affected her feelings about her body, she also actively engaged in the project to be ‘the strong one.’ Her adoption of this project was evident in the conversation citation where she described how she won’t weigh herself after vacation when she knows she may be a bit heavier from eating out.

Anna: No, but if you, like when we got back from Disneyland you didn't weigh yourself.
Laura: No, I just didn't do it, like I knew it was going to be more.
Anna: Yeah like where I would weigh myself then I would be, I would be like depressed.
Laura: Yeah, but then, I mean, but then I also know that if I weigh myself and I was up five pounds that not eating for those for the next four days is not gonna do you any good, cause in the next, after you do start eating then it's just going to, then your body's not going to know what to do and it's just gonna start grabbing it and storing it (CON, Min 6).

Laura’s description of what she was taught in school programs about metabolism and weight gain suggested that she does make use of the knowledge she’s gained from school programs in order to guide herself and reframe any anxious thoughts about temporary weight gain. Another example of her enactment of the project to support her mother by being the stronger one is evident when she described how she eats bigger meals than her mom. Within their individual self-confrontations they both endorse Laura’s eating habits as healthier. She also displays strength and authority when she comes to her mom’s defense while discussing the times Anna felt hurt by people asking if she was pregnant. “I still wouldn’t be like “oh!?” I mean it’s one thing if you know, but to say “are you pregnant?” I think it's really rude…” (CON, Min 14).

However, this “stronger one” project began to seem incongruent when considered alongside the feelings of distress, and the anxious behaviours Laura endorsed in her self-confrontation. These were evident in her preoccupation with her grad dress and the pressure she feels to look good:

“Yeah I think I did get it too early that I can’t, like it’s almost like I put it on, I tried it on like 50 times to make sure it’s not like, I can’t return it after like four months… but it's just like the one thing the excitement will be gone by Saturday that I’m so nervous. I think our grad is really based on what you’re gonna look like, and I think it’s like too much pressure, that like people, like I get nervous” (Dtr, SC, Min 1).
Another example of incongruence between Laura’s intended project and actual presentation can be found in her actions within the conversation. At many points in the conversation, she seemed to be modelling her mother by expressing insecurities, and perseverating on critical thoughts about her body, or difficult experiences. For example, when reflecting on her sense of her body when they lived in a different, colder city, Laura described herself with degrading tone: “Even in [other city] when I was a little chubster…” (CON, Min 7). Anna promptly refutes this perception, but Laura also seemed to be operating according to implicit, and potentially unhealthy, standards for appearance.

Another example was when she described her plan to eat less the day or two leading up to the dance: “…And I was saying like I can't, I just don't want to look, like I'd rather, I'd rather be a little bit hungry by the end of dinner than have gross pictures” (CON, Min 7). Her mom agreed with this sentiment. These clips are evidence of incongruence between the project Laura consciously endorsed and her actual experience, which may stem from the incongruence between Anna’s explicit messages and her behaviour.

What’s more, these two seemed to routinely engage in objectifying conversation. Between the emphasis they placed on the experience of trying on clothes, and Anna’s acknowledgement that they often engaged in self-critical “banter back and forth,” in her self-confrontation, their tendencies to objectify themselves were frequent and familiar. They also slipped into back and forth objectifying comments about themselves and one another at the very end of this research conversation:

Laura: I think me and you and Nana all carry it like right here at like the middle.. and we have larger chests, which I hate.
Anna: Yeah, but we’ve got great legs
Laura: Well, I don't as much as you guys do…
Anna: You have good legs, you have a nice butt, you have a better butt!
Laura: Yeah but it's not flat… (CON, Min 14-15).

Their similar evaluations, and use of the pronoun “we,” revealed this tendency to objectify themselves in a mutual way. Also, it appeared that Anna was attempting to boost Laura’s self-esteem by objectifying her which revealed the degree to which she was operating from an implicit, less conscious, belief that appearance is important in feeling good about one’s self. From her descriptions of her own upbringing it seemed clear that being proud of parts of her body for fitting a certain standard, is one way Anna learned to gain recognition and feel good about herself.

As described earlier, Anna was aware of the ways in which her own mother had an unhealthy, perfectionistic and competitive approach to her own body and appearance, which she said was imposed on her. In many instances throughout the study Anna explained that she is trying to be a better parent in this regard. Laura expressed her awareness and appreciation of her mom’s efforts to prevent those messages from being passed on to her. She explained that her mother was doing a much better job of raising her to be accepting of her body than her grandmother had done with her mother. The awareness of intergenerational patterns was notable in this case, as are both the mother’s and daughter’s intentions to change the dysfunctional aspects of those patterns.

Another noteworthy aspect of this dyad’s project was the consideration of cultural influences on their bodies and behaviour through transitions. For example, they discuss how their eating patterns changed when Anna started dating her current husband because he would take them out to eat more often than they were used to. Also, they both acknowledge how moving to Vancouver from a colder Canadian city affected their sense of fashion and their feelings about their bodies. According to Laura: “I think it’s strange,
it’s not like we moved to like Europe and it was totally different, it was like one province over and then the attitudes of people are so different” (Laura, SC, Min 8). She explained her understanding of the cultural shift as having to do with the difference in climate. She figured that in their previous city dressing warmly was a priority and fashion was not emphasized as much, whereas Vancouver’s milder climate made it possible to dress fashionably on a regular basis. She posited that the focus on fashion may cause her and others to pay more attention to body shape. This conceptualization seemed to contribute to their joint project to support and protect one another as they sought to understand the various aspects of their social environment that impact their body image.

In the second in-person interview, which was held a few months after the original interview, these two participants both agreed with the analysis and descriptions in their individual and joint narratives. They also offered further detail and updates to the conceptualizations (see Appendix H for additional data). Laura emphasized how she was closely connected to, and affected by Anna’s difficult experiences: “It’s like I was there.” She elaborated that their views were so similar because they talk about everything. This suggested that their participation provided an in vivo glimpse of the process of identification. Laura also expressed some distress over recent weight gain due to eating out more and not being engaged in school sports because it was summer. Anna thought it was neat to read about their conversation and relationship from an outsider’s perspective, and found it to be very accurate. She also expressed some surprise at how much she obsesses over these topics.

Together, these two clarified that they did not feel like the conversation was rehearsed, that, despite the research setting, it felt mostly natural. They agreed with the
descriptions in the narratives and didn’t have any major revisions to suggest. They clarified that they sometimes have differing perspectives on day-to-day things, but in general they are very similar. As a pair, they emphasized the value of their open communication and expressed appreciation for their heightened awareness of their patterns as a result of their participation.

The follow-up phone call was conducted three months after the second interview (see Appendix H for additional data). At this point, Laura had left home to start her university education in another province. They both reported that they talk on the phone multiple times a week and that every time they talk one of these body or appearance related subjects arises. Anna described again, that she was still surprised about how much she “obsesses” about her weight or body as much as she does, as well as surprised to realize how much Laura is conscious of her tendencies to do this. She agreed that their project to protect one another’s healthy body image by supportively relating to one another was still relevant. Within Laura’s follow up phone interview, she stated that she found participating in this study to be a good experience. She related that she and Anna had always talked about these things, but by participating in the study they were really able to think about it more. Laura agreed that they “definitely do still share the same project” (Dtr, phone-call). Laura described that “it’s nice that I can talk to her about anything” (Dtr, phone-call), that she feels as though her mother understands her and she can similarly empathize with Anna’s experience.

Overall, this mother-daughter pair adopted projects that seem to have the common responsibility of protecting one another’s healthy body image development. Anna was aiming to protect Laura by emphasizing her own difficulties. She was attempting to be a
better parent than her own mother. She was also intent on empathically supporting and defending her daughter by placing emphasis on Laura’s role of being stronger, and discouraging her from ‘doing as she does.’ Laura was protecting Anna by grounding her weight anxieties with scientific perspective, by empathically relating to her mom’s difficulties, by trying to maintain mostly healthy eating habits, by coming to her mom’s defense, and by engaging in her project to be the stronger one. Their high level of disclosure and empathic attunement seemed to facilitate their strong bond and identification with one another. Despite some incongruence, by being supportive of the relationship, as well as one another, their appearance-related projects seem to have been part of a higher order relationship project. It is important to note that although their goals and projects were intended to be supportive, they seem dissonant in the lived experience of the daughter. Therefore, a reverse of the colloquial phrase “Do as I say, not as I do” seems to emerge as the daughter intends to do as her mother says, but via her identification with her mom, in actuality Laura seems to be doing as Anna does.

**Within-Case Assertions.** Combined, the analyses of the conversational and interview data collected for this mother-daughter dyad have contributed to the development of six within-case assertions about their relational projects. The first assertion is that the articulation of a *shared conceptualization of social influences on body image* seemed to help this pair to empathically connect, and to safeguard one another from the potential hurt of negative social interaction and influence. Their conceptualization was comprehensive as it considered big picture influences like provincial and urban cultures, and intergenerational patterns, as well as more incidental influences, like the facial
expression of a salesgirl in a dressing room mirror. This was the only dyad to notice and provide examples of how different cities’ cultures have impacted their sense of their body.

The second assertion is that routine self-objectifying conversation seemed to facilitate identification with one another for this mother-daughter pair. This observation may represent a less conscious, overarching relationship project. They both exhibit similar tendencies to be verbally expressive about their appearance related anxiety which typically has a self-objectifying quality as they worry how others see them. They engaged in this anxious, self-objectifying communication, and surveillance of their bodies or appearance, often during the research conversation and explained that this is fairly common conversation between them. Interestingly, by expressing their worries to one another, they also seem to create space to be reassured by one another. Moreover, this type of appearance-focused talk, and associated empathic support, seemed to strengthen the degree to which they identify with each other’s struggle.

Building on the second assertion, the third assertion is that this pair was very closely identified with one another and therefore seemed to be acting on overarching relationship and identity projects. Anna and Laura seem to closely identify with one another’s experience of many of these concerns. It seems as though their shared behaviour (e.g. frequent communication about, and surveillance of, their bodies or appearance) strengthens the degree to which they identify with each other’s struggle. They also express some awareness of the ways in which discussing their worries may promote this type of thinking/behaviour for each other, and they were grateful to become aware of this.
A fourth assertion is that this dyad, particularly the mother, placed emphasis on the role of intergenerational patterns in body image. Anna referred back to her own mother’s problematic perspectives and behaviour with regard to body shape and weight at multiple points in the conversation and in her individual interviews. She described how her mother’s competitive and critical lens contributed to her focus on weight and shape, and has likely influenced her decisions to have cosmetic surgery. Moreover, Laura expressed awareness of how harmful her grandmother’s comments were from first-hand experience. These participants both connect over the need to break from the negative thoughts and critical lens that Anna’s mother imposed upon them.

The fifth assertion, another theme that is unique for this pair, is that there is a reversal in the usual direction of parent-child influence. The daughter is helping to ground the mother, Anna, as she is seeking to learn from Laura. This dyad represents a deviation from the typical strength of parental authority, in that there was clear mutuality and reciprocity within their relationship, as well as in the co-construction of identity. By allowing, and even in some cases encouraging, Laura to support her, Anna is facilitating her daughter’s authority and possibly unconsciously fostering her identity as helper.

Finally, the sixth assertion is that there is a noticeable incongruence between the values being verbalized and the internal processes exhibited for this pair. As described in the elaboration of their individual and joint projects, the daughter seemed to endure cognitive dissonance as she tried to accept her body type and maintain healthy eating and exercise habits, despite her tendencies to adopt her mom’s desire for thinness and body surveillance. Interestingly, her dissonance seems to clearly reflect the incongruence in her mom’s instruction (e.g. be the strong one, be healthier than me) and her mom’s behaviour.
(e.g. I am more attractive when I’m thin, other’s approval of my looks is important). This assertion reveals the nuances of how social learning can happen on a spectrum from the more explicit delivery of messages and direct learning, to the less conscious portrayal of implicit messages and values, and more subtle modelling.

**Pair 4.**

The fourth dyad to participate in this study was comprised of a 39-year-old, white, European-Canadian mother, whom I refer to as Lynn, and her 13-year-old, white, European-Canadian, biological daughter whom I will call Cara. At the time of the study, Lynn was working full time. Cara was nearing the end of 8th grade and involved in basketball. Cara and her younger sibling were both Lynn’s biological children. Lynn was married to Cara’s biological father and the four of them lived together in a permanent residence in Vancouver. English is the primary language spoken in their home. Both mother and daughter appeared taller than average and relatively thin.

Lynn explained that she was interested in participating because she and Cara find body image and appearance related topics interesting and talk about them often. Cara confirmed that she feels comfortable talking about these subjects with her mom, and reported they have a very open and understanding relationship. As they explored a variety of conversation topics to discuss, they immediately agreed upon the most relevant topic, which was the community centre dance held for grades 6, 7 and 8. Cara went to these dances because they are fun events during which she and peers from her own, as well as other area middle schools, can come together outside of school. The dances provide an opportunity for peers from different schools in the area to get to know one another since
they will attend high school together within the coming years. As Lynn and Cara described it, this dance had developed a tacit dress code that mimics adult ‘club clothes.’ This means the norm for the girls is a sexualized look with short skirts and tight tops revealing their stomachs and legs, while the boys just wear fashionable t-shirts and jeans. These two decided to begin their research conversation by examining the culture of the community centre dance.

**Interactional Pattern.** The most prominent pattern in this conversation is that Lynn took the lead by asking Cara many questions and occasionally shifting between different topics. Cara followed Lynn’s lead by responding to her inquiries with her observations and perspective. By asking Cara for information, as well as her opinions, speculations and descriptions of others at the dance, Lynn appeared to be gathering information on her daughter’s experience and perceptions of social expectations. Lynn checked on, agreed with, and related to Cara’s experience by sharing and comparing her own experiences. Similarly, by answering her mom’s questions with descriptions of her peers, and offering hypotheses about their behaviour, Cara shared her experience in an effort to examine the possible motivations and meanings of her own, and her peers’ behaviour. Lynn explained that her occasional, seemingly sporadic, changes of topic were partially due to the nature of the research setting, as well as her interest in covering relevant material. There was a moment at the end of the fifteen minutes when they both hit a lull and had to consider what else they might discuss. Lynn suggested that because they discussed body image related topics fairly often, they already knew and understood one another’s views about these topics, so it felt as though they ran out of conversation material for the purposes of the study.
During their conversation they covered a wide array of topics which were all related to appearance and their interpretation of cultural standards for beauty. The conversation began with an exploration of the club-like dress code and social behaviour at the local community centre dance. Lynn then asked Cara about her reasons for playing basketball which led to the expression of a shared value for truly enjoying the activities that one engages in to stay fit. They briefly changed topics when Lynn asked Cara about her discomfort going to a local nude beach with her parents. Then, Lynn shifted the conversation back to talking about Cara’s peers by asking about the popular girl group that they refer to as “the blondes.” Together, they disapproved of the blondes’ fashion, and speculated on Cara’s male peers’ preferences regarding the girls’ looks. They discussed the experience of being sexually objectified and agreed on the value they both hold for dressing comfortably and appropriately for the context. Later, they talked about how Cara’s brother teased Cara by saying she was on a diet. This topic allowed Cara to express her beliefs about dieting and healthy eating. When Lynn told Cara about a documentary on obesity, they both expressed interest in accepting other body types. Finally, the conversation ended as Lynn asked Cara about her changing awareness of her body as she develops. Their comfort and openness discussing all of these topics were evidence that this conversation covered subjects that were familiar.

Joint Project. Over the course of their conversation, it appears as though Lynn and Cara’s shared projects were intended to bond and ensure that their values align, and to bolster one another’s appearance-based identity. Their investment in one another’s well-being reveals the degree to which these projects contribute to an over-arching relationship project. Their projects were carried out through three general objectives that emerged
within this conversation: to understand the appearance-based culture of Cara’s peers; to confirm that Cara’s appearance meets her peers’ standards and values without compromising her own values; to affirm shared beliefs about healthy eating, being fit, as well as dressing comfortably and appropriately.

The first intention, to understand the appearance-related culture and objectifying practices among Cara’s peers, was apparent as they explored her peers’ behaviours during the community centre dance. By reflecting Cara’s perceptions, asking her for further information, as well as her opinions, speculations and descriptions of others at the dance, Lynn seemed to be gathering information on her daughter’s experience and her perception of the social expectations. By answering her mom’s questions with descriptions of her peers and her hypotheses about their behaviour, Cara was enacting the functional steps of sharing her experience with Lynn and following her lead in examining the possible motivations or meanings of her peers’ behaviour. This type of exchange was evident when Lynn asked Cara about whether the boys dance with the girls who are heavier than the others:

Lynn: The boys don’t dance with them if they don’t look like that (ideal body)?
Cara: Well some boys do, because there are boys who, I don’t know if they feel bad for them, or if they actually wanna dance with them, but there are lots of, there are boys who do and boys who only choose pretty girls.
Lynn: Do you think there are boys who feel bad and so they ask?
Cara: [nods yes] (CON, Min 2).

This goal of understanding the appearance-related evaluation and judgment among Cara’s peers also seemed to emerge when they wondered about the boy’s opinions and behaviour in general. Lynn asked Cara about her perception of what the boys like and how they behave toward the girls. Cara speculated about the boys’ preferences:
Cara: They like the fact that we’re showing more and that it’s tight and stuff like that.
Lynn: And that’s when they talk about they’re boob guys or bum guys? (Laughs)
Cara: Yeah. It’s like anything, but they do that all the time usually.
Lynn: Even when you’re wearing skinny jeans?
Cara: Even when we’re wearing skinny jeans. It’s every day (CON, Min 9).

In addition to clarifying appearance standards among Cara’s peers, these two participants seemed to relate to one another’s interpretation of the boys’ behaviour, as well as the experience of being viewed as sex objects. Through this process of relating to one another’s experience of different situations in which they are more, or less, comfortable, as well as alternately approving and disapproving of certain behaviours exhibited by Cara’s peers, they clarified and reinforced their shared values for confidence and comfort. Thus, the process of identifying and understanding the values held by Cara’s peers seemed to facilitate the clarification and alignment of their own values for appearance. This process comprised their joint project.

The second aim of their project, to ascertain that Cara met the appearance standards that they mutually valued, as well as those that were valued among her peers, was apparent when they connected over the preference for being comfortable in their own skin. Cara affirmed that this is her value and she behaved accordingly. When Lynn asked Cara what the boys think of her friendship group’s style of clothing, Cara expressed her uncertainty, but through the process of contrasting the boys’ opinions of “the blondes” with their opinions of her and her friends’ style, together they confirmed that Cara’s appearance is approved of. They also reaffirmed their own value for not trying too hard.

Cara: I don’t know, I think… the guys I hang out with comment on it and they say, like they like that it’s more comfortable and it doesn’t look like I’m…
Lynn: You’re not trying too hard.
Cara: Yeah
Lynn: I think that’s an attractive trait in people in general when they’re comfortable in their own skin (CON, Min 10).
Building on the analysis of this exploratory conversation, the third intention identified seemed to be that of affirming and aligning with one another’s values and beliefs for healthy eating, being fit, and dressing comfortably and appropriately. One example where this goal seemed to be at play was when Lynn asked Cara about her motivation for playing basketball.

Cara: No, I play basketball because I like it.
Mom: That’s good.
Cara: I work out because I want to be fit.
Lynn: Okay, that’s good, no I like that you like it and that’s not your motivation for it ‘cause I think when that’s your motivation for something you don’t always want to do it then (CON, Min 4).

The articulation of the value for engaging in athletic pursuits that one truly enjoys seemed to contribute to their project to be aligned, as well as to bolster one another’s ‘healthy’ appearance-based identity. In her self-confrontation, Cara exemplified this process as she reflects on her mom’s approval for her motivation to play basketball: “It’s good, I like that she appreciates it. She doesn’t want me to do something to be fit, she doesn’t really, she likes the fact that I like to be active but she doesn’t, she wouldn’t force me to if I didn’t like it” (Cara, SC, Min 4). Through a similar process in which Lynn asked Cara about her experience of her brother’s teasing about dieting, Cara responded by expressing her frustration and beliefs about dieting. They seemed to clarify their shared value for healthy eating, as well as giving their bodies what they need. Lastly, the aforementioned value that they share for being comfortable in their clothing, and dressed appropriately for their context was affirmed as Lynn asked Cara about her rationale for wearing certain clothes:

Cara: Yeah but they like skirts without tights and I’m not about to wear skirts without tights to school.
Lynn: Why?
Cara: Because I find that inappropriate and it’s uncomfortable to sit down in and I just don’t feel comfortable.
Lynn: Well that’s good. So you wouldn’t compromise your comfort and what you feel is appropriate for the fact that you know the boys want you to wear that (CON, 9).

As Cara expressed her opinion of what is appropriate for her context and explained her dissatisfaction with revealing clothes, Lynn reflected and approved of her decision-making and affirmed the value for an internal sense of comfort over the external validation of appealing to the boys. Lynn also personally related to this value at different points in the conversation when she described feeling really tall in heels, or uncomfortable in short, tight, yoga shorts. Within these moments in the conversation, the alignment of values appeared to be deepened through the process of relating with one another. Moreover, the project of bolstering one another’s appearance-based identities was enacted through their more immediate objective to validate one another’s healthful beliefs, like focusing on comfort and nutrition.

Together, these two covered many familiar topics and seemed to be very comfortable exploring issues related to appearance and body image together. Cara’s experience with her peers in various appearance-focused contexts served as a conversational vehicle, creating the momentum for each of them to share stories, and relate to one another’s experience and values. Their objectives to understand and meet the appearance-based standards of Cara’s peers and to affirm one another for their shared values, wove together to form their joint projects for aligning their values and bolstering their appearance-based identities. The identification involved in these projects and the degree to which they reflected a mutual investment suggests that they are part of a larger relationship project.
**Individual Projects.** Lynn’s participation in this conversation was characterized by a pattern of asking questions about her daughter’s perceptions and beliefs, listening to her responses, and responding to agree and confirm the expressed sentiment, or to relate to Cara’s disclosures by sharing similar experiences. By asking questions and confirming, or reflecting back her daughter’s experience she appeared to be checking her daughter’s values and bolstering them. Her objectives throughout the conversation seemed to be to explore and to relate to her daughter’s experience of her body and appearance within objectifying contexts, as well as to understand and reinforce certain values and behaviour related to appearance. Lynn appeared to be enacting a project to teach her daughter and guide her appearance identity by asking, reflecting, and attuning to her daughter’s experiences. Cara’s intentions in this conversation were to help her mom understand her experience with appearance and body image, and to connect with her over shared values and experiences of appearance and body image. Both aims appeared to contribute to a larger project of openly embracing Lynn’s influence in the development of her appearance-based identity.

**Elaboration of Joint Appearance Project.** Lynn and Cara shared stories and related to one another’s experience and values about appearance. In doing so, they clarified Cara’s experience with her peers in various appearance-focused contexts. Jointly, their main objectives in this conversation were to understand the standards and values for appearance, as well as the objectified evaluation of girls, among Cara’s peers; to confirm that Cara’s appearance fits with their shared values, as well as it is approved of by her peers; and to affirm their mutual beliefs about healthy eating, being fit, and dressing comfortably and appropriately. These objectives coalesced over the course of the study.
into joint projects to align their values, and bolster one another’s appearance-based identities. These appearance specific projects were likely informed by overarching projects about identity and the mother-daughter relationship.

By asking Cara about her experiences with appearance evaluation, and objectification from her peers, Lynn seemed to guide Cara in the clarification of her values for dressing appropriately for her context and being comfortable. This exchange allowed the two of them to confirm that Cara’s decisions about her appearance were both sensible and attractive to others. When Lynn described and considered the experiences of the main subjects in a documentary on obesity, and when she asked Cara about her feelings about dieting in relation to her brother’s teasing, she created the conditions for them to relate to each other’s values for healthy eating and exercise. Moreover, there are a few points when Lynn may have been actively seeking to shape Cara’s appearance-based identity as she demonstrated more explicit attempts to inform her daughter’s sense of self, or style. For example while conversing about Cara’s development, she said: “But you don’t really strike me as tomboy” (CON, Min 17). And in her self-confrontation she explains how she was trying to shape Cara’s beliefs about fashion when she commented on the blondes’ fashion: “Yeah, that’s not attractive. (Laughs) I’m trying to like, push my feelings onto Cara, like, don’t wear that, it’s not attractive” (Lynn, SC, Min 5). Cara seemed to be active in facilitating this shaping process, as she helped her mother to understand her experiences by sharing her perception of her peers within different contexts. Cara and her mother seemed to share values as they had similar reactions to different stories, and agreed with one another in their evaluations.
Throughout the conversation, self-confrontation, and follow-up interviews, Lynn exhibited some congruence between the behaviours and values she described herself embracing, and her actual behaviour while interacting with her daughter. Thus, there was an alignment between her prescriptive message to Cara to dress comfortably and appropriately, and the behaviour she modeled. Admiring this comfortable presentation in other people is one example of how she acted according to this value. “I think that’s an attractive trait in people in general, when they’re comfortable in their own skin” (CON, Min 10). Another example of this was her own adherence to the standards of appearance when she described her clothing decisions. After emphasizing the value for being comfortable in one’s own skin and dressing appropriately for one’s context, Lynn endorsed this value within her own experience when she said: “Although for me sometimes, I feel comfortable wearing 5-inch heels, and I’d like to wear them to work but then I’m like 6 foot 4 tall… And that’s not comfortable” (CON, Min 10).

This congruence between Lynn’s explicit guidance and modeled behaviour was also evident when she described how her appearance can affect her mindset, and further endorsed her own value for being dressed appropriately for her context: “Because I feel the same way. I like, I don’t wear my yoga pants to work because it’s... I need to be on and I need to be focused and I’m taking responsibility for the day and when I’m in sweatpants to me that means being lazy ‘cause that’s why I want to wear sweatpants, when I’m being lazy” (CON, Min 10, 11). However, there was one point of divergence that emerged when Cara described in her self-confrontation how she sometimes finds it hard to fully embrace Lynn’s value for being accepting and feels misunderstood by her, because Cara noticed that her mother does sometimes gossip and forgets that it is difficult to never judge others.
Cara’s feeling of being misunderstood possibly stemmed from the mixed messages she received due to her mom’s insistence on body acceptance, despite her apparent focus on evaluating appearances from others’ perspectives. Lynn seemed to want to promote body acceptance and yet in much of the conversation she modeled an evaluative, sometimes critical lens based on others’ opinions. Other than this inconsistency, Lynn appeared to be congruent in the messages she was consciously conveying and modelling in her behaviour particularly with regard to being confident, comfortable, and dressed appropriately for the context.

Lynn’s general congruence, combined with the quality of their mother-daughter relationship may have facilitated a heightened mutual identification with one another’s confident body image. Interestingly, while it was apparent that Lynn was seeking to guide Cara’s values and behaviour regarding appearance, there was also evidence that Cara was invested in her mother’s appearance. The most notable example of this is when Lynn explained in her follow up telephone interview that Cara had recently encouraged her to “accessorize more, and try a little harder” (Lynn, phone-call). This suggested that Cara was projecting her awareness of social judgment and insecurities on her mother and wanting her to look good. Combined with the earlier example of Lynn “…trying to like, push my feelings onto Cara…” (Lynn, SC, Min 5), it appears that the investment in, and identification with the other’s self-presentation is bi-directional.

In their conversation, Lynn and Cara both expressed awareness, and shared experiences of being objectified. They also articulated different impacts of objectification within their self-confrontations. Lynn reflected on the degree to which evaluations of appearance are important at Cara’s age, and yet too superficial. She wondered about
whether it is detrimental to consider such evaluations when she says: “Yeah. I was like who cares? The more I talk about it with her, the more maybe it validates it, and I don’t really wanna validate it either” (Lynn, SC, Min 5). This dissonance was possibly a reflection of the incongruence between her value for diverse appearances, and her tendency to engage in this speculative and evaluative conversation with her daughter.

Similarly, Cara was aware of the pervasiveness of appearance judgment among her peers. Within her self-confrontation, she commented specifically on how girls tend to objectify themselves when she says “… it’s like more about how the boys think of us, we’re always dressing for how guys seem to think of us, I’m not really sure why, but that’s what girls seem to do” (Cara, SC, Min 7). While both mother and daughter expressed discomfort with being objectified, as well as embrace values against bullying and criticism of other’s appearance, they also both engaged in a critical evaluation of the objectifying, revealing clothing worn by “the blondes,” as well as other sexy, or “sloppy” fashion worn by Cara’s peers. This fashion critique led to an emphasis on dressing comfortably, and appropriately for one’s context. Taken together with their shared distaste for objectification, this flow of evaluative conversation suggested that their value for comfortable and intentional attire served to protect them from the discomfort of being inappropriately objectified, and criticized by others.

Notably, both Lynn and Cara appeared to meet the thin ideal and other standards for beauty (e.g., balanced and feminine facial features), so considering others’ evaluative judgments of appearance, as well as objectifying themselves to some degree, may have allowed them to feel acceptance and affirmation. This hypothesis was somewhat supported during the follow up interview when both Lynn and Cara agreed with the goal outlined in
their narrative summaries: to ensure that Cara meets the appearance standards that they mutually value, as well as those valued among her peers. Through their identification with one another, they both felt proud that Cara has been successful in meeting her peers’ standards for beauty without relinquishing her values for comfort and modesty.

This pride was also particularly evident when Lynn reflected on her daughter’s endorsement of certain values within the conversation:

Just feeling really, really, um, happy that she is confident … in the way she feels about her, her, just all of her habits, her life, her everything and she doesn’t seem to be super, well I was saying that the peer thing is definitely more a part of her life now, it doesn’t seem to sway, it sways more like the superficial things so maybe they’re all gonna wear the same kind of skirt or something to the dance but it doesn’t seem to sway her core values which is nice (Lynn, SC, Min 10).

Moreover, when asked how she was feeling during their conversation about enjoying sports for more than just staying fit Lynn responded: “Proud of her” (Lynn, SC, Min 3).

Cara expressed her appreciation for her mother’s values and appearance in subtler ways throughout the interview process. The primary way she expressed this seemed to be through her consistent agreement with her mom’s perspectives. Also, toward the end of her self-confrontation, she described appreciating Lynn’s values and input even when she disagrees with it:

Yeah I think they have, I mean she’s on to me about not wearing things that are not appropriate, and stuff like that, and not dating because I feel like dating, but dating because I like someone and I think that it carries on, I’ve got to know that she’s probably right about a lot of the things and that I probably shouldn’t do those things because it comes off and is sometimes not good to other people (Cara, SC, Min 16).

Cara’s pride for her mother, and their relationship, was also expressed at the very end of her participation in the study. During the follow up phone-call she described feeling gratitude for the openness and honesty in their relationship, and for her mom’s guidance.
Seven months after their initial interview, these two returned for their follow up interview. During both the individual and joint portions of the follow-up interview, Lynn and Cara resonated and agreed with the goals described in their narratives. They expressed appreciation to have their relationship reflected in an analytical way. Both also expressed heightened awareness of how their values for appearance allow them to maintain the social image (i.e., stylish, but comfortable and appropriate) that they value.

In her follow-up phone-call, three months later, Lynn reported that they both really enjoyed participating and kept their narrative summaries. When asked if anything had changed in their project, Lynn responded: “No, it hasn’t changed at all. Moreso in that direction” (Lynn, phone-call). She explained that Cara is spending more time in sports each day so she often sees her wearing sports clothes, and hopes she continues to dress both fashionably and modestly, or appropriate for her environment. When asked how often they engage in project-related activities or conversations, Lynn said it is still very common for them to engage in this way and estimated that it comes up more than ten times a week. Lynn closed the phone interview by sharing that they both are invested in one another’s appearance and Cara recently told Lynn she needs to accessorize and try harder.

In Cara’s follow up phone-call she evaluated the experience of participating in the study as fun and interesting. She explained that she and her mom still talk about body or appearance relevant topics often, but that they do not often discuss how they talk about these topics. When asked if their appearance-related project was the same, or if it had changed, Cara, like her mom, said it was very much the same. She reported that they are constantly commenting on each other’s clothes and discuss appearance and bodies openly. The meaning she attributes to these conversations and activities is that they make it feel
easier to talk about anything. She expressed gratitude for their openness, values, and honesty, and for her mom’s guidance (see Appendix H for further detail on follow-up phone call for both participants).

**Within-Case Assertions.** This within-case analysis of all of the conversational and interview data collected for this mother-daughter dyad facilitated the development of six within-case assertions:

First, a unique theme became clear as Lynn’s shaping (or prescriptive communication) and *the beliefs and behaviours she modeled to her daughter were mostly congruent messages*. The only exception was the mixed message Cara identified in her self-confrontation, when she noted that her mom’s occasional gossiping was a divergence from her promotion of body acceptance.

This congruence, along with the quality of their relationship, may have enhanced her efficacy as an identity agent. This lends to the second assertion, that Lynn made *explicit efforts to shape her daughter’s appearance-based identity*. The most noticeable examples of this dynamic were when Lynn guided her daughter’s self-perception regarding whether she is a tomboy, and when she described her effort to discourage her daughter from dressing like “the blondes.”

Another notable theme for this dyad was how their shared value for comfort and context-appropriate clothing *protected them from the negative aspects of being objectified*. They both expressed awareness of the degree to which objectification can be harmful and fodder for negative social judgment (e.g., “the blondes”). They also expressed awareness of the discomfort they experienced being objectified. However, they seemed possibly less
aware of the degree to which focusing on appearance and fashion allowed them to feel social approval.

The fourth assertion is rooted in the emergent construct of mutual confidence and pride in appearance. These two seemed to derive confidence from the degree to which Cara met the standards for beauty among her peers without compromising her values. They both endorsed pride in their values and their relationship. They also both agreed with the hypothesized goal that they were hoping to ensure that Cara’s appearance is accepted by her peers.

The fifth assertion is that, through their pride in each other and shared values, it became apparent that Lynn and Cara identified with each other. In addition to the degree to which they echoed one another’s values, confidence and insecurity, the fact that they both expressed investment in the other’s appearance at different points in the study revealed the degree to which their identification with one another was bi-directional.

Finally, as these two engage in projects to explore the standards for beauty and fashion among Cara’s peers, to understand the objectification and evaluation of girls, to reassure one another that they are approved of, and to share values and beliefs about fitness, fashion and food, they are very clearly aligned with one another’s values, confidence, and sense of social approval. Therefore, their appearance-related projects may reflect a longstanding relationship career.

**Pair 5.**

The fifth mother-daughter pair to participate in this study was a 47-year-old, Iranian-Canadian mother whom I refer to as Nadia, and her 14-year-old, Iranian-Canadian,
biological daughter whom I named Niku. At the time of the first interview, Nadia was working full time. Niku was in the middle of grade 9 and actively involved in school activities such as plays, and invested in achieving good grades. Niku is Nadia’s eldest of two children. Nadia was married to Niku’s father, and they were living in a home with their two biological children. Their family immigrated to Canada from Iran when Niku was in elementary school. By the time of the follow-up interviews, Niku’s father was temporarily living abroad for a work assignment, so Nadia was acting as a single parent. Both English and Farsi are spoken in the home, but Farsi is the family’s native language. Both mother and daughter appeared relatively thin and average in height.

Nadia clarified that her interest in participating in this study stemmed from her awareness that her daughter is growing up in a very different cultural context than she did. Nadia also described being motivated to “get to know her (daughter) better, and also making more connection and close relationship” (Nadia, Intro, Min 3). She elaborated that she wanted to better understand Niku due to her occasional negative reactions to her mother’s language and word choices, possibly reflecting an interest in aligning their cultural development. When asked about possible discussion topics, Nadia related that they sometimes talk about skin-care, since Nadia had difficulties with acne when she was younger. She also mentioned that she and her husband both have athletic backgrounds, so conversing about sports activities with Niku was familiar for them as well. When asked what topics interest her, Niku responded by saying that she was hoping they could talk about her make-up use. They both agreed that this has been a frequent and relevant conversation topic recently, and decided to begin their research conversation by re-visiting it.
**Interactional Pattern.** In a noticeable contrast with previous dyads, the daughter in this dyad, Niku, was very much in charge of the direction of the conversation. The mother, Nadia, gave her daughter the lead when she began the conversation by telling Niku “Ask me your questions” (CON, Min 1). From there, Niku did ask her mom many questions, most of which sought to clarify Nadia’s justification for the age restrictions she placed on Niku regarding make-up use, eyebrow grooming, and dating. After Niku asked a question, Nadia explained her beliefs and values, and sometimes offered a story from her own experience. In most instances, Niku responded to her mother’s explanations by disagreeing, bargaining for more lenient rules, and rejecting comparisons between their experiences due to different times and cultures. There was a moment when they noticeably escalated in disagreement as they discussed the ways eyebrow grooming can be distracting and time consuming. The escalation was evident as they raised their voices and talked over one another without fully listening to, or acknowledging, what the other had said. Niku subsequently changed the topic of conversation to dating, which they had not discussed much. Despite the discomfort Nadia expressed feeling for this topic in her self-confrontation, she bravely discussed her rules for dating, and her desire to preserve her daughter’s wellbeing.

Niku’s interest in enhancing her own appearance was a consistent theme that facilitated the discussion of Nadia’s beliefs about confidence, focus, and appropriate ages for appearance-focused activities like using makeup and grooming eyebrows. They also explored Niku’s rationale for wanting to wear makeup and pluck her eyebrows. She presented her arguments against age restrictions on makeup and eyebrow grooming. As noted earlier, toward the end of their conversation they ventured into the topic of dating, a
subject that they had not yet examined together much. Despite having differing perspectives on all these topics, this mother and daughter seemed to listen to one another’s perspectives, laugh with each other, and generally appeared to want to understand one another. One example of this was when Nadia confronted Niku for wearing eyeliner more often than they had agreed upon:

Nadia: Oh come on. Last, during the last month, I think once a week, without telling me you wear eyeliner. (laughs)

Niku: Or maybe more? (laughs)

Nadia: Maybe more (laughs) but I want you to uh, to, uhm, what’s the difference? When you’re wearing it, and when you’re not wearing it? The, the experience wearing it, was it very different from what without it? Umm... (CON, Min 5).

**Joint Project.** Their conversation revolved around Niku’s examination and negotiation of the cultural values and the age restrictions that both her mother and father have enforced for her regarding certain grooming habits and dating. Altogether, their conversation and individual input seemed to point to two related joint projects: To preserve and promote Niku’s youth and wellbeing, while navigating different experiences of cultural identity development, and to deepen their connection with open and honest communication. The project to preserve and promote Niku’s healthy development seemed to be driven by their mutual interest in facilitating both parties’ bi-cultural identity development. Niku seemed to be interested in allowing her mom to provide her with protection, and to teach her about Iranian culture, but she was also very clearly motivated to incorporate some of the North American beauty practices into her repertoire. Nadia’s emphasis was on preserving her daughter’s experience of youth, as well as her own Iranian traditions, and protecting her daughter’s emotional health.
These intentions were put into action through the functional step of negotiating opposing cultural practices and parent-adolescent perspectives. This negotiation of cultural or generational perspectives was evident when these two addressed the issue of eyebrow grooming. Niku embraced the cultural value to preserve the bridge between her eyebrows when she suggested that she just trim the edges. Nadia resisted this idea and suggested that she have her hair cut with bangs instead. They then seemed to be in opposition, hoping to understand one another, but not fully embracing the other’s perspective.

Moreover, the project to preserve and promote Niku’s wellbeing seemed to emerge at various points in the conversation, and it was especially apparent when they sought to further understand one another by addressing age-appropriate boy-girl relationships. They connected with one another over the idea that what Niku learned from reading a book called “The Secret” was good for her. Then, they explored the idea that adolescent relationships have no future. Nadia expressed her concern that Niku will get hurt if she dates during adolescence. They both appeared to be considering what will best for Niku’s wellbeing within the following exchange:

Niku: How about if I don’t care if I get hurt?
Nadia: You say right now, but when you are in a relationship you will get hurt
Niku: and then you get hurt and then…
Nadia: and then…
Niku: and then I move on.
Nadia: and then you move on with another one and move on with another one…
(CON, Min 14).

Niku seemed to be questioning the protection that Nadia is providing with her age restrictions. At the same time, this back and forth appeared to facilitate her understanding of Nadia’s desire to protect her emotional health.
Their second joint project was more clearly a relational project as it centered on strengthening their connection. It was shaped through their goals to maintain open communication, to understand one another, and to address both familiar and less familiar topics of conversation. It could be interpreted that the entire conversation was an effort to better understand one another as they explain their differing perspectives on appropriate ages for engaging in certain appearance-based activities. One striking example of the shared goal to keep communication open, within the project to connect, was when Niku changed the topic of the conversation to dating, a topic this mother and daughter had not talked about quite as often. Niku introduced this subject in a humorous way, using a wavering voice that seemed to imply that this topic is strange, scary, or potentially awkward. Nadia responded by laughing and following along with the topic change.

Another example of their mutual interest in deepening their connection was evident in Niku’s desire to learn more about her mother’s Iranian traditions:

Nadia: Natural you have to go burn an um, an almond? Almond skin?

Niku: And that gives you color?

Nadia: Yeah, this is what the old days they do, so they use as eyeliner. This is the natural-est. If you want to do that we have to go. But anything, any products they are selling is chemical (CON, Min 11).

Overall, this dyad tackled challenging issues related to Niku’s development with openness and a full awareness of the tension between their opposing parent-adolescent perspectives. It also seemed as though Niku was navigating the differences between her parents’ Iranian culture and the Western culture of her peers. Together, they appeared to be making an effort to communicate openly, in order to more fully understand one another. This ultimately maintained their joint project of strengthening their connection and relationship.
They also seemed to be mutually working toward preserving and promoting Niku’s wellbeing as they addressed appearance-based issues related to Niku’s development, and negotiated opposing cultural and parent-adolescent perspectives.

**Individual Projects.** In this conversation, Nadia seemed to draw from her own experiences, and cultural background, to guide her parenting. In her self-confrontation she described how she wants her daughter to feel comfortable talking to her and this is reflected in her efforts to create an open dialogue within this conversation. At the same time, she seemed to be using the conversation as a forum to share her rationale for her rules, in an effort to help Niku understand them, and to ultimately shape her values. Thus, it seems that Nadia’s projects were: to shape her daughter’s appearance-based identity, and to strengthen their bond. These projects emerged within Nadia’s two primary goals in this conversation. One, it appeared as though she had the intention of resisting her daughter’s challenges to the protective age restrictions she and her husband established for her. Two, Nadia aimed to impress her values regarding makeup and dating upon Niku.

Niku’s project within this conversation seemed to be to maintain a close connection with her mother while negotiating her independence in the development of aspects of her identity related to her body image and appearance. She seemed to enact these projects through two prevalent aims within this conversation: Niku maintained an intention to challenge some of her mom’s restrictions for makeup use and dating; she also aimed to understand her mom’s beliefs, and feel understood, in the process of negotiating the cultural differences between her parents and peers. Through the examination of some challenging topics on which these two have opposing perspectives, like makeup use, eyebrow grooming and dating, Niku sought to maintain a sense of connection with her
mother, while asserting her independence by challenging her mother’s restrictions. Some of Niku’s disagreement seems to be rooted in typical parent-adolescent tension, where the adolescent wants more freedom than the parent is willing to allow, but she also insisted that her experience is unique due to the navigation of different cultural influences between her parents and peers.

**Elaboration of Joint Project.** This dyad’s overarching project appeared to be two-fold. Nadia and Niku are driven to preserve and promote Niku’s youth and wellbeing, while navigating different experiences of cultural identity development, and they seemed to be deepening their connection with open and honest communication. A notable dynamic that emerged for this mother-daughter pair is that Nadia appeared to be consciously, explicitly acting as an identity agent in an effort to preserve her Iranian cultural values, and to protect her daughter. This was articulated within Nadia’s individual project and there were several instances in the conversation and in her self-confrontation when she expresses her desire to impress the values of her culture on her daughter. Nadia described some concern and disagreement for Western approaches to schooling youth (e.g. theatrical performances in school that focus on relationships; a youth professional’s suggestion that teens learn by experiencing relationships). Another moment when she articulated concern was during her self-confrontation when she said:

Umm, and, it shows their personality or they’re... You know, back home, if a girl do it before she’s 18, they say you’re become kind of a Westerner (okay) you’re not, um, how do you say, to your culture, you’re not um... it’s like a Western um... they are free to do anything you know? (Nadia, SC, Min 9).
Thus, it might be interpreted that she was protecting her daughter from what she saw as
being the lenient and less healthy aspects of Western culture by seeking to impress the
more conservative traditions and values from her own Iranian culture on to her daughter.

In light of Nadia’s aim to shape her daughter’s developing cultural identity she was
mostly congruent, but it is worth noting that at a couple points she seemed to communicate
incongruent messages to her daughter. She rejected her daughter’s pleas to wear makeup,
but then bought her some eyeliner when she found out Niku was using her friend’s
makeup. In that instance, it seemed that physical health and hygiene (i.e., not sharing eye
makeup) trumped the concern about her pre-occupation with appearance. Moreover, while
requiring Niku to keep her uni-brow because it represents ethnic pride and signifies youth
in Iranian culture, Nadia was also wary about the potential for her daughter’s Canadian
peers to judge her for how it looks. Nadia may have been attempting to facilitate her
daughter’s social acceptance by suggesting she wear her hair in bangs in order to cover up
her eyebrows. Niku rejected this idea in the conversation, and in her self-confrontation she
reflected on how her mother had her hair cut in bangs when she was younger, once they
moved here, possibly with a similar intent to cover up her eyebrows. This mixed message
about maintaining ethnic pride while attempting to meet North American beauty standards
most likely reflected a conflict in Nadia’s parenting as a result of her own cultural
negotiation.

Another unique aspect of this mother-daughter relationship was the power that
Niku had with regard to language and cultural fluency. Niku might have acted as a cultural
identity agent as well. Her power was evident as she led the conversation and challenged
her mother’s efforts to shape her values. At the same time, Niku acknowledged that her
mother had ultimate authority (see also Niku’s follow up phone-call below). Niku’s power seemed to have evolved in tandem with Nadia’s collaborative, and occasionally permissive, approach to parenting in spite of her conservative rules. An example of this that was touched on above was when Nadia gave in to her daughter’s makeup use. “…In the beginning she started using her friend’s makeup and I told her ‘No, don’t do that’ so I gave her new ones and I told her ‘If you want to use that’s okay, use your’s’” (Nadia, SC, Min 5). Between Nadia’s collaborative style, and Niku’s strong-minded personality, as well as her North American cultural and linguistic fluency, it seemed that Niku was more outspoken in this conversation, and possibly had some power in her negotiation within this conversation.

Furthermore, Niku’s bi-cultural experience seemed to facilitate both identification with, and individuation from her mother. Within the conversation, and her self-confrontation, she challenged her mother’s traditional parenting, yet appreciated the protection she provides. Niku also expressed appreciation for the ways her mother’s customs may shape her cultural values and identity development. Some examples of how Niku seemed to assert her individuality were evident when she challenged her mother’s age restrictions by bargaining for younger limits with nearly every rule. This individuation was even more explicit when Niku resisted her mother’s efforts to protect her from time-consuming eyebrow grooming practices by separating her experience from her mother’s: “Nooo… not really. You’re not me. And you wouldn’t know that if you’re not me. That was your experience!” (CON, Mins 9-10). While, at the same time, she seemed to identify with her mother when she expressed appreciation and pride for her ethnicity by embracing the custom to not pluck the bridge between her eyebrows. Niku also seemed to be aligning
with her mom’s values and identity by adopting her requirement for natural products and not using chemicals on her face. A further example of how Niku appreciated her mother’s cultural identity, and possibly aligned with it, was when she expressed curiosity and interest in an old Middle-Eastern technique for eyeliner, despite a little apprehension:

I guess, she was trying to like wrap it up and try to tell me… like either put make up on… use something natural, or don’t do it at all. And the natural things, like burning almond it might be like really cool, but I’m kind of scared of fire, like just a bit, I don’t think I’ll be able to wrap the almond skin up and then light it on fire and then put it on my face or something (Niku, SC, Min 9).

Altogether, Niku’s contributions to this study provided a striking example of the tensions that can exist in the processes of identifying with, and individuating from one’s parent during adolescence. These tensions seem to be especially evident with the notable discrepancy between the cultural perspectives of her parents and peers.

The second, in-person interview with this dyad was held approximately four months later. Niku and Nadia were spending more time together as it was summer break for Niku, and her father had been doing some temporary work overseas. After reading their individual narrative summaries separately, then coming back together to review their joint narrative, both participants agreed with the overall conceptualization of their conversation and projects. In the conceptualization of their joint goal, Niku noted the importance of her interest in trying to fit in with the culture of her peers. Together, they felt that it was a valuable experience to make the time to talk, to confront new topics, as well as to read the summaries and to reflect on their relationship.

Individually, Nadia expressed her agreement with her narrative summary and reaffirmed that she appreciates the structure provided by her cultural heritage and desires
to hold on to her traditional values. However, Niku disagreed with a few descriptions in her individual narrative summary. She did not see herself as “resisting” her mom’s restrictions as that might suggest that she is behaving against the rules, but did agree that her behaviour could be described as “challenging” the restrictions. She also felt that the description of parent-adolescent tension (i.e., the line read “where the adolescent wants more freedom than the parent allows them”) was not specific and somewhat generic, given the unique and significant differences between their perspectives due to cultural context. This added further evidence of how self-aware and strong-minded Niku was. Not only did she think critically about the conceptualization, but she was also confident and assertive in expressing her perspective. This may have also reflected her sense of empowerment regarding language and culture, but it also suggested that Niku was adamant about being understood, and placed emphasis on her struggle to fit between two cultures.

Finally, the follow-up phone-calls were conducted two months after the second interview, to check on the relevance of the projects articulated within the interviews (see Appendix H for further detail on follow-up phone call for both participants). Nadia spoke first and described her reaction to the participation as helping her to feel more comfortable with her daughter. She said: “I know more about my daughter, how she thinks and feels. Now sometimes she asks me what to wear – it’s surprising. In the summertime, we went shopping together and daughter asked for my input” (Nadia, phone-call). When asked if their project had changed, she said that it was mostly the same. One concern she brought up was that Niku was planning to go to camp where there would be swimming and she chose a swimsuit that seemed “unsuitable” to Nadia, but she reported that she “respect(s) her need to fit in, and so I said yes, but I trust her” (Nadia, phone-call). Nadia considered
this to be a “kind of give and take.” She highlighted that she found it comforting when
Niku asked her for her opinion with clothes. She stated that she trusts her. Nadia ended the
phone-call by thanking the researcher for the opportunity. “It was a good chance to talk”
(Nadia, phone-call).

Niku then took over the phone for her follow-up interview. When asked about her
overall experience participating in the study, Niku responded to say that she was happy to
help people going through a similar experience. She then reiterated that every person’s
experience is unique as this was an important point for her. “It was pretty easy and I’m
glad to contribute” (Niku, phone-call). She confirmed that their projects were “pretty much
the same” (Niku, phone-call). When asked about the meaning of the project within their
overall relationship, Niku described how their relationship, and their identified projects
have been affected by her father’s recent, temporary absence:

Since my dad has been gone for work we have been close together and we talk
more. I’m kind of the head of my family because of language, but mom is still the
authority. We don’t really talk about make-up as much. I didn’t wear as much over
the summer because it was hot. Now I wear make-up every other day. I realize
what she meant by it being hard and time consuming. We’ve just generally been
relating to each other a lot. Talking, sharing our day, laughing… (Niku, phone-
call).

Her final comments in the phone-call were that she felt that she and her mother had
accomplished a strong and open mother-daughter relationship, but their current goal was to
maintain it. “It’s kinda hard – we don’t really talk about other unfamiliar topics like
dating” (Niku, phone-call). Niku described how her mother gets persistent and asks about
‘friends,’ but Niku doesn’t feel like sharing because of her mother’s conservative values
and dismissive reaction.
Overall, this pair’s projects weave together cultural and appearance-based values as both mother and daughter were learning to navigate the integration of their Iranian and Canadian cultural identities. Both Nadia and Niku were seeking to ensure that Niku was safe from psychological and emotional harm (e.g., preoccupation with appearance, being hurt by dating at a young age), as well as that she fit in with her peers (e.g., finding middle ground between protective rules and Western beauty customs like wearing makeup as a teen). As they sought to navigate their individual and joint bi-cultural identity development, they were also intent on maintaining the closeness in their mother-daughter relationship by endorsing, and attempting to engage in honest and open communication about most topics.

Within-Case Assertions. This within-case analysis of the conversational and interview data from this mother-daughter dyad has led to the development of six key assertions:

First, through her insistence on maintaining her culturally based age restrictions for her daughter, Nadia was consciously and explicitly attempting to shape her daughter’s cultural identity. Thus, it could be said that Nadia was acting as cultural identity agent. In addition, to sharing her rationale and teaching her daughter about her cultural values within the conversation, there were a few instances in her self-confrontation when she explicitly expressed her desire to impress the traditional values of her culture on her daughter.

The second assertion for this dyad is that Nadia generally was congruent in the values she modeled as well as taught. However, there were a couple contradictions in the messages she conveyed to her daughter (i.e., pride for ethnic eyebrows, but wear hair in
bangs to cover them). It seems likely that this may have been due to her efforts to adjust to North American culture in tandem with her daughter. As in the previous dyad, the fact that Nadia was mostly congruent and that these two seem to have a strong bond may both be factors that facilitated Niku’s social learning and identification with her mother.

Their simultaneous navigation of cultural tensions and their efforts to shape one another’s beliefs and behaviours regarding appearance reflects a third assertion that they were sharing in a process of cultural identity development. An example of this was particularly evident when Nadia reflected on a recent project-related activity within the follow-up phone-call. She described how Niku chose a swimsuit that seemed “unsuitable” to Nadia, but she reported “I respect her need to fit in, and so I said yes, but I trust her” (Nadia, phone-call).

Another key assertion for this dyad was that the daughter seemed to have more power in their conversation and project, given the cultural and linguistic contexts of the study. She was very outspoken and led the conversation as well as challenged her mom’s efforts to shape her. Within the context of their simultaneous cultural identity development, it could also be considered that Niku’s cultural power rendered her an identity agent for her mother. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that Mom has ultimate authority.

The fifth assertion is that Niku’s bi-cultural development seemed to facilitate both identification with, and individuation from her mother. Between her contributions to the conversation and her individual interviews, she vacillated from repeatedly challenging her mother’s traditional rules, to appreciating the protection they provide, and the cultural
values informing them. Generally, these two seemed to be negotiating the integration of Iranian and Canadian culture together. Niku’s simultaneous individuation and identification illustrated how this process is embedded in their relationship.

Finally, this dyad’s projects, like the others, were highly relational at their core. Their appearance-based projects were to protect Niku’s youth and wellbeing while navigating different experiences of cultural identity development, as well as to better understand one another and maintain a strong relationship with open and honest communication. Their shared experience of cultural integration, and the bi-directional influence in cultural identity development were particularly salient markers of the degree to which their appearance projects were part of a larger mother-daughter relationship project.

**Pair 6.**

The sixth mother-daughter pair to participate in this study was a 60-year-old, European-Canadian mother, Karen, and her 15-year-old adopted, European-Canadian daughter, Sara. Karen and Sara make up the household as Karen is single and Sara is Karen’s only daughter. English was the language that was spoken in the home. At the time of initial contact, Karen was working long hours within a temporary position. As a result of Karen’s busy schedule there were some difficulties contacting and scheduling this pair. At the time of the first interview, Karen’s temporary position was coming to a close and her daughter, Sara, was busy with school, nearing the end of grade 8, and participating in extracurricular activities. While the mother was of average height and noticeably thin, the daughter was average in height and possibly slightly overweight.
Karen initiated participation after seeing an advertisement for the study, and at the outset of the introductory interview, Karen articulated her expectations for participation while instructing Sara to ignore the video-camera. She said “We’re doing this ‘cause it’s going to be kinda fun, and it is a chance to talk about something we argue about all the time” (Karen, Intro, Min 1) to which Sara replied with a moan, expressing what sounded like discomfort. Karen further explained her interest in participating when she said that the topics of appearance and clothing combined represent “a very difficult topic in our household” (Karen, Intro, Min 2). She elaborated that they often argue about these subjects and she hoped that talking about it in a more neutral research setting would promote their ability to converse in a healthy way. Karen was concerned about her daughter’s body image and behaviours related to clothing and food. According to Karen, Sara was adopted from an orphanage and had experienced some difficulties related to delayed cognitive development and emotionally reactive behaviour. She explained that these experiences may have had a negative impact on her social relationships. Karen believed Sara’s difficulties were related to an absence of normative attachment in infancy. With regard to her motivation for participating, Karen also mentioned that she has a Master’s degree and is generally interested in research.

When asked about her interest in participating, Sara explained that her mother just arranged it, but it sounded like “cool” research so she was willing to give it a try. Sara also offered an explanation of a drawing that she provided for the study. She had drawn two female figures: one that was a stick figure with a large round circle for the torso, under which Sara had written “too fat;” the second figure, labeled “Me,” was similarly drawn as a stick figure, but with a smaller circular torso, under which she had written “not too fat,
but muscular and a little overweight” (Intro, Sara). At that point in the introductory interview, Sara’s descriptions of herself, and her dressing habits, were direct references to what her mother had said to her in the past. This included a critique of cropped shirts that show her stomach, she said Karen had told her that “because you have a big belly it’s not a good thing” (Sara, Intro, Min 4). Karen further explained that she sometimes said critical things when they discussed this topic at home because they would usually escalate into an argument and she would find herself saying harsh things out of exasperation.

**Interactional Pattern.** Generally, the content of this dyad’s conversation was focused on healthy eating, and Karen’s concern about the way Sara dresses. Together, they discussed Sara’s exercise and eating habits, and they generated a list of nutritional snacks, as well as foods to limit. They also attempted to resolve the major topic of disagreement: the way Sara dresses. The predominant pattern that seemed to emerge early on within this conversation was that Karen took the lead in guiding the conversation as she alternated between questioning and instructing Sara regarding her experience of exercise, her awareness of healthy eating, and her motivations for dressing in revealing ways. Karen was engaged and seeking to understand Sara, as well as to influence her by sharing her beliefs, perceptions, developmental conceptualizations, and information. Karen’s efforts to guide her daughter by instructing her became particularly evident when they clarified a list of healthy “low calorie” foods.

Sara followed Karen’s lead in this conversation by cooperatively engaging in this process and openly explaining her clothing decisions, as well as expressing her feelings about exercise, and certain foods. She was clearly making an effort to stay engaged and somewhat enthusiastic by listening, occasionally agreeing, making lists, but also by
disagreeing, and expressing disinterest and dismissal during more contentious moments. At times Sara expressed uncertainty (e.g., permanence of weight gain) and seemed to adjust her beliefs according to mother’s input. There were also moments when, on a surface level it appeared as though Sara was attempting to keep the conversation lighthearted by using humor and distraction, but upon further analysis, it might be said that Sara was acting dismissively in response to her mother’s attempts to instruct her regarding fashion. Sara’s dismissal emerged through her efforts to distract her mother using humor (e.g., making fun of her mother’s facial expressions) and expressions of dissatisfaction and frustration (e.g., telling Karen that her criticism makes her feel fat, and asking her not to use certain words like “breasts”). These different perceptions and approaches to dealing with one another during a contentious conversation possibly reflect an underlying relational misunderstanding about how to express care and be cared for. Taken one step further, this misunderstanding may be influenced by some of the mental health and developmental concerns attributed to Sara’s background as an orphan.

**Joint Project.** Throughout this conversation it seemed that this pair shared the following main joint project: to improve their relationship by spending time together and finding common ground over their disagreement regarding Sara’s clothing. This project is evident through their mutual intentions to get along with each other during this research conversation, to engage in supportive problem-solving, and to better understand one another’s perspectives with regard to Sara’s clothing. These goals were evident when they were successful in their collaborative effort to generate a list of healthy foods, which seemed to serve an intervention in Sara’s eating behaviour:

Karen: Sushi’s really healthy. These are all good foods, sweetie.
Sara: But don’t eat it a lot.

Karen: No. Sushi’s probably okay. Sushi’s good (CON, Min 7).

The intentions to problem-solve while being supportive were evident when they connect with enthusiasm over Sara’s grandfather’s offer to give her monetary rewards for exercising:

Sara: I can earn 50 cents by walking around the block, that’s cool (talking to camera). My grandfather gives me 50, he just sent 10 dollars

Karen: That’s easy money! Take a little bike ride…

Sara: Tell the camera! (CON, Min 14).

The project to relate to one another in an effort to find common ground is less obvious during moments when they were in opposition. However, the fact that they persevered through their disagreement by continuing to try to understand, and be understood by, one another, reflects their mutual investment in one another. This can be seen in their efforts to express themselves when the discussion escalates:

Sara: And you called me fat this morning.
Karen: Because I was mad, I’ve been really mad about how you’re not even listening at all and taking care of your reputation?
Sara: Why can’t you stop, do you not care anymore?
Karen: And dressing… and ruining shirts we bought? (CON, Min 13).

And through their persistence in working toward a solution with one another:

Sara: I don’t like this anymore.
Karen: You don’t like this anymore. She doesn’t… (Looking at camera) she’s petering out here.
Sara: Uh huh.
Karen: But let’s finish up and what about starting to get more exercise
Overall, it seems the main joint project that emerged within this pair’s conversation was to connect with one another by spending time together participating in the study, and through their efforts to find common ground in areas of disagreement related to body image.

**Individual Projects.** Karen appeared to be enacting a project to love and protect her daughter from what she sees as potential harms (e.g., gaining weight, being judged for her revealing clothing, etc) within her participation in this study. She carried out this project by acting on two primary intentions that seemed to dovetail together. One, Karen aimed to engage and connect with her daughter in hopes of shaping her attitudes and behaviour without escalating into a fight. Two, her efforts to redirect Sara’s thinking and behaviour seem to be an indirect expression of her love and concern for her. Karen’s efforts to engage and connect with her daughter are evident throughout the entire conversation. Sara had two primary intentions in this conversation. The first was to learn from her mother about topics related to body image, without necessarily agreeing with all of her perspectives. The second goal was simply to stay engaged and positive while spending time talking with her mother. These objectives seem to stem from a project to connect with her mother and learn about body image in the research setting, while still maintaining her independence regarding fashion and acceptance by her peers.

**Elaboration of Joint Project.** Karen and Sara’s joint projects primarily seemed to be about spending time together connecting in an effort to find common ground in their disagreements about appearance and clothing. During their conversation, their objectives to understand one another and to engage in supportive problem solving were evident as they engaged in back and forth about their understanding of Sara’s activity level and eating
behaviours, as they collaborated on a list of healthy foods, and further examined Sara’s rationale for wanting to wear revealing clothing. While they seemed to enact this project straightforwardly, further examination of their internal processes revealed some of the complexities and challenges these two were experiencing.

One unique challenge that was present for this dyad was related to the nature of their adopted relationship. According to Karen’s report, Sara had been adopted from an orphanage where she experienced neglect in her first few months. Karen explained that Sara was severely underweight when she first adopted her. She also said that her daughter exhibited cognitive delays and a tendency to be emotionally reactive throughout her development. They sought therapy with various providers and Sara had been given multiple diagnoses. She tried some psychotropic medication that Karen believed caused her to gain weight. Some important questions emerged about how mother-daughter identification happens (e.g., attunement through social learning, physical caretaking, etc) between an adoptive mother-child. Within this study, Sara’s limited self-awareness and comprehension of others’ perceptions might be understood as evidence of some degree of developmental delay. Interestingly, based on her self-confrontation, it seemed that Sara was longing for connection with her mother, which may add support to the relevance of attachment needs, and the presence of identification with her mom. Sara confirmed with the researcher that it was good to be talking to her mom when she said “Yeah. Cause my mom was working at… this thing, she was working a lot so I couldn’t really talk to her a lot…” (Sara, SC, Min 8). In a similar vein, Sara expressed desire for her mom’s attention when she described her interest in having her mom film her. She described how her mother told her that she doesn’t see herself doing this and if she had a video camera she would
film her. Sara suggested that she wanted to ask her to do it, but decided not to. It seemed that her mother was suggesting that she may have developed a better understanding about how she was perceived if she could see herself in video or pictures. Sara latched on to this idea in order to see herself through her other’s eyes, which at the core may have reflected a longing to be watched closely by Karen, or more generally to be the center of attention.

Along this line of reasoning, if Sara was craving attention both at home, and at school, then dressing in provocative ways might possibly have been a means to secure attention even if it had become negative. Additionally, her goals to learn from and connect with her mother, and make the most of their time together without giving up her own beliefs, suggested that she was experiencing a similar tension between identification and individuation as described in previous dyads.

Additionally, it seems noteworthy that Sara’s history in the orphanage, her adopted status, and related difficulties connecting seemed to elicit Karen’s tendency to focus on pathology. This emphasis on Sara’s challenges was consistent within Karen’s self-confrontation. She described how her daughter’s difficulties with peer interactions are “classic” for children coming from orphanages. She compared her daughter to a famous Autistic woman. She expressed her frustration with herself for repeatedly nagging her daughter. Her focus on Sara’s challenges was particularly evident when she described her efforts to teach her daughter:

Y’know, it’s like she’s 15 going on 6. Y’know, I’m just so used to sometimes talking, you know paraphrasing or just to make sure she understands or explaining that and I mean, you don’t know if you’re talking to a 6 or 10-year-old or a 15-year-old but she just needs to get that information and trying to make it very clear (Karen, SC, Min 6).
Karen further articulated her struggle with her daughter’s delays as she described how frustrated she felt, and her tendency to say harsh things because she felt as though she cannot “reach” her daughter. Karen shared that the times she has made negative comments about Sarah’s body were when her frustration and sense of helplessness had peaked because her daughter seems unable to understand how others perceive her and reacts emotionally to her mother’s efforts to intervene.

This commentary from Karen overlapped with another important aspect of their project: their historical pattern of arguing about her appearance. It was evident that when the topics of Sara’s clothing and appearance would arise, they both seemed to have emotional reactions and would end up arguing. Their emotionality appeared to maintain a sense of disconnection. It is plausible that this argumentation was the product of interpersonal expectancy effects such that they each expect a certain response from one another and react emotionally by defending themselves and criticizing the other, based on their experience of the other not understanding them. Karen’s experience of this process was evident in the previous quote when she described how she felt as though she could not “reach” her daughter and would react by calling her fat. Sara did not seem to have as much awareness of this process, but she did touch on it when she responded to the researcher’s inquiry into her perspective on whether the clothes she wore that revealed her cleavage were getting attention from the boys. Her response was “Well I try not to, but it happens. I think it happens, maybe, but we have our own opinions so… And that’s my opinion” (Sara, SC, Min 10). Asserting her opinion in the matter-of-fact way that she did was possibly a defense against feeling judged, perhaps resulting from feeling judged by her mother. This defended position facilitated her mother’s feeling of defeat, which may have
led her to further judge and criticize. However it began, their mutual engagement in this spiral of offense and defense was evident, and seemed to have some history as it appeared to be an entrenched pattern in their joint project.

Another unique facet of Karen’s and Sara’s disagreement is that the arguing can be seen as part of a relationship project. They agreed with this conceptualization in the second interview. Their efforts to convince one another of their individual perspectives seemed to reflect an ongoing project to reach an agreement and feel closer. As described earlier, for Sara the disagreement may have fundamentally been about keeping her mom’s attention, which may have stemmed from a drive to feel bonded or connected. While for Karen, the disagreement seemed to result from feeling like she was unable get through to her daughter. Her idea of being closer to her daughter seemed to depend on her sense that her daughter was embracing her values (e.g. thinness and modesty). Her efforts to persuade her daughter to share in her values despite feeling hopeless in the face of Sara’s resistance reflects Karen’s persistent effort to feel closer to her daughter.

In addition, as noted in previous dyads, in this pair the mother is very clearly acting as an identity agent. Karen’s efforts to shape her daughter’s identity are evident when she explains her conceptualization of her daughter’s development to her:

…Because maybe that’s making you not like to walk. And that’s leading to you never wanting to do anything and then you don’t get exercise. So I’m just wondering if that goes back, ‘cause there’s other stuff about y’know, when they had you crawl later, and just all this other stuff and whether because you missed out on crawling, you missed out, you jumped right into being a toddler at two and a half first learning to walk, and all this stuff… (Karen, CON, Min 1).

Karen’s efforts to instruct and inform her daughter’s values, as well as guide her behaviour with regard to eating, being active and dressing modestly are all clear indications of her
desire to shape, promote and protect Sara’s developing identity even when she unintentionally makes critical comments.

Karen highlights her intention to instruct her daughter when she reflected on the moment in the conversation when they were generating a list of healthy foods. “Yeah, but you know what they say ‘act don’t yak.’ (Laughs). Yeah, but this is a good teaching moment” (Karen, SC, Min 5). The intentions to shape her daughter seemed to take a literal spin when she expressed her desire for Sara to lose some weight: “I’m just trying to be supportive and also like hopeful, Yeah you could – you wanna dress like that okay. Let’s uh be active like you used to be” (Karen, SC, Min 14). In saying this, she seemed to suggest that would be more acceptable for her daughter to wear more sexualized clothing if she were thinner. Karen also admitted to occasionally criticizing her daughter for her weight or shape. Although she endorsed positive intentions in her efforts to influence her daughter’s developing identity (i.e., wanting her to embrace values for modesty, healthy interaction with her peers), Karen seemed to implicitly embrace a thin ideal and was actively teaching, as well as possibly shaming, Sara to do the same.

Finally, another important, mutually agreed upon conceptualization of this dyad’s project was that Karen’s efforts to shape her daughter’s identity were essentially an expression of love. This concept was identified within Karen’s individual project which was offered to her in a narrative summary for member-checking purposes during the second interview. She fully agreed that her efforts to influence her daughter are coming from a place of love and concern. Additionally, at various points in their individual interviews, both Karen and Sara identify Karen’s attempts to teach and persuade her daughter as a form of caregiving and love. Sara seemed to touch on this when she
described how her mother is her guardian and “…knows the best thing for me…” (Sara, SC, Min 9). Karen’s reflection on the conversation about healthy foods revealed this loving stance as she described her commitment to her daughter, expressed her desire to facilitate her daughter’s realization of her potential, and expressed frustration with the way they seem to miss each other:

But it just strikes me like we’re always, it’s this feeling that there’s a really neat kid in there with a lot of potential but we’re always kind of missing, we’re just missing. And seeing this brings that to mind, like look how eager, but at home it’s more like in one second, she just flies off the handle in a second, and I’m already kind of emotional, just worried about things in general. And then I didn’t work for 10 years and just now started working part time ‘cause I’ve been so consumed by her but to see, you know we would never get to that point at home (Karen, SC, Min 4).

Karen also confirmed that her efforts to shape her daughter are her way of caring and expressing love when she agreed with the narrative analysis in the second interview.

This dyad’s second interview was approximately three months after their initial interview. Both Karen and Sara agreed that their individual and joint narrative summaries fit. During the individual follow up interview, Sara’s response was that it was interesting to participate. She then described how over the summer she had attended a therapy program in the United States, in which she lived with a family that hosted her and a few other adolescents. She explained that they offered a lot of discipline and structure and there were strict rules about how she could dress. She felt that this had influenced her to make reasonable and fashionable decisions that were more aligned with her mom’s requests. In Karen’s individual follow up she particularly agreed with, and reinforced, the notion that disagreement is an effort to connect too.
During their joint follow up interview Sara seemed proud of having endured the therapy program for her developmental difficulties. She reported that she and her mom had been understanding each other a bit more about clothing and appearance as a result. Karen shared this perception and sentiment during the joint narrative follow-up. Karen commented on how the narrative reminded her of how things were back before the first interview. She noted how it seems as though a lot has changed since then. Karen described that Sara was asking for her input regarding what to wear more and this felt like a positive change.

There were some difficulties in getting back in touch with this dyad for the follow up phone call, but this final step was completed four and a half months after the second in-person interview (see Appendix H for further detail). While speaking with Karen, she described her experience participating as “Insightful, interesting, neat… glad that I did it” (Karen, phone-call). Karen confirmed that their project is still the same and elaborated that the joint project description articulates their approach really well. She said that they are still trying to find common ground. She reported that she is trying to be accepting and open within reason. Karen endorsed that they had engaged in project related activities about 3 times a week in the past couple months. She identified that, for her, the meaning of their joint project lies in her desire for Sara to embrace her values. She explained her efforts to guide Sara to be modest in describing a recent occasion when she wanted to wear a really short skirt with a longer coat that made it look as though she might not be wearing a skirt. Karen took this as an opportunity to discuss the way Sara might be perceived. They continually work together with her desire to wear things too revealing just because they are
in style. Regarding her overall experience participating, Karen said “It was neat. This experience articulated our relationship with regard to this theme” (Karen, phone-call).

Sara then participated in the follow up phone call. She reported that her experience participating in the study was “Satisfactory. Easy” (Sara, phone-call). She also described the issues discussed as being beneficial and said “Talking to my mom was helpful” (Sara, phone-call). When asked about whether she thought their joint project was the same or changed, she responded that “Eating well is still a main goal, but we get along” (Sara, phone-call). She repeated that lately they see eye-to-eye a bit more about her clothing decisions. Sara also reported that they had engaged in 10 or more project related activities since the last interview. Some examples she gave of these activities were conversations about eating well and taking care of her body, as well as her plans to do Flamenco dancing, and efforts to go to the gym. Sara explained that she is trying to listen to her mother more. When asked about what this project means to her, or to their relationship, she responded by saying that it is about their continued efforts to understand each other and get along.

Overall, this pair seemed to be enacting a longer-term project to improve their relationship by spending time together and finding common ground on appearance-related topics that they disagree about. This project emerged through their shared intentions to get along with each other during this research conversation, to engage in supportive problem-solving, and to better understand one another’s perspectives about clothing and appearance. Their project was fraught with disagreement and emotional reactions to one another which seem to maintain a sense of disconnection on the topic, but which were also a sign of an overarching investment in connecting with one another.
Within-Case Assertions. Altogether, the within-case analysis of the conversational and interview data from this mother-daughter dyad has led to the development of six key assertions:

One, the nature of the adoptive relationship was associated with some unique challenges for this pair. More specifically, Sara seemed to have some cognitive delays and relational needs that her mother was concerned about, and occasionally very frustrated by, and attributed to the neglect Sara endured during her early infancy. The obstacles resulting from Sara’s challenges with attachment may have played a prominent role in their disagreement and sense of disconnection both in their identification with one another’s body image and in their relationship in general.

Two, Karen and Sara endorsed and exhibited a historical pattern for arguing about Sara’s clothing as it reflects attention-seeking behaviour. When they discuss Sara’s clothing they each tend to anticipate one another’s resistance and quickly become emotional and argumentative. Karen attributes this ongoing battle to her daughter’s unique developmental delays and needs. However, arguing is a central feature of their appearance project. While it represents a functional step in their goal and persistent effort to convince one another of their individual perspectives, their arguing seems to reflect on ongoing relational project to feel closer by eventually understanding one another and reaching an agreement.

The third assertion is that Karen is intentionally acting as an appearance identity agent. Although, the messages she conveys to Sara are mixed in that they are sometimes healthy and positive, but sometimes angry and potentially damaging, Karen was seeking to
influence her daughter throughout their involvement in the study. Moreover, Karen’s critical remarks about her daughter’s body reveal that she has implicitly adopted the thin ideal that is pushed by the media and is acting upon this ideal in her efforts to influence her daughter. It is noteworthy, that Karen herself is quite thin.

The fourth assertion is that Karen’s efforts to shape her daughter’s identity are an expression of love. Both Sara and Karen identify Karen’s attempts to teach and persuade her daughter as a form of caregiving and love. Sara’s awareness of this was less articulate, but evident when she described how her mother knows what’s best for her in her self-confrontation. This assertion also touches on the degree to which Karen’s efforts to guide her daughter, and their arguing contribute to an overarching relational project.

The fifth point is that Sara’s goals over the course of the study reveal that she was being pulled in different directions between wanting to connect and be shaped by her mother, but also wanting to be separate and independent. Sara seems to be experiencing a tension between identification and individuation as she was invested in learning from her mother about topics related to body image, like food, and exercise, without fully embracing all of Karen’s perspectives about fashion. She also aimed to stay engaged through the uncomfortable moments and make the most of the time they were spending together.

Finally, Karen’s and Sara’s individual goals and joint project are oriented toward improving their relationship by making the most of the time together, to discuss a topic of significant disagreement and distress, in an effort to better understand one another and feel more connected. Even the argumentation reflects their perseverance to bridge their
differences. Similar to other dyads, it could be interpreted that their appearance-based project is part of a longstanding relationship project.

Cross-Case Analysis

The final stage of this analysis involves a comparison of these dyads with one another in order to identify commonalities and unique processes among them. This type of cross-case analysis is utilized in both action theoretical research (Domene & Young, 2008; Young et al. 2005), and instrumental case designs (Stake, 2005). Even though there were notable differences in the demographic characteristics of these mother-daughter pairs (e.g., age of daughter ranged from 13 to 17 years old; age of mother ranged from 39 to 60 years old; nationalities including Canadian, Iranian, and American; European and Persian ethnicities; a range of socio-economic statuses and family structures), there were some clear similarities between these cases. Cross-case comparison revealed five areas of similarity among these diverse dyads. These overlapping themes are discussed as “Commonalities.” Cross-case analysis also revealed four unique differences within the projects of these dyads. These discrepancies were related to the nature of the relationship, communication and coping strategies in the mother-daughter appearance-related project. These aspects are discussed as “Unique Processes.” Finally, key assertions summarizing the analytic findings are stated at the end of this chapter.

Commonalities

Commonalities among the joint appearance projects of these mother-daughter dyads included that they were all coping with experiences of objectification; the mother-daughter relationship was integral in their projects; the daughters’ experienced
developmental tension between identification with and individuation from their mothers; there were mixed messages between modelling and prescriptive communication from the mothers; and mutual influence and investment in one another’s appearance-based identity.

**Projects Facilitated Coping with Objectification.** Each dyad that participated in this study enacted projects that were ultimately about how they understood body and appearance within their mother-daughter relationship, but also within the North American cultural milieu that objectifies women. While their coping strategies were distinct from one another, and are discussed in the section for Unique Processes, it was a commonality that, whether they were operating with intention to protect themselves from objectified, appearance-related judgment within their relationship, or to protect one another from such judgment from others, they were all conscious of how others perceived and judged girls and women based on appearance. Every dyad exhibited tendencies toward self-objectification in both obvious and subtle ways that were aligned with the pathways articulated in OT.

**Overarching Relationship Projects.** To varying degrees the mother-daughter relationship was a central feature of the joint appearance-based projects held by each dyad. In each project description there are words to describe essential features of being in relationship, such as to support, share, connect, and relate to, or understand one another. The omnipresence of the mother-daughter relationship was apparent within the goals and functional steps toward empathic attunement, identity shaping, and the discussion of intergenerational patterns outlined below.

**Empathic Attunement.** Within a majority of the dyads’ conversations, there were numerous moments when either or both participants would empathically reflect the other’s
emotional experience. This type of empathic attunement was a functional step in the various dyads’ efforts to share, understand and feel connected and therefore served to maintain or improve their relationships.

Even in the dyads where there were obstacles in communication, like the avoidance and resistance exhibited by Pair 1, or arguing in Pair 6, their participation in the study and appearance-related projects were fundamentally about their relationship because they represent an effort to become closer by acknowledging and confronting their difficulties. An example of this is evident in Stacy’s (Pair 1) ambivalent longing for empathic attunement with her mother.

**Identity Shaping.** The degree to which both mother and daughter participants either endorsed conscious intentions, or exhibited less conscious tendencies, to influence one another’s identity was also evidence that their projects revolved around their relationship. This interest in shaping the other served many functions to promote the mother-daughter relationship. It allowed for an alignment of values and behaviours, which in most cases were intended to be oriented toward health. By preserving one another’s healthy perspectives, they also sought to preserve the health of the relationship itself. The processes of shaping one another’s identity were a supportive investment in the other, as well as the relationship, that inevitably bolstered reciprocal support within the relationship.

**Intergenerational Patterns.** Another commonality that attests to the centrality of the relationship among these cases’ appearance-based projects was the awareness and discussion about the transmission of intergenerational patterns. This topic came up the most for Pair 3 as Anna frequently referred to how her mother’s competitive and critical
approach negatively impacted her body image. Evidence of intergenerational patterns also emerged in Pair 1 as Diane described in her individual self-confrontation how she could relate to her daughter’s reaction to her questions based on her own discomfort with her body and her inability to talk about it with her mother.

**Adolescent Identification v. Individuation.** Within each of these cases the mothers and daughters identified with one another to some degree. This was most often evident in their joint actions to share in, or influence one another’s appearance-based practices or values, but it was also present in the alignment of other beliefs and behaviors related to communication, education, friendships, family, and culture. Identification was also apparent within the less conscious adoption of one another’s coping strategies, like the reciprocal avoidance exhibited in Pair 1, or the high degree of body surveillance endorsed in Pair 3. While it may seem intuitive that family members would be identified with one another, in some of these cases it became clear that adolescent daughters were experiencing both identification with, as well as individuation from, their mother’s appearance-based beliefs, feelings and behaviours. These simultaneous, interdependent, but conflicting, processes contributed to a sense of internal tension that reflected cognitive dissonance for some of them. The main factors that seemed to affect this experience were: the daughter’s developmental stage, the mother’s own body image, and the nature of the mother-daughter relationship.

**Daughter’s Developmental Stage.** The tension between identification and individuation was less prominent in the dyads where the daughter was in an earlier developmental stage. The two youngest daughters to participate were Claire age 13 (Pair 2), and Cara age 14 (Pair 4). Interestingly, they were both mostly unquestioning in their
alignment with their mother’s beliefs, and embraced their approach toward appearance (e.g., focusing on athletic body ideal, or dressing appropriately and comfortably for one’s context). The slightly older adolescent daughters including Laura who was 17 (Pair 3), Sara (Pair 6) and Stacy (Pair 1) who were 15, as well as Niku (Pair 5), who was 14 (almost 15) tended to guide, question, argue with, and even occasionally dismiss their mothers, which seemed to suggest that they were asserting their individuality within the relationship. At the same time, these older daughters were each engaged in projects that involved identity exploration with their mothers, which ultimately promoted attunement, or an attempt to connect with their mother, thereby facilitating identification.

_Mother’s Confidence as Reinforcement._ Another factor, which appeared to impact the degree to which the daughters willfully identified with their mothers, was the mother’s own confidence in themselves and their daughter. When the mothers actions communicated confidence or pride in their beliefs about their own, or their daughter’s bodies or appearance, like Lynn did with Cara (Pair 4) when she approved of her sense of fashion, or like Rebecca did with Claire (Pair 2) when she validated her athleticism, the daughters seemed to readily agree with and endorse their mother’s values. While when the mothers focused on insecurities and judged themselves, or their daughter’s appearance-related behaviors, their daughters similarly struggled and seemed to resist their identification with their mothers. This was evident in the way Anna and Laura (Pair 3) attempted to focus on Laura’s different, healthier approach, despite the fact that in her self-confrontation, Laura still expressed insecurities similar to those exhibited by her mother. Another example of how the mother’s judgment may have impacted the daughter’s willingness to identify with her appearance based beliefs or behaviors was evident in Pair 6
where the mother, Karen expressed insecurity about whether her daughter was accepted by others and was critical of Sara’s clothing and body, while Sara actively resisted her attempts to shape her values.

**Nature of Mother-Daughter Relationship.** Building on the assertion that the mother’s confidence in herself and her daughter influenced the degree to which the daughter openly identified with her mother, it also seemed that the security of the relationship, including openness of communication, and absence of criticism, influenced whether the daughter straightforwardly identified with her mother. This dynamic was particularly noticeable when comparing the relationships where there seemed to be a secure attachment and emphasis on open communication about appearance related topics (Pair 4 or Pair 5), with relationships where the mother-daughter bond seemed to be less secure, and laden with critical judgment or withholding (Pair 6 or Pair 1). The way Diane and Stacey both resisted being vulnerable with each other was another example of this in that the daughter seemed frustrated by her mother’s discomfort, and resisted identifying with her, but still experienced a similar discomfort and exhibited the same avoidance of vulnerability. Overall, the processes by which the daughter identified with their mother were affected by factors specific to their development, to their mother’s attitudes and reinforcement, and to the nature of the relationship, but there were examples of their identification to their mother’s behaviors, beliefs or both in every pair.

**Mixed Messages Between Intention and Action.** Across all dyads in this study the mothers demonstrated some degree of conflict or incongruence in the behavioural and verbal messages they conveyed to their daughters. It was often the case that they would consciously offer prescriptive messages about values and instructions for behavior, while
they would less consciously model different behaviors. One obvious example of this emerged for Pair 3 as Anna instructed Laura to embrace healthy perspectives offered by school curriculum, to eat well, and to love herself regardless of others’ perspectives, she offered contradicting modelling as she engaged her daughter in appearance evaluating conversation, endorsed skipping meals, and struggled with other’s negative comments. This incongruent behaviour happened within each dyad on some level and seemed to stem from two processes: relationship ambivalence, and difficulty with internalized standards for beauty.

**Relationship Ambivalence.** In two of these dyads, the relational aspects of their joint appearance projects had an ambivalent quality in that they simultaneously involved approach and avoidance. For Pair 1 there was an inherent incongruence in their participation in the study, which involved talking about body image, and their preferred strategy to avoid disclosing about this topic with one another. Also, Pair 6 struggled with argumentation as the mother criticized the daughter’s appearance or clothing, and the daughter reacted emotionally, which would frustrate and distance them. However, their persistence in arguing reflected their investment and ongoing efforts to understand one another. For these pairs the mothers sent mixed messages by focusing on the daughter’s behavior without providing relational support (e.g., modelling vulnerability, or offering more positive attention) to back the messages they seemed to hope to convey.

**Internalized Standards for Beauty.** Across all of these dyads, the mothers unintentionally endorsed some standards for beauty gleaned from their social context. The amount of awareness they had about their implicit endorsement of beauty standards varied, but from a social constructionist lens it would make sense that they were inevitably
impacted by socio-cultural messages about beauty. A striking example of this was evident when Karen (Pair 6), who was quite thin and promoted her daughter’s healthy body image by encouraging her to lose weight. She told Sara she could wear tops that showed her belly if her stomach was smaller. This was also evident when Anna (Pair 3) sought to protect her daughter from her own body anxiety, and yet engaged her daughter in back and forth self-objectifying conversation (e.g., how others see them, focus on parts of body). Another example was how Lynn (Pair 4) emphasized being comfortable in one’s clothing and dressing for context, and yet spent a fair amount of time exploring what her daughter’s peers think about her daughter’s appearance.

Overall, the mothers in this study appeared to have internalized certain appearance-related ideals (e.g., toned athletic body, or thinness), which they conveyed in their functional steps in the conversation (e.g., self/other objectification, focus on others evaluations) and related mixed messages between the actions modeled and content of the prescriptive communication they offered. These mixed messages also seemed to stem from relational ambivalence for two of these dyads.

**Mutual Influence and Identification.** Another commonality among these cases is that, although the mother’s influence on the daughter’s identity was often more apparent, the daughters also seemed to affect the mothers’ beliefs and behaviors related to appearance to some degree, which attests to the presence of varying degrees of mutual influence. Moreover, by acting to shape one another, it could be interpreted that mothers and daughters are invested in one another’s appearance-related identity. The act of influencing the others’ appearance-based behaviors and beliefs happened in subtle, less intentional ways, as well as in direct and intentional ways which I have described as acting
as identity agents. The main aspects of this conceptualization are that both the mothers and daughters display investment in the other’s appearance-based identity by acting on goals that reflect the intentions of identity agents. The degree to which the participants mutually influence one another seems to be associated with their openness to being identified with one another.

**Mothers Acting as Identity Agent.** The mothers’ efforts to impact their daughters’ identities with regard to appearance or body, was rather obvious in the conversations and individual self-confrontations for each pair. In Pairs 1 and 2 the daughters were both competitive swimmers and the mothers sought to reinforce their confidence through their athletic abilities. This emphasis on athletic performance, and the ideal athletic body, was more prominent in Pair 2 through Rebecca’s pride for, and validation of, her daughter’s ability to swim well and out-run her peers. Rebecca’s efforts to shape her daughter’s identity in this direction appeared to be effective as Claire also exhibited pride in her athleticism and endorsed confidence in her ability to attain an ideal athletic body. In Pairs 5 and 6 the mothers expressed their intention to support their daughters’ developing appearance-based identities by protecting them and their reputations, with restrictions about clothing and grooming. By encouraging their daughters to talk about body image, to embrace healthier perspectives, and to gain social approval, the mothers in all the dyads were investing in their daughters’ healthy identities by seeking to influence them positively.

**Daughters Acting as Identity Agent.** Just as the mothers’ investment in their daughters was apparent through their attempts to influence them, the daughters’ investment in their mothers was evident as they sought to influence them as well. The daughters’
efforts to communicate their perspective, and to influence their mothers’ appearance-based beliefs and behaviors, varied in the degree to which they seemed conscious and intentional. Examples of daughters intentionally acting as identity agents can be found in Pair 3 where Laura offered caution and encouragement for her mother’s appearance-related decisions (e.g., clothing, plastic surgery), and in Pair 4 when Cara told her mom to accessorize and try a little harder. These direct efforts within these communicative pairs seemed to be effective as the mothers expressed their appreciation for, and seemed to incorporate their daughters’ input.

Another way in which daughters indirectly acted as identity agents was through the investment in, and reinforcement of, their mothers’ values and behaviours. By embracing her mother’s values for comfort, wearing context-appropriate clothing with confidence, and gaining the approval of her peers, Cara’s appearance project unconsciously reinforced her mom’s appearance-based identity. Similarly, when Claire recounted how she out-ran her peers she successfully lived up to her mother’s investment in her athleticism, and healthy body image, and thereby reinforced her mother’s identity via mutual investment and identification. This process was evident between Niku and Nadia too. As Niku argued to incorporate Western beauty practices, she also sought to uphold some of her mother’s Iranian traditions (e.g., maintaining eyebrow bridge) and therefore reinforced her mother’s appearance-based identity by identifying with her values to a certain degree. Thus, by incorporating their mothers’ beliefs and practices in the process of identifying with their mothers, the daughters seem to reinforce their mothers’ appearance-based identities.

**Influence Associated with Identification.** Building on the conceptualization of the daughters’ influence as identity agents, in each mother-daughter pair, the degree of mutual
influence seemed to be associated with ease of identification and vice versa. In addition to the above examples, Anna and Laura were closely identified as their project involved empathically sharing in one another’s difficulties and this identification appeared to fuel their mutual influence over one another. For example, Anna took Laura’s guidance to heart, while Laura adopted her mother’s anxious approach to seeking social approval for her appearance (e.g., heightened worry over graduation dress). In an instance in which there was conflict in the identification with one another, an associated interference in mutual influence was revealed for Pair 1. Stacey and Diane were not attuned to each other’s experience of body or appearance because they were not comfortable disclosing about their individual experiences of body or appearance. This absence of attunement, and less intentional identification with one another seemed to parallel a low degree of mutual influence as they struggled to sway one another to be vulnerable, or approach their conversation differently, and endorsed different practices regarding eating and fashion.

Altogether, the mothers often acted in both direct ways (e.g., instruction and guiding value exploration), and indirect ways (e.g., modelling and reinforcement) to influence their daughters’ beliefs and practices related to body and appearance. The daughters would similarly influence their mothers in both direct ways (e.g., prescriptive communication/instruction) and indirect ways (e.g., supporting and enacting their ideals). This process of investing in, and influencing one another’s identity was bi-directional, as was the identification with one another’s appearance-related values and behaviors.
Unique Processes

While there was overlap in the action and meaning of the joint projects for these dyads, the cross-case analysis also revealed many unique characteristics among them as well. These unique processes were: 1) Each pair had distinct coping strategies for objectifying experiences; 2) Pairs 1 and 6 experienced relational distress; 3) Pair 6 was navigating an adoptive relationship; and 4) Ethno-cultural identity development was implicated in the appearance project for Pair 5.

Distinct Coping Strategies for Objectification. As described above within the commonalities, every dyad that participated in this study enacted projects that involved different approaches to coping with experiences of appearance-based judgment from self and others within a cultural milieu that objectifies women’s bodies and appearance. Each mother-daughter pair had distinct approaches to dealing with the pressures of objectification and cultural ideals for appearance. This was evident as Pair 1 admitted to judging others’ appearances and feeling uncomfortable being vulnerable to such judgment within their own relationship. While Pair 2 enthusiastically embraced an ideal for athleticism over culturally imposed standards for “sexiness,” their evaluations of female athletes’ bodies suggested that this ideal was somewhat about a svelte or toned appearance in addition to function and performance. This “attainable” approach may have protected them from more harmful beauty standards related to thinness or sexiness. Pair 3 coped with objectification with heightened appearance anxiety and body surveillance as they devoted a good deal of their conversation to expressing their worries and sharing hurtful experiences with one another. They also self-objectified within the research conversation about clothes shopping, exercise, dieting, and by comparing and contrasting parts of their
bodies. This process seemed to reflect a fearful vigilance about other’s objectified judgments of them.

Pair 4 seemed to cope with objectification with more confidence as they considered others’ appearance-related judgments and focused on how Cara’s appearance and fashion was approved of by others. It is important to note that their approach involved frequent consideration of others’ perspectives, which is an initial step in self-objectification. While Pair 5 aimed to prevent experiences of objectification as Nadia’s restrictions seemed to be an effort to maintain Niku’s innocence and freedom from appearance-related judgment.

Finally, the mother in Pair 6, Karen, seemed to similarly want to protect Sara from sexual objectification, while Sara may have been indirectly inviting objectifying experiences as she cut up her clothing in an effort to gain attention and approval from her peers. In their case, they seemed to struggle to bridge different approaches for managing the experience of objectification as Sara seemed to embrace objectification in a haphazard attempt to meet her social needs and Karen critically evaluated her in an effort to protect her from a negative reputation.

**Relational Distress.** The presence of distress in the mother-daughter relationship was noticeable for only two pairs: 1 and 6. Their distress was characterized by argumentation and communication break-down and seemed to be related to both appearance-related shame, or judgment, and their relationship. This manifested in distinct processes for each pair, which are outlined separately below.

**Distress for Pair 1.** The difficulties exhibited by Pair 1 in this study may have stemmed from their joint project for avoidance, and an underlying sense of disconnection. The daughter Stacy’s disclosures from her individual self-confrontation revealed important
information about how the strategy to avoid vulnerability with one another may have been rooted in a sense of body dissatisfaction and how the context of the relationship did not feel secure to her. Her comments seemed to suggest that Stacy’s dissatisfaction with her body, and disbelief of her mother’s attempts to reassure her, led her to not want to share her feelings with her mother. Moreover, the distance she feels from her mother could be contributing to her strategy to avoid in an effort to protect herself. She also appeared to feel powerlessness to improve their relationship.

**Distress for Pair 6.** There was also noticeable disconnection for Pair 6 as they described a pattern of argumentation about body and clothing, and exerted effort to avoid arguing within the research environment. In the research conversation they aimed to reach an understanding of Sara’s decisions to wear clothing that revealed her developing body more than her mother Karen felt was appropriate. At multiple points in the introductory interview and conversation Sara cited comments in which Karen criticized her body or appearance as reasons why she was argumentative and emotionally reactive with her mother. Similarly, Karen seemed to focus on her daughter’s argumentative and emotional actions and attributed her own critical comments to feeling exasperated with her daughter’s reactivity. It is worth noting that, although the argumentation reflected a larger relational project to understand one another and feel closer, the way it unfolded seemed to have the opposite effect on both participants. Moreover, Karen’s comments about Sara’s clothing or body did not appear to instill a sense of modesty as she seemed to intend. Instead they may have contributed to Sara’s emotional reaction and sense of disconnection from her mom.
To reiterate, both Pairs 1 and 6 were enacting projects aimed at improving communication about body image and better understanding one another. At the same time they were struggling with feelings of disconnection and being misunderstood. It is interesting that in both cases the mothers endorsed a thin ideal (either for themselves or for their daughter), and were both rather thin in their appearance, while the daughters (who were both 15 years old at the time of the research conversation) seemed to carry a little extra weight (as many girls do at that age). Both of these daughters expressed insecurity with their appearance or bodies.

**Adoptive Relationship.** Another unique process among these dyads was that Pair 6 was navigating an adoptive relationship. Karen adopted Sara at about 6 months old, from an orphanage where she likely endured neglect as she was severely underweight upon adoption and had consistently struggled with developmental delays. Karen attributed Sara’s delays to attachment-related difficulties stemming from infant development. Karen explained that Sara had seen many doctors and therapists, had been given many diagnoses and tried different medications. Karen openly referred to the diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder as it characterized some of the symptoms of emotionality and cognitive delay that Karen had been struggling to respond to in her parenting. Sara did seem to be developmentally “young” in her responses and rationale. She also appeared to actively resist identifying with some of her mother’s beliefs and practices related to appearance and she seemed to seek attention and approval from her peers. However, within the scope of this study it is not possible to ascertain how much of her action stems from infant development and attachment style, her cognitive ability, her needs for attention, or the dynamics in her relationship with her mother. Regardless, the adoptive nature of this
dyad’s relationship presented additional layers to interpret and provoked interesting questions about whether adopted children, or children with attachment related difficulties, identify with their adoptive parents differently, or if their body image is impacted by their adopted status.

**Ethno-Cultural Identity Development.** The process of navigating cultural identity development was an important and distinct element in the appearance-based projects for Pair 5. The intertwined process of mutual influence and identification, outlined within the above commonalities section, was inextricable from the cultural context within which it occurred. The relevance of cultural navigation was also touched upon within Pair 3’s interviews as the daughter noted the difference in fashion between another colder Canadian city in a colder climate and Vancouver, but this was not identified as a predominant element of their projects. The relevance of the cultural context was most evident in Pair 5 as the navigation of two distinct cultures was integral in their appearance project. Niku’s strength as a cultural identity agent (i.e., English fluency, cultural comprehension, ability to bridge Canadian and Iranian customs) appeared to impact Nadia’s acceptance of some of her negotiations regarding beauty and fashion restrictions. For example, Nadia’s restrictive limitations for make-up use, or swimsuit style, seemed more flexible as the study progressed. As Nadia explained in the follow-up phone-call, because her daughter checked in with her about these decisions she trusted her more and adjusted the rules. Thus, Niku’s simultaneous cultural-linguistic power and respect for her mother’s authority seemed to influence her mother’s cultural identity development as an Iranian-Canadian parent.
Cross-Case Assertions

The within-case and between-case analyses of these 6 mother-daughter dyads serve as a detailed examination of the functional steps and goals of their joint appearance projects. I will conclude this chapter with three key assertions that summarize these results and represent the key findings of this study. These key assertions are that 1) body image is constructed between mothers and daughters in projects about appearance, identity and the mother-daughter relationship; 2) these mothers and daughters were affected by and invested in one another’s body image; and 3) modelling seemed to play a role in body image identification just as much as, and in some cases more than, prescriptive messages offering explicit instructions or guidance.

Body Image in the Mother-Daughter Relationship. Based on the definition of body image offered in Chapter 1, it is a multidimensional construct consisting of perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours regarding an individual’s physical appearance, as well as the impact that appearance has on their psychological and social health (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Grabe, Hyde & Ward, 2008). It can be said that body image developed within the mother-daughter relationship of these 6 cases. Both mother and daughter participants explored their perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours regarding their own and others’ physical appearance in the conversations held for this study. The daughter’s beliefs, feelings and behaviors about her own appearance tended to constitute the core of the conversational focus. Body image development seemed to occur over time as these dyads continued to engage in ongoing appearance-related projects over the course of the study (between 6 and 8 months). It also became apparent that body image was inherently woven into projects about identity and relationship for these dyads.
**Body Image, Identity and Relationship.** These mother-daughter conversations and individual self-confrontations revealed the degree to which appearance-related projects were inherently bound to overarching relationship and identity projects. As the participants navigated the differences between, and overlap among, their appearance-based values and practices, they simultaneously articulated their individual identities, as well as aligned in a joint relationship identity. This was also evident as most of the adolescent daughters in this study seemed to experience a tension between the desire to be identified with, and individuate from, their mother’s appearance-related beliefs and practices.

**Mutual Investment and Impact of Body Image.** These mother-daughter dyads revealed the ways in which mothers and daughters can be invested in, and affected by, one another’s body image. In addition to the way both mothers and daughters acted as identity agents in an effort to influence and promote one another, they also shared in one another’s experiences. From Pair 3’s shared appearance anxiety, and Pair 4’s shared confidence and values for fashion, to Pair 6’s argumentation about clothing and Pair 1’s avoidance of disclosure and vulnerability, all of these dyads were acting jointly to preserve joint projects, or influence one another’s coping strategies and promote one another’s wellbeing.

This investment in each other’s body image was also reflected in their mutual identification and especially obvious in Rebecca’s (Pair 2) pride for, and apparent identification with, her daughter’s athletic success, as well as Cara’s (Pair 4) instruction for her mother to accessorize more. The degree to which mothers and daughters can be affected by their identification with one another’s appearance-based identity was evident when Laura (Pair 3) described in her self-confrontation that she also felt hurt by the body-shaming comments her mom experienced from strangers. Overall, it appears that the
degree to which mothers and daughters are identified with one another contributes to their feeling affected by, and mutually invested in one another’s body image and this was evident in their projects to promote, protect and feel close to one another.

**Modelling Body Image.** Contrary to the common phrase “Do as I say, not as I do,” the degree to which the daughters in this study seemed to be identified with their mothers’ body image suggests that they were learning from their mothers’ modelling just as much, if not more than, they were learning from their prescriptive messages. In some of these dyads, the mothers’ prescriptive messages were closely aligned with their behaviors, but as I articulated in the commonalities section, most of the mothers unintentionally endorsed some version of internalized cultural beauty standards. Therefore, there were some inconsistencies between the values they sought to transmit, and their internalized contradictory standards for appearance, which emerged in their behaviour. In contextual action theory terms, there were inconsistencies in the goal-directed actions of prescribing one set of values and behaviours while enacting different behaviours. The presence of such inconsistencies suggests that they are actually embracing different values from what they are hoping to instill in the other. The most apparent example of this was how Anna (Pair 3) encouraged her daughter to be healthier and less neurotic than she was, but then modelled her anxiety and engaged in objectifying conversation. Laura endorsed healthier perspectives learned in school, but her contributions in the conversation and self-confrontation reflected a similar level of appearance anxiety and tendency to objectify herself (e.g., trying on her grad dress many times in the past few months to be sure it still looked good).
The prominence of the disparity in intentions and actions through modelling was also evident in Pair 1 as Diane avoided disclosing her personal experience and ineffectively attempted to draw out her daughter’s experience of her own appearance and body. As Diane asked Stacy questions about situations in which she would talk about body image, “So under what circumstances would you participate? (Mom, CON, Min 12),” it was clear that she wanted to break through her daughter’s resistance, but by talking about how to talk about the topic, she also avoided sharing much about her individual perspective or experience. Stacy went on embracing the behaviour her mother modelled and neither of them disclosed their personal experiences. Based on the relevance of identification and modelling within these dyads, it seems as though the body image development within these dyads inverted that famous phrase such that the message became “Do as I do, not as I say.”

Altogether these cross-case assertions summarize the themes and assertions both within and between these case studies of mother-daughter conversations about appearance. They provide ample evidence of the co-construction of body image through joint goal-directed actions of mothers and daughters during a pivotal point in development for the daughters (see Table 2 below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertions</th>
<th>Pair 1</th>
<th>Pair 2</th>
<th>Pair 3</th>
<th>Pair 4</th>
<th>Pair 5</th>
<th>Pair 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Body image is constructed in mother-daughter relationship</td>
<td>Project oriented toward better communication about body image, they endorsed similar discomfort and avoidance</td>
<td>Shared confidence and pride in athleticism, alignment of appearance values; identity and relationship projects</td>
<td>Identification with one another via empathy and shared behaviours evident in overarching relationship and identity projects</td>
<td>Mutual confidence, pride and appearance identity was evident in joint projects and goals</td>
<td>Culture and appearance identity development was evident in joint projects and goals</td>
<td>Working toward shared values for nutrition, clothing and self-objectification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Participants were invested in and affected by one another’s body image</td>
<td>They were affected by one another as they avoided being vulnerable and privately endorsed similar body dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Rebecca consciously acted as an identity agent shaping Claire’s body image; Claire actively participated and achieved</td>
<td>They shared in body image conceptualizations, empathy for difficulties, and were hoping to help one another feel healthy and confident</td>
<td>Lynn was consciously shaping Cara’s values for fashion and comfort; Cara was encouraging Lynn’s fashion</td>
<td>Nadia was an identity agent invested in Niku’s appearance identity; Niku attempted to individuate from and inform her mother</td>
<td>Karen was acting as an identity agent shaping daughter’s body image and Sarah actively participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Modelling was important in appearance values and behaviours</td>
<td>They shared discomfort and coping strategy of avoidance without explicit efforts to shape one another</td>
<td>Claire appeared to adopt all of Rebecca’s values and was active in endorsing Rebecca’s pragmatic view</td>
<td>Despite her efforts to behave according to health-focus, Laura tended toward self-objectification and body surveillance</td>
<td>Lynn’s behavior and teaching were congruent; Cara adopted most of her appearance values and practices</td>
<td>Nadia’s behavior and teaching were congruent; Niku adopted some of her cultural and appearance values</td>
<td>Sarah identified with some of her mother’s behaviours, but resisted her criticism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summarized descriptions of cross-case assertions according to each mother-daughter dyadic case.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In response to the burgeoning number of quantitative studies of body image, which have attempted to clarify the complex and interrelated aspects of the experience of the body, the cases in this social constructionist study illustrate the goal-directed actions and projects related to body image in the mother-daughter relationship. The present study sought to understand body image development by exploring how it is co-constructed within the mother-daughter relationship. This discussion chapter relates the findings that are detailed in the previous chapter to the extant literature on body image. The first section revisits the research questions, and is followed by a summary of the findings as they add dimension to the extant literature. In response to the research problem, subsequent sections offer illustrations of previous findings and theory, as well as novel dimensions of body image development. Following that response, theoretical, methodological and clinical implications are discussed. This chapter concludes by addressing the limitations of this study, and areas for further investigation in future research on body image within the mother-daughter relationship.

Research Questions

In pursuit of further understanding of body image development from a contextual action theory perspective, this study was guided by the following research questions: What are the processes by which mothers and their adolescent daughters co-construct attitudes and behaviours toward their appearance and bodies? Within what superordinate relational projects are these body or appearance-related processes embedded?
Summary of the Findings

By examining mother – daughter conversations about body and appearance with the action-project method (Young et al., 2005), this study provided in vivo data on the processes by which body image was socially constructed within the mother-daughter relationship. Contextual action theory was the primary framework for the analysis of actions, goals, and projects within these mother-daughter conversations. Body image constructs, like self-objectification, as well as the concepts related to learning, gender identity and the parent-child relationship, provided further conceptual templates within which to understand the findings among these mother-daughter case studies. The action-project method accounts for the complexities of development by considering behaviour as goal-directed and intentional, although not necessarily rational action, and by comprehending the process of how actions proceed into projects and form lifelong ‘careers’ (Young & Valach, 2000). In this study, mothers and daughters’ joint projects regarding body and appearance were identified through their manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning when discussing topics in which appearance and body image were central.

In an effort to highlight the most salient processes among these cases, three cross-case assertions were identified. The first cross-case assertion was that body image was co-constructed in the appearance-related projects, and tied to relational projects, between mothers and daughters. Secondly, the mothers and daughters in each of these cases were affected by and invested in one another’s body image. Third, modelling appeared to play a role in body image identification as much as, and in some cases more than, prescriptive messages offering explicit instructions. Altogether these findings suggest that body image
and one’s appearance identity are inherently tied to the process of identity development within the mother-daughter relationship.

The cross-case assertions emerged from the procedure of considering commonalities and unique processes among the joint appearance-related projects for the six mother-daughter dyads. The projects identified for each dyad were unique to their relationship and included efforts to share values, support and relate to each other, understand, connect, and feel more comfortable in the conversation. These projects reflected activities that facilitated connection in relationship. Although some dyads had projects that involved avoidance, disagreement, and uncertain efforts to protect one another, and these aspects did not appear to be straightforwardly about connection, their projects still reflected efforts to be in relationship and to bridge differences. Thus, each of these joint appearance projects was fundamentally about the mother-daughter relationship.

Dynamic constructs emerged through the within-case analysis, which informed the development of within-case assertions. Examples of some common within-case assertions include: “alignment of values,” “mother acting as an identity agent,” “mutual confidence and pride,” “intergenerational patterns,” and “appearance project as part of an overarching relationship project.” Some distinct within-case assertions were: “sharing in a process of cultural identity development,” “arguing is a central feature of appearance projects,” and “reciprocal avoidance.” These within-case assertions, as well as each pair’s goals and projects were further examined within the cross-case analysis. This stage of analysis revealed commonalities and unique processes among these cases.
There were five commonalities identified across cases. The first was described above, these joint mother-daughter appearance projects were rooted in overarching relationship projects. The second was that the appearance projects were also inherently tied to identity shaping projects within the context of the mother-daughter relationship. Thirdly, each of the daughters was navigating tension between conflicting processes of identification with, and individuation from their mothers. The fourth commonality was that the mothers (and some daughters) were sending mixed messages between their prescriptive messages and the beliefs and behaviours they modeled. Finally, there was evidence of mutual investment in one another’s healthy body image, as well as identification with one another’s values and appearance across these mother-daughter cases.

Action-project analysis of these case studies also revealed four unique processes among these dyads. The first unique process was that each dyad had its own way of coping with the experience of objectification, including tendencies toward judgment of self and other, valuing the more attainable athletic ideal, and sharing in self-objectification. Another distinct process was the experience of relational distress in two of the dyads. A third unique process was that one pair was navigating an adoptive relationship which seemed to represent a unique challenge. Finally, two pairs were navigating notable cultural adjustment.

Response to the Research Problem

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on body image, self-objectification, and the mother-daughter relationship in a variety of ways. These contributions include detailed and dynamic illustrations of previous research findings, as
well as three novel dimensions of body image, which have not yet emerged, or have not been fully developed, within the body image literature. Although this study does not exhaustively account for all aspects of body image development, it contributes a substantive and meaningful perspective to the literature.

Illustrations of Previous Findings. The findings of this study supported previously identified processes and concerns related to body image and they illustrated these processes from the perspective of joint goal-directed action. The previous findings that connect to this study’s outcomes include: (1) the pathways of self-objectification were evident in these dyads’ conversations, self-confrontations and joint projects; (2) mother-daughter communication, particularly maternal modelling, is impactful in body image development; and (3) issues related to adolescent development and the mother-daughter relationship seemed to affect the daughters’ identification with their mothers’ body image.

Pathways of Self-Objectification. As noted in Chapter 2, OT has been a key influential contribution to the body image literature. The experience of being objectified by others has been found to facilitate self-objectification for women and girls, which poses as a risk for a variety of mental health concerns including body shame, appearance anxiety, disordered eating, depression, and sexual dysfunction (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012). Numerous empirical examinations of the process and outcomes of self-objectification have supported these main tenets (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Roberts 2013a/b; Tiggemann, 2013). As characterized in the analysis of commonalities and unique processes, all of the participants in this study seemed to be coping with objectification to some degree. This coping was outlined in the unique processes within the cross-case analysis, and some of these dyads’
actions and intentions specifically illustrate the pathways defined by OT (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012).

Pathway analysis on the damaging consequences of self-objectification have clarified that it is significantly associated with the affective experiences of appearance anxiety and body shame, which in turn are significantly associated with disordered eating, depressed mood, and impaired sexuality (Moradi & Huang, 2008; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012). There were several instances in the data when either the mother or daughter described experiences of being objectified and judged for their size or shape, and highlighted feelings of insecurity as a result. The participants who exhibited tendencies toward self-objectification, body surveillance, and/or restricted eating in their joint conversation, also endorsed feelings of body shame and appearance anxiety within their self-confrontations. Also, there was some contrast in the way some participants used self-objectification to dodge body shame and manage appearance anxiety. By considering how others viewed them, they were reassured that they met appearance ideals. This contrasting approach fits with the research that suggests appearance satisfaction is associated with global self-esteem (Tiggemann, 2013). Every dyad exhibited tendencies toward self-objectification in both obvious and subtle ways that were aligned with the pathways articulated in OT research.

While some participants appeared to be buffered by their endorsement of an athletic ideal, prioritizing bodily performance and function over appearance, there were also moments when they subtly revealed that they did value the toned appearance of the ideal athletic body. Even so, it seemed that this value was protecting them from the negative consequences of objectification because it was “attainable” and not sexualized, but OT
research suggests otherwise. Daniels and Lavoi (2013) argue that the athletic ideal is not actually attainable for most, and highlight the ways that female athletes are subject to heightened sexualization in the media. They describe how there is minimal coverage of female athletes in the media, but the majority of such coverage is either sexualized or domestic in nature, suggesting that society needs to temper their athletic prowess with “white, hegemonic femininity” (Daniels & Lavoi, 2013, p. 69). Moreover, they review research that found that sexualized coverage of athletes leads to negative evaluations of the athletes, as well as negative self-evaluations for the viewer. Another study suggested that girls felt depressed and discouraged when they viewed images of female athletes that were focused more on their aesthetic beauty (Thomson, Bower & Barnes, 2004). While there are many positives to girls’ participation in sports, given the research on sexualization, it appears to be important to consciously de-emphasize appearance and focus on girls’ health and enjoyment of the activity. The present study adds nuanced data to support these previous findings on the conflicting nature of messages about women athletes. While it seemed that each of the competitive swimmers in the present study were making an effort to separate their athletic performance from their appearance, they each also endorsed some degree of critical, objectified evaluation of the appearance of their bodies.

**Impact of Mother-Daughter Communication.** The case studies in this dissertation provide support for, and further illustration of some of the findings and theoretical positions in the areas of study relevant to mother-daughter communication and modelling. There have been a number of studies on the communication of body image concerns between mothers and daughters in the past 25 years (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Kichler & Crowther, 2001, 2009; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010; Ogden & Steward, 2000; Pike &
Rodin, 1991). There have also been relevant studies on the theory of identity agents (Schachter & Ventura, 2008) that are relevant to the present research. The findings of the present study, including the commonality among the cases that there was mutual influence and identification between mothers and daughters, and the cross case assertions that mutual investment and modelling were important aspects of the co-construction of body image, provide support and illustration of the extant findings on the impact of mother-daughter communication and modelling. The data and findings of this study call attention to the complexities of social learning as outlined in social cognitive theory on gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

The cases in the present study convey how aspects of body image, like body dissatisfaction and body-related behaviours, are modelled within mother-daughter interaction and that this modelling is sometimes not as straightforward as previous quantitative studies have conceptualized. Social cognitive theory’s (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) conceptualization of modelling is particularly relevant in understanding the subtleties of how daughters may adopt their mothers’ beliefs and behaviours. Modelling facilitates learning as one selectively observes a gender model through an attentional process, retains information by transforming and restructuring it in a cognitive representational process, and translates their symbolic conceptions in their own action via behavioural production processes (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). This behavioural production is determined by a fourth subfunction of modelling referred to as motivational processes. Motivational processes are an integration of information, external feedback and self-evaluation and are therefore informed by enacted behaviors, as well as impacted by the further integration of beliefs and behaviours in one’s identity. Motivational processes
distinguish between knowledge acquisition and spontaneous performance. Motivational processes serve as a compass in the construction of gender and identity.

Just as Abraczinskas and colleagues (2012) found that maternal body dissatisfaction was linked to daughter body dissatisfaction, Katz-Wise and colleagues (2013) also found that maternal body shame was associated with adolescent body surveillance. These empirical findings suggest that modelling has the potential to be more impactful than direct messages, particularly when it comes to the affective experience of the body. The impact of modelling is illustrated by the cases in the present research because for the dyads that struggled with negative affective experiences of their bodies, those feelings appeared to be shared between mother and daughter. The most apparent examples of this were shared tendencies toward body surveillance and appearance anxiety within the research conversation, or similar experiences of body shame shared in the self-confrontation. Overall, as outlined in Chapter 4, processes of modelling were evident within each of the cases in this study, and included behaviours (e.g., body surveillance, or avoidance of self-disclosure), beliefs (e.g., comfort is more important than sexiness, adolescents should not engage in eyebrow grooming), and affective experiences (e.g., fear of fat, discomfort with height, pride in athleticism).

Mother-daughter joint projects also allowed the mothers in this study to act as identity agents, as they expressed intentions to shape their daughter’s values and behaviours associated with body image. In a majority of these cases the daughters seemed to agree with, or share, their mothers’ guidance, or modeled behaviours. Research on identity agents suggests that parents act explicitly and intentionally to shape their child’s values and behaviours due to their investment in their child’s developing identity.
(Schachter & Ventura, 2008; Von Korff, Grotevant, Koh, & Samek, 2010). Additionally, the degree to which mothers’ direct instruction was effective in shaping the daughters’ beliefs and behaviours in the present study is aligned with multiple studies that have found that mothers’ instruction was impactful (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Katz-Wise et al., 2013; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010). Mothers appeared to intentionally facilitate processes of social learning by acting as identity agents.

**Adolescent Development and Identification.** Through the analysis of commonalities among these cases, it was interpreted that factors related to adolescent development were implicated in the daughters’ motivation to embrace their mothers’ messages related to appearance and body image (either through tuition or modelling). The degree to which the daughters intentionally identified with their mothers was discrepant based on age and the quality of the relationship. These two factors have been found to be important based on research of body image modelling within the mother-daughter relationship.

In a review of the confounding findings in the research on maternal modelling Abraczinskas, Fisek and Barnes (2012) suggested that modelling is more influential in earlier adolescence because it is a time when social comparison becomes prominent, as does weight and shape consciousness for girls. Furthermore, they posited that modelling may become less important in later adolescence as behaviours and values are based on internalized beliefs. Adding to this conceptualization, in research and theory regarding identity development in adolescence, Grotevant and Cooper (1998) characterized later adolescence as a time of individuation, which is facilitated by the parents’ tendency to take a more egalitarian approach. They described how security in adolescents’ relationships to
their parents was predictive of adolescents’ ability to explore their sense of identity and the future. This seemed to be true among the daughters in the present study. The two youngest daughter participants, who were both 13 years old at the start of the study, were both straightforward in their adoption of their mothers’ instructions and seemed eager to incorporate their mothers’ beliefs and behaviours, whereas the older adolescent daughters questioned and disagreed with their mothers, and even offered them guidance at times.

Another way in which the present study both illustrates and clarifies the research on body image modelling within the mother-daughter relationship is by offering evidence on the intersection of multiple variables that were only measured discreetly in the quantitative literature. In a recent study on self-objectification and identification in the mother-adolescent relationship, Katz-Wise and colleagues (2013) attempted to measure modelling by comparing measures of body surveillance, body esteem, and body shame between mothers and their adolescent offspring. Their study produced conflicting results as they did not find evidence of modelling based on a lack of significant association between the mothers’ and adolescents’ endorsements of body surveillance. However, they did find a significant association between maternal body shame and adolescent body surveillance. These results suggest that modelling is not as straightforward as the adolescent adopting their mother’s behaviours. The authors concluded that they did not have evidence of identification based on the lack of modelling observed in body surveillance scores. However, it seems likely that the heightened body surveillance exhibited by adolescent children of mothers with heightened body shame may reflect some degree of modelling or identification with their mother – whether through investment in appearance, or fear of developing her difficulty. This type of indirect identification was true of both Pairs 1 and 3.
in the present study. Additionally, Ogden and Steward (2000) found that the quality of the mother-daughter relationship affected the degree of modelling exhibited by the daughters. This was also evident among some dyads in the current study who seemed to get along and value each other’s perspective and also were highly identified in their projects and internal processes.

A clinical study on self-concept clarity, internalization of beauty standards and body image has shown that for women, self-concept clarity and self-esteem were negatively correlated with the internalization of societal standards for attractiveness (Vartanian, 2009). In a follow-up study, researchers found that for individuals with low self-concept clarity and low self-esteem, the internalization of societal standards was mediated by other factors like a general tendency to conform, public self-consciousness, and a contingency of self-worth that is based on the body. There are many social and psychological aspects implicated in body image and the potential for societal standards to have a negative impact on one’s self-concept and self-esteem seems to be impacted by values for appearance and self-worth, both of which were being co-constructed by the mother and daughter pairs in this study. Altogether, the conceptualization of body image as a joint appearance project situated within overarching relationship and identity projects between mothers and daughters attests to the complexity of both body image and identity development. This understanding points to overlap between the theoretical conceptualizations of social learning, theory on identity agents and adolescent identity development. It seems that the intricacies involved in body image modelling and identification are difficult to measure with quantitative approaches, in contrast, the cases in this action-project study provided more dynamic examples of the interaction of processes
that produce conflicting findings when measured via correlational and cross-sectional methods.

**Novel Contributions to Understanding Body Image Development.** In addition to providing further illustration of the extant literature, the main findings of this study both extend previous findings and contribute novel dimensions to the literature on body image development. These novel dimensions include the findings that body image is co-constructed, body image is inherently about both identity and relationship, and maternal modelling is impactful and sometimes incongruent.

**Body Image is Co-Constructed in Mother-Daughter Relationships.** There is abundant research suggesting that the media and peer relationships significantly affect girls’ body image. There is also strong support in the literature that family relationships, particularly mother-daughter relationships, are impactful in body image development (Smolak & Levine, Neumark-Sztainer, Pike & Rodin, 1991; McKinley, 1999; Milkie, 1999). Moreover, Piran (2005) posited that women internalize social expectations for self-silencing, anger suppression and objectification, and in her study of this she found that women’s endorsement of constructs measuring these experiences predicted scores on a measure of eating disorders. These findings suggest that eating disorders can stem from the construction of femininity. By identifying the social influences in body image and body related concerns, most research on body image has been conducted from post-positivist paradigms, and yet provides support for a social constructionist conceptualization of body image development. The present study is novel in that it examines body image development from a social constructionist framework.
The cases in the present study have added evidence that the mother-daughter relationship can be central in body image development. These cases contributed to the understanding of body image development as a process in which mothers and daughters jointly engage in goal-directed action that contributes to mid-term appearance-related projects. The projects seemed to continually unfold in relation to the dyads’ beliefs and practices about their appearances and bodies. Action-project analysis has situated their action and projects within superordinate projects about identity and the mother-daughter relationship. This conceptualization builds on the extant findings by providing the understanding that, in these particular cases, joint projects about appearance seem to reveal elements of both identification and social learning, were inherently connected to the mother-daughter relationship, and that these appearance projects were ongoing through the course of the study.

**Relationship and Identity.** As described in Chapter 2, familial influences on body image have been characterized as occurring through processes of both internalization and identification (Kearney-Cooke, 2002). Drawing on Freud’s conceptualization of identification, Kearney-Cooke described the process by which children unconsciously adopt their same-sex parent’s body image in the process of developing gender-identity. There is some research that suggests that mothers and daughters seem to share a similar experience of their body, including affective experiences like dissatisfaction, or esteem (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Kichler & Crowther, 2001; McKinley, 1999). Furthermore, Kearney-Cooke characterized internalization as a progressive process of social learning whereby children’s body-based beliefs and behaviours are shaped through observation of, and reinforcement by, those around them. Research on appearance-related modelling
within the mother-daughter relationship has provided evidence that such a process of internalization via modelling can happen, such as Pike and Rodin’s (1991) study that found that mothers of daughters with bulimia endorsed disordered eating themselves.

By revealing that mother-daughter appearance projects are inherently connected to relationship projects, the cases in the present study illustrated how, to varying degrees, the daughters in this study seemed to be identifying with their mothers’ experiences of their body, as well as adopting their beliefs and behaviours. The joint appearance projects exhibited by the mother-daughter pairs reveal the interwoven nature of manifest behaviour, internal processes and social meaning. Moreover, these appearance and relationship projects seemed to continue over time which suggests that the co-construction of body image may be ongoing in adolescence.

**Maternal Modelling & Incongruence.** The literature on body image between mothers and daughters provides contradictory findings on maternal modelling. These conflicted findings were outlined in the earlier section on illustrations of the findings. Based on the analysis of the present cases, it seems that the conflicting findings among prior studies may be due to the modelling of multiple, sometimes incongruent beliefs, affective experiences and behaviours related to body and appearance. Because the data set of the present study was comprised of the actual actions of parents and daughters rather than survey responses or interviews about their behaviour, it offers a unique glimpse into the complexities of identity construction that have been characterized by theories like social cognitive theory (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).
There were incongruities between what some mothers in this study attempted to instruct their daughters to do, and what they were less consciously modelling in their beliefs and behaviour. This finding is reminiscent of another contextual action theory study on mother-child relationships. In a study of family projects for sun protection, Young et al. (2005) found that for some parents, the desire to have darker skin competed with the demand to protect their families and themselves from the sun, and so they would limit their children’s exposure to the sun, while engaging in sun-tanning themselves. This sun-tanning study provides evidence of the ambivalence and dissonance that can emerge between competing projects for health and beauty. The present study uncovered a similar discrepancy between explicit intentions, internal processes and projects for many of the mothers and some of the daughters. One of the most poignant examples was how the mother in Pair 3, Anna, insisted that her daughter, Laura embrace healthier appearance-related practices and beliefs, while she herself endorsed skipping meals, and was preparing to have revisions made to her recent cosmetic surgery because she was unhappy with the outcome. The most common discrepancy in modelling and prescriptive messages among these cases was between the mothers’ intentional efforts to inform and guide her daughter’s values and behaviours related to body image, while less intentionally complying with societal beauty standards in their own behaviour. Thus, it could be interpreted that they were engaged in competing projects to provide their daughters with healthy guidance, and to conform to beauty ideals. By revealing such incongruities, this uniquely nuanced finding both extends and complicates the research on maternal body image and modelling.
Theoretical Implications

By illustrating how mothers and daughters appearance-related projects are co-constructed within their relationship, and by revealing the processes by which they identify with one another’s appearance and body image, this study supports the utility of contextual action theory in the conceptualization of complex, socially constructed, individual experiences. Objectification theory was also extended by the evidence that the mother-daughter relationship is relevant in the transmission of self-objectifying practices.

**Contextual Action Theory.** By elucidating the co-construction of body image within the mother-daughter relationship, this study both substantiates contextual action theory and attests to its utility for comprehending the complexities of socially constructed aspects of identity. From a contextual action theoretical lens, these mothers’ and daughters’ behaviours were understood as goal-directed action within the context of their relationship, and this approach illustrated how joint appearance projects were enacted, as well as embedded in mother-daughter relationship projects. This conceptualization adds to the body of literature produced by prior action-theoretical explorations on dyadic goals and projects contributing to other socially constructed phenomena (e.g., parent-adolescent health or career projects; Young et al., 2000, 2005, 2006). Moreover, the relational nature of the appearance projects maintained by these dyads suggests that relationships may impact body image which is an important aspect of identity.

In a contextual action theory perspective on identity development, Young and Valach (in press) describe how identity is constructed through the process of creating meaningful links between goal-directed actions that are primarily enacted within a social context. According to contextual action theory, identity construction occurs within ongoing
social processes. The relevance of identity development as it relates to the mother-daughter relationship was evident in these appearance projects. Given the conceptualization of the findings with the additional lens of social cognitive theory, the modelling in these cases could be considered a functional step in the co-construction of identity within the mother-daughter relationship. This is the first study to contribute to the contextual action theory understanding of how the mother-daughter relationship can facilitate the co-construction of body image through projects about appearance.

**Objectification Theory.** In addition to providing further description and support for the existing OT research, the findings from the present study add an extension to OT by revealing ways in which the mother-daughter relationship may be prominent in body image development and in the transmission of objectifying attitudes. OT emerged from a social psychological perspective and the original theory focused entirely on sociocultural influences on body image. The mother-daughter relationship was not mentioned in the original paper (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Additionally, most research on body image in the mother-daughter relationship has involved correlational and cross-sectional studies of disordered eating without consideration of the specific concerns associated with OT like self-objectification, body surveillance and appearance anxiety (Tiggemann & Williams, 2013).

There are a limited number of studies of self-objectification within the mother-daughter relationship. One such study was McKinley’s (1999) exploration of age-related differences between mother’s and daughter’s scores on the Objectified Body Consciousness Scales. Another was a cross-cultural study of self-objectification between mothers and daughters from Nepal and the United States (Crawford et al., 2008). More
recently, there was the study of individuation and identification in the mother-adolescent relationship that compared self-objectifying attitudes and behaviours (Katz-Wise, 2013). These studies each provide some evidence that concerns related to objectification can be communicated, sometimes indirectly, between mothers and daughters, but due to limitations in quantitative measurement, they were unable to describe the processes by which this translation occurs.

In her recent chapter on the theoretical underpinnings of OT, Roberts (2013b) included more consideration of the role of the mother-daughter relationship as she articulated psychodynamic and social cognitive theories, and their respective processes of identification and social learning. It appears that there is growing interest in extending the tenets of OT to consider how primary relationships might inform one’s vulnerability for developing concerns as a result of the objectifying culture. The action-project analysis of the cases in the present study offers an important perspective on the relational underpinnings of concerns related to objectification. The cases in this study have suggested that strategies for coping with the objectifying milieu, including self-objectification, were endorsed by all the mother-daughter dyads, but were distinct based on the unique intentions and projects within the relationships. For those dyads that tended toward self-objectifying attitudes, and that struggled with some of the consequences, like appearance anxiety or body shame, it seemed to be the case that self-objectification was enacted in an effort to cope with the difficult affective experiences associated with external, objectified judgment. Self-objectification has not often been characterized as intentional or purposeful, but based on this contextual action theoretical understanding, it could be said that self-objectification is a less conscious, goal-directed action embedded in higher order
goal-directed projects. Self-objectification appeared to be motivated by a need to cope with difficult affective experiences associated with appearance or body judgment (e.g., body shame) and may have been self-defeating. Moreover, self-objectification was jointly enacted within the mother-daughter relationship. The findings of the present study suggest that the co-construction of body image within the mother-daughter relationship inevitably influenced, and was influenced by, self-objectification.

**Methodological Implications**

Just as a film provides more information and context with a three-dimensional sequence, than a series of two-dimensional photographs can offer, the constructionist action-project method facilitated a more multi-dimensional view of the processes of body image development than post-positivist correlational and cross-sectional studies have provided thus far. This method contrasts with post-positivist, survey and cross-sectional studies because data collection and analysis are thorough and multi-faceted. As opposed to static survey responses, action-project data collection includes interactional, conversational data, as well as participant internal processes via reflections on the conversations. Also, by exploring two participants’ interactive experience, this method offers relational information on the social nature of experiences like body image, that have typically only been studied from one person’s perspective. Additionally, the data are analyzed in an integrative way, including the multiple perspectives rooted in social meaning, internal processes, and actual manifest behavior. Because the constructionist action-project approach was uniquely well-suited to study the ways in which body image is constructed within the mother-daughter relationship, it could be argued that it is an ideal method to
understand how other relationships, for example, with siblings, peers, or fathers, may contribute to body image.

**Clinical Implications**

The cases studied in this dissertation provide valuable information on the social and developmental nature of body-related concerns. While this study was not a clinical study, nor were any of the participants seeking counselling, the findings offer more general implications for clinical interventions. In the aforementioned review of feminist literature on the body, Bordo (1989) argues that societal expectations about gender and sexuality contribute to women’s acquiescence to pursuits that diminish their power. She conceptualizes anorexia, as well as other primarily female disorders, as providing the woman with a sense of self-mastery in the face of self-sacrifice. Bordo placed emphasis on understanding the social underpinnings of women’s mental health concerns. The emergence of OT (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) and its burgeoning empirical support bolster Bordo’s rationale that the sociocultural context contributes to disturbances in women’s mental health. Findings from the current study further develop this understanding of the social construction of body-related concerns as they arise, and are maintained, within the mother-daughter relationship. This understanding fits the culture of counselling psychology, is aligned with counselling-oriented literature on objectification, and provides valuable information for programs of intervention and prevention. Additionally the self-confrontation procedure of the action-project method employed may have value for interventions with family dyads.
In a review of the advances to theory and research on sexual objectification, Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr (2011) emphasized counselling psychology’s social justice mission when they called for psychologists to advocate for the eradication of sexual objectification on individual, interpersonal, institutional and political levels. The field of counselling psychology is known for placing value on social justice and positive psychology, and for its leaning toward understanding the social and developmental forces contributing to mental health concerns. The aim and findings of the present study fit within these areas of interest in counselling psychology research as the study illustrated how we conceptualize body image within close family relationships. This understanding provides vital contextual perspective for programs of prevention that build on strengths, and programs of intervention focusing on family values, beliefs, and behaviours about body and appearance.

By offering descriptive and in-vivo data and findings on the nature of body image construction in the mother-daughter relationship, the present study contributes to counselling perspectives on the prevention and treatment of the body-related concerns. Specifically, the findings of this study place emphasis on the need to consider how the mother-daughter relationship, as well as aspects of identity (e.g., developmental stage, cultural identity) may be implicated in a female client’s experience of her body. Understanding how primary relationships contribute to a woman’s beliefs and feelings about her body and appearance can facilitate the conceptualization of her concerns, as well as the plan for treatment. The relevance of this conceptualization may be useful in working with client concerns that are associated with self-objectification like body shame, appearance anxiety, depressed mood and disordered eating (Moradi & Huang 2008;
Szymanski, Moffitt & Carr, 2011; Tiggemann & Williams, 2013). Depending on one’s psychotherapeutic orientation, one may apply these findings differently, but by examining the relational underpinnings of the beliefs and behaviours a client endorses for appearance and body, and how those beliefs and behaviours might be associated with negative feelings about their appearance and body, they can begin to dispute their beliefs and change their behaviours.

Szymanski, Carr and Moffitt (2011) drew from theory and empirical research on the sexual objectification of women to develop training considerations for counselling psychologists. These authors remind psychologists to attend to sexual objectification in both its insidious (e.g., social messages, sexually objectifying environments) and more direct manifestations (e.g., sexual violence and harassment). They recommend that psychologists consider the intersection of sexually objectifying experiences with multiple sociocultural identities when working with women of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They also suggest that psychologists maintain a feminist lens with any approach in order to account for internalized sexism and offered ideas about therapeutic activities like developing an oppressive events timeline. Building on Szymanski and colleagues’ work, the findings from the present study might enhance psychotherapeutic approaches and conceptualizations for work with individuals with body image concerns. This study has drawn attention to the need to consider how appearance and body image concerns are constructed and maintained within the mother-daughter relationship, or other closely identified family relationships. Furthermore, the understanding that body image development is connected to identity and relationship could inform case conceptualization and treatment planning.
Szymanski and colleagues (2011) were comprehensive in offering considerations for advocacy and intervention in multiple formats including policy, education and individual therapy. They also emphasized the value of prevention and outreach. The understanding of how body image is constructed that was identified in this study can enhance programs of prevention both by informing the conceptualization and focus of interventions, and by including both mothers and daughters in such therapeutic programs. There are many studies of programs designed to empower girls and women to resist objectifying and damaging messages via media literacy, psycho-educational girls groups, and programs of comprehensive sex education (Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013). For example, Bowling, Zimmerman, and Daniels, (2000) found that the girls who participated in a curriculum on healthy relationships, sexuality and body image reported improved self-awareness and communication, as well as feeling more empowered to reject harmful societal messages. This type of psycho-educational program may benefit by facilitating discussion about how body image is enacted in the mother-daughter relationship. Similarly, psycho-educational and therapeutic groups could be enhanced by including meetings or group discussions with both the girls and their mothers to explore these concerns as they relate to their mother-daughter relationships.

Epidemiological data on families, eating, and weight concerns has shown that family communication and meals are vehicles for the transmission of influential and sometimes harmful messages about the body (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005). Another study by Neumark-Sztainer and colleagues (2010) provided evidence that parents’ weight-related comments, dieting behaviours, and family weight teasing may contribute to disordered eating in adolescents. It has been suggested that such research findings can contribute to
strategies like enhancing communication and modelling healthful behaviours to guide parents in the prevention of weight or eating problems in their children and adolescents (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010). The present study further supports this proposition as it has revealed how body image concerns emerge in mother-daughter conversations about many topics, including food, and how maladaptive beliefs and behaviours can be learned via both modelling and prescriptive messages.

The action-project method has been conceptualized as a possible therapeutic approach (Young & Valach, in press) as the process of self-reflection involved in the self-confrontation interviews can promote self-awareness and access to emotions in a similar manner to psychotherapy. More specifically, by watching the video of their conversations separately with the interviewer, and by responding to inquiries about what they were experiencing minute by minute, the participants often reflected on their emotional experience and had moments of realization that resemble therapeutic work. For example, by examining her uncomfortable reactions to her mother with the researcher during the self-confrontation interview in which she watched the video of her conversation with her mother, the daughter in Pair 1, Stacey, was able to further articulate how she was impacted by the ambivalence in her relationship with her mother. Given this consideration, not only does the nuanced data of this study offer a possible template from which to better understand how appearance projects between mothers and daughters can be helpful and harmful, but with further clinical research it also has the potential to be developed into a dyadic counseling approach in which mothers and daughters can jointly deepen their understanding of their body or appearance-based concerns.
Limitations of the Study

The decision to examine the construction of body image between mothers and daughters using the action-project method was made with the intention to address deficits and conflicts in the body image literature due to its fractured nature. However, there are several limitations to this study. First, based on the instrumental case study design, this study provides rich data on 6 mother-daughter dyads, but the assertions developed are specific to these cases and cannot be generalized to larger populations of mothers and daughters. The findings and assertions resulting from the action-project analysis of these cases serve as valuable illustration and hypothetical explanations for body image development that might prove more generalizable if they were researched further using inferential designs.

Secondly, this study aimed to describe developmental processes that may extend for a lengthy amount of time. Although this study involved follow-up with both mother-daughter participants, the timeline was between 6 to 9 months. Thus, it is recognized that these findings do not offer the same developmental perspective that an extended longitudinal approach would provide. This seems particularly relevant when considering the findings that appearance projects were enacted within overarching, potentially longer standing identity and relationship projects, and that there were noticeable developmental differences in identification between the younger and older adolescent participants. It would be valuable to better understand the processes of how appearance projects are jointly enacted over the course of late childhood and throughout adolescence. A research timeline that would allow for more longitudinal follow up on mother-daughter pairs would
have deepened the understanding of how body image develops within relationship over an important period of time of identity development.

Thirdly, this study would have benefitted from a more diverse sample. Even though recruitment included advertising within a wide range of communities, only one dyad represented an ethnic and national background other than European-Canadian. Considering that body image and eating disorders have historically been studied among white, North American, and university populations, it is necessary to gather further information on how racial, ethnic or cultural identity contribute to body image concerns. This is especially true given that the present study revealed that generational differences in cultural adjustment seemed to be a prominent factor in their joint appearance project. Additionally, the present study focused on mothers and daughters based on the relevance of the mother-daughter relationship in body image research and theory (Abraczinskas et al., 2012; Daniluk, 1998; Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Kichler & Crowther, 2001; McKinley, 1999; Neumark-Sztainer, et al., 2010; Ogden & Steward, 2000; Usmani & Daniluk 1997), but also because there was only one father who responded to the recruitment efforts, and his daughter did not want to participate with him. McKinley’s (1999) study of both parents and daughters suggests that fathers’ approval plays an important role in their daughters’ body esteem. It is critical that research on body image further articulates how fathers and daughters, as well as sons, construct appearance and body related projects. Further information on how fathers impact body image would contribute considerably to our understanding of body image development.

Finally, this study could have been strengthened with additional sources for data gathering, and by improving the ecological validity of the interview setting. Due to the
practical concerns of data collection in the action-project method (e.g., videotaping, separate rooms) the procedural steps of this study were streamlined by being conducted at the University of British Columbia, but this may have also posed some limitations. More specifically, the mothers and daughters were asked to participate in conversations about body image that reflect their normal conversations that they might have at home. The enactment of these joint appearance projects may have had more validity if the conversation had actually taken place at home, or any other naturalistic setting where they may have conversed about appearance. Building on this consideration, additional sources of data, like observations of the mothers and daughters engaging in behavioural manifestation of appearance-related projects (e.g., shopping, preparing for an event, etc.) would have provided proximity to the actual actions contributing to body image. At the same time, the research environment may have allowed these participants to have longer and more focused conversations about body or appearance than they might have otherwise. Additionally, the use of video-recall, and the identification of joint and individual projects, were features that likely heightened the participants’ awareness of, and ability to discuss their appearance-related projects.

Future Directions

Body image researchers have called attention to the need for further research and conceptualization that might attend to the complex, multi-faceted and fluid nature of body image (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). OT has provided further comprehension of the degree to which women’s difficulties with their bodies are associated with cultural standards for thinness and beauty (Tiggemann & Williams, 2012). This dissertation has provided further information about the contextual and relational nature of body image development from a
social constructionist lens. The novel conceptualization from these findings, that appearance-related projects are jointly constructed in the mother-daughter relationship, has both clarified and complicated the understanding of various aspects of body image and has illuminated areas where future research will be valuable.

First, given the finding that body image is tied to identity, which has been understood to change throughout the course of one’s life, it would be ideal to have further research that offers a greater longitudinal perspective on development, as mentioned in the limitations for the study. Studies on body image development with longer follow-up between childhood, adolescence and adulthood would provide valuable insight on how body image corresponds to identity development. Also, as Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) have noted the complexity and fluidity of body image, the need for further research from social constructionist approaches, in which phenomena are understood as arising within a social context, is warranted. For example, further studies from social constructionist approaches like the action-project method, or narrative inquiry, might further elucidate the intersecting and transitional aspects of body image, identity and relationships.

Secondly, the present study might inform the literature on body image interventions if psychoeducational programs and therapeutic approaches based on these findings were developed and piloted. This study supports the understanding of body image as a social construct that is shaped within close family relationships, which provides an essential understanding for any therapeutic work with women and girls who have body-related concerns. The finding that body image is tied to the mother-daughter relationship underscores the need to include both mothers and daughters in therapeutic discussions in some cases. A potential example of this would be to involve both mothers and daughters
in a type of consciousness-raising, therapy-oriented group in which mothers and daughters can meet separately (e.g., mother group and daughter group) to process their individual, developmental specific concerns, as well as meeting all together to process their mother-daughter body image projects. Taken one step further, as mentioned in the section on clinical implications, the action-project method offers a possible approach for intervention (Young & Valach, in press) that would allow mothers and daughters to observe and reflect on their joint action related to body image and appearance. The efficacy of such collaborative mother-daughter therapeutic approaches would need to be supported empirically.

The conceptualization put forth in this dissertation of body image as a co-construction in the mother-daughter relationship also calls attention to the need for further research on how body image is tied to both gender and identity. Prior studies have tackled this subject and suggested that the interplay of gender identity and body image is made complex by the intersection of attitudes, relationship and development (Cash, Ancis, & Strachan, 1997; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997). One possible avenue to consider these variables would be to explore attitudes about both appearance and gender within families and how these attitudes impact an individual’s body image and identity in adolescence. Furthermore, several studies have called attention to the lack of research on the role of fathers in adolescent body image concerns. Although the present study did not include fathers, the way father figures informed the mother-daughter relationship emerged in subtle ways in several cases in this study. There is also some evidence that fathers have an impact on their daughter’s body image via approval of their daughter’s appearance (McKinley, 1999), by engaging in weight-talk and teasing (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2010), and by
contributing to a focus on appearance or weight in the family (Kluck, 2010). It would be ideal to further clarify the role of fathers in the body image development of their sons and daughters as part of a larger social constructionist exploration of how families construct body image. Furthermore, to build on the social constructionist lens put forth in this dissertation, it would be valuable to examine how mothers and fathers talk about body image or appearance with one another, as well as how each parent addresses the topic with their child (e.g. mother-daughter, father-daughter).

Finally, the finding that body image is tied to identity development, as well as the mother-daughter relationship, suggests that it would be helpful to explore these processes in earlier stages of development. To complete the picture of how gender and identity inform and are informed by body image, it might be necessary to go back to early childhood and infancy to better understand the role of attachment given that recent research and theory has highlighted this as a primary aspect of body image development (Orbach, 1999; Rizzolatti, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2001; Sira, 2003; Snijders, 2007). To research body image as it relates to attachment, with particular consideration of the role of touch and caregiver body image, would provide crucial information on the origins of body image development.

**Conclusion**

Women and girls have historically been particularly prone to body image concerns which have been linked to the objectifying cultural milieu. It has also been suggested that body-related concerns have become more prominent for men and boys in recent years. This highlights the need to understand the development of such concerns, yet the study of body
image is quite complex as it represents a psychological construct that is subject to input from peers, family, media and other social and cultural forces. Both the quantitative and qualitative studies reviewed in Chapter 2 attempt to clarify how social influences become internal constructs, like the internalization of the thin ideal, self-objectification, and body surveillance. This extant literature has provided a somewhat fractured conceptualization of how such socialized processes, like self-objectification, relate to a variety of concerns including body shame and disordered eating. The findings from the present action-project study of mother-daughter cases have revealed a more complete picture of the processes by which mothers and daughters co-construct body image. Moreover, the findings from this study attest to the degree to which body image is made up of socially constructed processes as these joint appearance projects were inherently tied to identity development within the mother-daughter relationship.

Combined, much of the extant body image literature illustrates that important social learning can take place between adolescent girls and their mothers, which can facilitate the development of body and eating concerns. This conceptualization was supported and extended by the present study. It seems that mothers are in a position to not only foster their daughters’ filter for the cultural standards or pressures, but also to contribute to their daughters’ experience of her body as they co-construct appearance related projects from within a closely identified relationship. The action-project method, with its access to internal processes via self-confrontation was particularly useful for capturing dynamic social and developmental processes in vivo, which made it possible to tie together some of the distinct findings from quantitative approaches.
By contributing an understanding of how a primary family relationship, the mother-daughter relationship, provides the relational context within which body image is co-constructed, this study has illustrated Orbach’s (2009) characterization of body image as being imprinted with a “familial body story.” Altogether, the research on body image has begun to elucidate the ways in which the body and mind mutually influence one another, as well as the ways body image is inherently tied to one’s social context. It is the authors’ belief that much remains to be explored in this area. It is necessary to develop a more comprehensive understanding of body image in order to promote and empower those who have struggled with body-related difficulties, as well as to further incorporate more holistic approaches to prevention and intervention in counselling.
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Appendix A

Recruitment Poster

Appearance and Development Projects Study

Calling all girls!

Are you between the ages of 12 and 15 years old? Do you have conversations with your parents about your body, or your appearance? Do you talk about how you look or how you want to look?

Calling all parents!

Do you have a daughter between the ages of 12 and 15 years old? Do you have conversations about her body or appearance? Do you talk about how you look or how you want to look as well?

More Info?
In this research study you will have the opportunity to talk about your parent-daughter relationship and explore your thoughts and feelings about your bodies and appearance in a series of two interviews that will take place over a 4 month period.

Each parent-daughter pair will be entered into a drawing to win gift cards (50$ ?)

Primary Investigator: Emily Polak
Research Supervisor: Dr. Richard Young

If you and your parent or daughter are interested in hearing more about this opportunity please contact us at (---)------- or email us at _______________ Please leave your name, and telephone number, so the research team can contact you! Thank you for your interest!
Appendix B

Appearance and Development Projects Study: Telephone Screening

Thank-you for your interest in the Appearance and Development Projects Study. Where did you hear about us?

Just to clarify, are you calling on your own behalf, or are you a parent calling on the behalf of your teenager?

As you may have learned, we are interested in studying how adolescent girls, along with their parents understand themselves based on their bodies and appearance. So we want to find parents and daughters who are willing to talk to us, and each other, about things like which activities the daughter engages in that may have a focus on her body or appearance, how both the parent and daughter think about appearance, and what expectations and standards the parent and daughter should have in the daughters development.

We are looking for people who can commit to doing two interviews, and a follow-up phone interview over the course of about 4 months. Both the daughter and one parent would need to be involved. The interviews would have to take place at the facilities on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Your travel or parking costs of up to 10$ will be reimbursed.

Are you interested in becoming involved? A few important details you should know: All the information will be kept strictly confidential, to ensure your privacy. Also, we will not be able to accept everyone who wants to take part in the study so I have some questions I need to ask you in order to determine your or your daughter’s eligibility.

Have both parent and daughter discussed being involved in the study and agreed? (If not can you please discuss this with them? I will back in 2 days to finish screening. Ensure that name is recorded)

Parent Name:__________________________ Daughter Name:__________________________

Relationship between participating parent and daughter (biological or adoptive, step-parent, guardian):_________________________________________________________

Members of household:_________________________________________________________

How long have Ppts lived in the same household? _______________________________

Currently live together on a full time basis? _______________

Parent DOB_____________________  Daughter DOB_______________________
Appearance and Development Projects Study: Telephone Screening (cont’d)

Parent Occupation______________________________________________________________

Parent Marital Status__________________________________________________________

Daughter’s grade and school____________________________________________________

Has daughter ever been diagnosed with any mental illness or psychological disorder?__

If yes, what was/is the official diagnosis?________________________________________

Is there someone we can contact to confirm this diagnosis?________________________

Does daughter have any physical limitations and/or disability?______________________

Is there a family history of mental illness?________________________________________

If so, who, and what types of issues?____________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________________________

What are the best days and times of the week for both of you to come in for an interview?

________________________________________

Do you have any questions at this point? What happens next is I will bring this information to my research supervisor and call you back in a week or so to let you know whether we will be able to include you in the study.

Thank you so much for your time and interest.
Appendix C

**Appearance and Development Projects: Procedure Outline**

I. Recruitment:
   a. Posters placed in community centres, clinics, similar public venues
   b. Craigslist.org posting
   c. Contact with local high school mental health professional

II. Telephone Screening:
   a. Orientation
   b. Eligibility screening (Appendix B)
   c. Initial demographics gathered

III. Initial Interview
   a. Explanation of procedures and Consent/Assent signing
   b. Daughter art project
      i. Daughter will be given a separate space and some time to illustrate her feelings about appearance and beauty
   c. Initial pair interview
      i. Research interviewer meets with both parent and daughter to discuss daughter’s illustration and explore relevant body-related conversation topics
      
      ii. Example questions:
          
          1. (To daughter) Can you tell us a bit about your illustration? I am wondering about your interests and what you like to do? In all of those things do you have thoughts/feelings about your appearance? What is your current/future perception of your body? How do you think it will change? How do you want it to change?
          
          2. (To parent) What interested you in this study? What do you do with regard to your daughter’s appearance? How do you see as your role in her body image development? (Mother) What is your perception of your own body? (Mother)

   

230
you manage cultural standards for beauty? What are some conversations you have with your daughter related to body or appearance?

iii. A conversation topic will be identified
d. Taped conversation
   i. Videotaping and length of conversation will be explained to parent and daughter
   ii. They will be left to have a conversation that is taped by researcher
e. Self-Confrontation
   i. Parent and daughter will review the conversation tape separately with research interviewers
   ii. The tape will be stopped every minute or so and participant will be asked to identify what they were thinking or feeling at that point in the conversation in order to identify layers of meaning.
f. De-brief
   i. Researcher will check in with both parent and daughter to see how the experience was for them and to check whether there are any resulting concerns
   ii. Further procedure will be explained and they will be offered reimbursement for travel

IV. Initial Analysis
   a. Data will be transcribed and initially analyzed to identify goals, joint actions and projects
   b. Narrative summaries will be written for each parent and daughter

V. Second Interview
   a. Participants will be invited back for a follow up interview about two months later.
   b. They will be separately read their summaries and asked for feedback and their further thoughts on the process.
c. Researcher will reconvene with both parent and daughter to discuss joint actions and projects in an effort to ensure consensus.

d. Debrief: Both participants will be debriefed again, reimbursed and the last follow-up phone call, as well as the award notification/delivery will be explained

VI. Follow Up Phone Call
   a. Participants will be reached by telephone approximately 2 months after the second interview to check in (Appendix F).
   b. They will be asked, individually, to reflect on their experience with the study, to confirm/make changes to the general analysis and to share any related experiences since the study.

VII. Award Drawing
   a. Participant name will be drawn from a hat to award the gift card prize
   b. Winning participant will be notified by phone and gift cards will be mailed.
Appendix D

Appearance and Development Projects: Consent

Appearance and Development Projects
Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Emily Polak, MA
Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
(604)--------

Research Supervisor: Dr. Richard Young
Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
(604)--------

We are interested in finding out more about adolescent girls’ body image development, specifically how their body-related feelings and thoughts develop, and how they learn to understand their bodies and appearances. In our efforts to know more about this process we are also interested in how parents are integral, including parent-daughter conversations and joint activities related to body or appearance.

If you consent to be in this study, your involvement will consist of two in person interviews with your daughter, as well as a follow up phone call, over the course of approximately four months. The total time involved will be about 8 – 10 hours. The interviews will include interview time together, individual interviews, and a conversation with your daughter. All interviews will be video/audio recorded.

There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. If, however, a need for counselling becomes apparent while you are involved, we will assist you in finding the appropriate services.

The benefits of participating in this study include an opportunity to communicate about your relationship with your daughter, as well as the possibility of further understanding of your relationship and her development. Also, your participation will contribute to general knowledge on the subject of body image development.

Every participant’s identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by a code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. No names or other identifying information will appear in any reports of the completed study. Only the research team will have access to the data.

In order to assist with the costs of transportation created by involvement in this research, each pair will receive 10$ in reimbursement.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact the student researcher, Emily Polak, or her research supervisor, Dr. Richard Young at 604--------. If you have any concerns about treatment or rights as a research subject, you
may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By signing below, you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study and that you have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant Name (please print): __________________________________________

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Witness ___________________________ Date ____________

Note: You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.
Appendix E

Appearance and Development Projects: Assent

Principal Investigator: Emily Polak, MA
Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
(604)--------

Research Supervisor: Dr. Richard Young
Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
(604)--------

We are interested in finding out more about adolescent girls’ body image development, specifically how their body-related feelings and thoughts develop, and how they learn to understand their bodies and appearances. In our efforts to know more about this process we are also interested in how parents may be involved in this process, including parent-daughter conversations and joint activities related to body or appearance.

If you consent to be in this study, your involvement will consist of two in person interviews with your parent, as well as a follow up phone call, over the course of approximately four months. The total time involved will be about 8 – 10 hours. The interviews will include interview time together, individual interviews, and a conversation with your parent. All interviews will be video/audio recorded.

There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. If, however, a need for counselling becomes apparent while you are involved, we will assist you in finding the appropriate services.

The benefits of participating in this study include an opportunity to communicate about your relationship with your parent, as well as the possibility of further understanding of your relationship and your own development. Also, your participation will contribute to general knowledge on the subject of body image development.

Every participant’s identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by a code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. No names or other identifying information will appear in any reports of the completed study. Only the research team will have access to the data.

In order to assist with the costs of transportation created by involvement in this research, each pair will receive 10$ in reimbursement.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact the student researcher, Emily Polak, or her research supervisor, Dr. Richard Young.
at 604------. If you have any concerns about treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By signing below, you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study and that you have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant Name (please print):_________________________________

Participant Signature   Date

Signature of Witness   Date

Note: You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.
Appendix F

Appearance and Development Projects Study: Follow-Up Phone Interview

Thank you again for your participation in the Appearance and Development Projects Study.

Parent / Daughter? Participant ID#__________________________________________

In reflection, how would you describe your experience participating in this study?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

During the interviews, the project we came up with was <name of project for this pair.> Is that still the focus of what you are doing with you [mother/father]/daughter, or has it changed?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Have you had many project-related activities or conversations since the last time we spoke? Y/N  How many?______________________________________

What were they? [elicit details: re: 1) alone or with whom? 2) meaning of the activity for them? 3) how did it relate to their project?]____________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Any remaining thoughts or questions?
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for participating!
Appendix G

Coding Dictionary

Acknowledges
- minimal statements such as um-hmm
- yes, sure, OK, that acknowledges the statement by the other

Advises
- I think the best idea for you is to get a job in the short term and then think about your educational concerns in the long-term.

Agrees
- Yes, I agree, That’s true, You’re right, I concur, We see eye to eye.

Ambiguous response
- Response is unclear, not readily interpretable, has more than one possible meaning, hazy or fuzzy meaning

Answers question

Apologizes
- Sorry, I apologize, Oops, My-bad.

Approves
- positive evaluative or judging statement (affirms)
- It’s a great idea that you’re ______________.
- Validates
- ”That’s fantastic” “It’s good” “It’s fine”

Asks for clarification (further explanation or expansion)
- Can you tell me more about that?
- I’m wondering which of your dilemmas seems to have the most importance for you right now. Can you give me more details about that situation?
- Can you expand on that?

Asks for confirmation
- Am I getting this right?
- Is that what you mean?
- So, you’ll be here for next week’s appointment?

Asks for feeling state
- How do you feel about that?
- What does it feel like when you ______________?
- Tell me more about that sadness.

Asks for information (more factual in nature)
- When was it that you moved out of your parents’ home?

Asks for justification or reasons
- Why was that?
- What was your rationale for making that choice?

**Asks for opinion or belief**
- What do you think about that?
- What do you believe to be the most important aspect of becoming an adult?

**Asks for speculation or hypothetical scenario (challenges)**
- What if . . . ?, Let’s say _________ happened?, How do you think you would handle _________?

**Clarifies**
- Usually in response to asks for clarification. Involves giving more information to clear up an ambiguity or a misinterpretation.

**Complains**
- My employer gives me every crappy shift. It ruins my weekend plans.

**Confirms**
- So you are coming for dinner tonight. Response to a request for further information.

**Continues other’s statement**
- After an interruption
- Continues own statement after a pause

**Demands**
- Tells the other what to do.

**Describes future**
- My mother will be visiting next week.

**Describes other**
- It seems to me that you ____________. (is usually used with expresses perception)
- It sounds to me that your sister is really trying to work things out with the family.
- In the annotation – describe who the “other” is.

**Describes past**
- I told my mother that I was grateful for everything she has done for me.
- I went to college 5 years ago.
- When I was a kid, I was bit by a dog and now I can’t seem to get over it.
- I used to hate my brother.

**Describes possibility or hypothetical situation**
- If I can’t get into UBC I know I will be disappointed (sometimes used with other codes – i.e. describes self, expresses perception)

**Describes self**
- I suck at tennis
• I’m a generous person.
• It really wasn’t like me to behave that way.

**Describes situation or event**

**Disagrees (denies)**

**Disapprove**
• Negative evaluative or judgment statement
• “I don’t like them”
• “She really should have known better than to behave like that.”

**Dismissive or diminishing statement**
• Oh c’mon, Don’t be silly, That’s nonsense.
• “Whatever”

**Elaborates**
• Extends a previous statement
• Provides more information, adds depth to a previous statement, gives a deeper explanation.

**Encourages**
• Give confidence, cheer, hearten

**Evaluative or judging statement**
• Focused on a phenomenon, or event, or person with approving or disapproving

**Expresses anger**
• (irritation, exasperation, rage, disgust, envy, torment)
• I was so pissed off with him.
• I was furious.

**Expresses belief or disbelief** (concrete as opposed to tentative)
• I just know things are going to work out
• I don’t believe in God
• I can’t believe this is happening to me.

**Expresses desire**
• I need, I want, I wish...

**Expresses disgust**
• (usually more of a facial expression, distaste, expression of not liking or loathing)
• It totally grossed me out. It was disgusting to be in that cell with all those crack addicts.

**Expresses dissatisfaction**
• School isn’t what I thought it would be.
• Expression of dissatisfaction.
• Sometimes coded with expresses sadness or some other emotion.
Expresses doubt
- I’m not sure I can handle that.
- I doubt I have the ability to get into university.
- Questioning, has emotional content
- Not about indecisiveness
- I don’t know about that, I don’t know if that fits for me (POSSIBLE OTHERS - disagrees, dismissive statement)

Expresses fear
- (horror, nervousness)
- Overwhelmed or expressing a lot of concern.

Expresses frustration
- It totally sucks that I didn’t get the job I wanted.

Expresses gratitude
- Thank you. I really appreciate what we are doing here. I’m thankful for this opportunity.

Expresses humor
- Tells a joke
- Says something funny (either intentional or unintentional)
- Contextual use of humour, use of wit, lightheartedness, kidding around

Expresses joy
- happiness, cheerfulness, zest, contentment, pride, optimism, enthrallment, relief

Expresses like
- liking of idea, object, person; not love

Expresses love
- (affection, lust, longing)

Expresses perception or opinion or hunch (Added April 2007)
- It seems to me that you may be quite similar to your dad in that way.
- Is usually a tentative statement or interpretation
- Correct me if I’m wrong but I think ______________________.

Expresses realization
- I realize that these people are very important to me.
- Client expresses an “ah-ha” moment in the present tense.
- Wow, I’ve never thought about that before. (add surprise to the code)
- “Oh no, really. I hadn’t thought about that consequence before” (add disappointment to the code)

Expresses sadness
- suffering, disappointment, embarrassment, shame, neglect, regret, sympathy
- I was so depressed about it.
- I was really hurt when my stepmother attacked me like that.
Expresses surprise
- more of a facial expression
- I was really surprised that she reacted that way.
- “Oh wow!”

Expresses uncertainty
- Is about decision-making. Not being able to sort something out. Not able to accurately predict.
- I’m not sure.
- I can’t decide what option to take.

Expresses understanding
- I get that. I see where you’re coming from.
- That makes sense. I see what you mean.

Expresses worry
- I’m worried about my exam.

Incomplete statement
- Can be questions, statements, or sentences.

Interrupts

Invites or elicits a response
- Use of hand gesture to elicit a response from a client.
- “You know what I mean?”
- “Right?”

Laughs

Paraphrasing
- Repeats previous statement
- Repeats a previous statement in your own words

Partial agreement
- “sort of” – specifying the amount of agreement.
- Half hearted agreement,

Pause
- A break in the sentence or dialogue.
- Silence, a pregnant pause.

Praises
- compliments, admiring remark, accolade, congratulates
- “Good for you”. “Look at you!” “Congratulations.” “It’s terrific that you have such great insight”

Provides information
- You can get an application on-line if you go to the website.

Reflects affect
- Capturing an image that is beyond what was previously stated
- beyond paraphrasing
• Advanced empathy, empathy
• You felt disappointment when you didn’t get into UBC this year.

Reflects cognition
• Advanced empathy, empathy
• That was a tough situation for you.
• “You didn’t think that was the right way to go”
• “So you’ve been thinking about a number of career options over the last year”

Requests
• Asks the person to do something. Asks for
• Could you sign this form?

States a plan
• I’m going to go to school next term
• I will be here next week for my appointment

Suggests
• I’d like to suggest that your father didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.

Unintelligible response
• Cannot be understood on tape or through transcription
Appendix H

Additional Follow-up Data

Pair 3

Second Interview. Laura updated the interviewer that since graduating high school she tried to look at things a bit differently and tried to not be ‘catty.’ When the author explained the different theoretical terms used in the narrative, Laura identified her experience related to each term. She felt that her grandmother’s competitive evaluation of her and her mother fit the description of ‘objectification,’ and that she experienced ‘body shame’ when her friends encouraged her to try on clothes that didn’t fit her. Anna got excited talking to the assistant interviewer about their shared interest in yoga. At the time of this follow up interview she had gotten a yoga pass and was starting to really get into yoga whereas she had previously been more engaged in more vigorous exercise. They both identified social influences that likely impact them (e.g. television watching, conversations about appearance between themselves and others) which they discuss frequently.

Follow-Up Phone-Call. Anna explained that she was focusing a bit more on encouraging her daughter to have a healthier relationship with food. She described that many of their recent conversations centered on Laura’s school stress and nutrition, but that they also had discussed Anna’s upcoming repair in her cosmetic surgery (i.e., “tummy tuck”) as it was weighing on her mind. Anna said she was nervous about the surgery revision and stated “I do really value Laura’s opinion. I look for her approval because she’s developed a pretty strong mind.” Anna also reported that still finds yoga to be therapeutic.

Laura similarly explained that they discuss her mom’s cosmetic surgery, considering why she wants to get it done, with different insight. Laura reported thinking
more critically about influences and attitudes. She also said that they talk about her
nutrition and eating habits at school, explaining that she had been really stressed with the
transition and workload which interfered with her appetite causing her to lose weight. She
also reported that she had been becoming closer to one of her guy friends. She explained
that she and her mother talk so often about these things that it is kind of normal
conversation.

**Pair 4**

**Follow-Up Phone-Call.** Some examples of project activities that Lynn provided
were that they talk about fashion while flipping through magazines, or they’ll talk about
eating, appearance, and boys. Lynn explained that Cara talks with her dad and brother
about some of these things too. Lynn interpreted their maintenance of this project as
resulting from, as well as contributing to the open quality of their relationship; that nothing
is taboo. She also expressed her hope that sex will be an acceptable topic to talk about too,
as it becomes relevant. Lynn said that, as parents, she and her husband try to stay invested
and oriented to Cara’s culture.

Cara said she had been wearing a lot of sports gear lately because of basketball, and
track and field. When asked how often they engage in project related activities or
conversations, Cara said they probably touch on these topics daily, or at least multiple
times per week. She said she feels comfortable sharing everything. Some examples she
gave of project related activities were going through mom’s closet, conversations about
dating, discussing her day at school, and going through magazines.
Pair 5

Follow-Up Phone-Call. Nadia endorsed engaging in project-related activities regularly, approximately once a week. She explained that these activities included shopping, picking out clothes, and conversations about make-up use. With regard to the significance of the project related activities, Nadia said that there had been some changes. For example, Niku had been using more make-up recently, but she kept her eyebrows the same.

Niku noted that their mother-daughter project seemed to have stayed “pretty much the same” (Niku, phone-call). Upon inquiry into the frequency of their engagement in project-related activities, she explained that they talk every day, and they’ve gone shopping a couple times. Niku also noted that they’ve shared in a couple active outings like biking and going to the pool, but then articulated that most recently she has “less time for shared activities because of school” (Niku, phone-call).

Pair 6

Follow-Up Phone-Call. Some examples Karen gave of joint project activities were discussions about clothes, and Sara’s recent participation in the various activities she loves, like dance performance and horseback riding. Karen described Sara as occasionally wanting to go to the gym, but mostly resistant to being active, aside from dancing and equestrian vaulting.