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Browde, Cara

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THE SELF AND BODY WITHIN THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP: VOICES OF YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

Research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology
in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg.

By
Cara Browde
415585

Supervisor
Dr Carol Long

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to understand the place of the body in the mother-daughter relationship. The mother-daughter relationship has long been recognised as important in understanding female identity. The current research explores young women's relationships with their mothers, as well as with their bodies, and seeks to comprehend how these two forces interact in the shaping of the daughters' identity. Within the broad framework of qualitative research, this investigation can further be characterised as utilising a psychosocial approach. This approach recognises social and psychological elements of the human subject as necessarily interdependent. The data for the study was collected using a purposive sample sourced from a convenient sampling group. The criteria for selection concerned the participants' ages and, to some extent, their ability to represent South Africa's population diversity. Female students from the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand were approached. The final sample comprised six participants, with equal numbers of black and white women. All participants were between the ages of 21 and 25 and had no children of their own. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to a narrative analysis using psychoanalytic techniques. What emerged from the analysis were the multiple and varied ways in which unconscious desires and fantasies – many of which are rooted in the mother-daughter relationship – shape a woman's relationship with her body and inform her unique engagement with dominant social discourses of the body. This study illustrates that the critical triangle of "self, mother and body" is a messy one that demands a complex and dynamic understanding.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

_____

Cara Browde

_____

Date

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

> "…the problem with female identity that most troubles us, and that is most disguised by our preoccupation with eating and body size and clothes, has a great deal to do with being a daughter and knowing that one's life as a woman must inevitably reflect upon the life of one's mother" (Chernin 1986, p. 37).

The mother-daughter relationship has long been recognised as key to understanding feminine identity (Chodorow, 1978; Bernstein, 2004). For most women, their relationship with their mothers remains important throughout their lives (Notman, 2006). The process of differentiation and developing a sense of self, while still maintaining the early attachments, is an ongoing source of tension. Notman (2006), a clinical therapist, sees the daughter's body as a "central area for experiencing this relationship" (i.e. the relationship with her mother) because of its similarities to the body of the mother (p.139). Notman (2006) describes patients whose personal desires and relationships with their mother manifest in feelings about their bodies. In line with research such as Notman's that highlights the importance of the body within the mother-daughter relationship (Balsam, 2003; Bernstein 2004; Hoffman, 2004), the present research is an attempt to understand the interaction between a woman's relationship with her mother and her relationship with her body. The research will explore young women's relationships with their mothers, as well as their relationships with their bodies, and how these forces combine in the construction of female identity. It aims to achieve this by collecting empirical accounts of how young South African women make meaning of their bodies and their mother's role in their sense of self. Particular topics that the research hopes to address include: dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship in the life of the adult daughter; mothers' and daughters' communication about the body; daughters' perceptions of maternal influence on their relationship to their own bodies; and the reproduction of feminine roles through the mother-daughter relationship. By "weighing" the body within the context of this relationship, the research will explore how and why the body takes on significance in the space between a daughter and her mother.

The research is situated within a particular brand of psychosocial studies, influenced by both social constructionism and psychoanalysis, that originates in British social science (Walkerdine, 2008).

Throughout the proposal, the use of the term psychosocial refers to this specific version of psychosocial studies which treats the individual and society as "intimately connected" (Frosh, 2003). Frosh and Baraitser (2008) define this type of psychosocial lens as "conceptualizing and researching a type of subject that is both social and psychological, which is constituted in and through its social formations, yet is still granted agency and internality" (p.349). This psychosocial lens – despite the close association acknowledged in the name – still appreciates psychic and social forces as distinct and considers them as important in their own regard. In other words, psyche and culture – the inner and outer worlds – cannot be seen to be necessarily congruent. Flaake (2005) explains: "Unconscious messages from both sides – that of the subject and the social environment – are always an element of the interactions which shape an individual's life history" (p.202). Under this umbrella of the psychosocial, the use of psychoanalysis has been used as a way to understand the interaction between the "inside" and the "outside". Once again, the present research aligns itself with researchers such as Frosh and Baraitser (2008), Jefferson (2008), Hollway (2008) and Hook (2008) who, despite internal disagreements, all argue for the productive potential of utilising psychoanalysis within the social sciences.

Research aims

The central aim of the current research is to understand how young women's relationships with their mothers influence their experience of their bodies. While the research taps into cultural discourses of the body and femininity, it looks in particular at how young South African women make individual meaning of pertinent social influences. The study aims to explore young women's relationships with theirs mother (relationships in which self-identification is forged and meaning is attached to the body) as a way to understand the processes through which such individual meaning is made. It is the nature of this meaning that the research seeks to explore.

A narrative analysis of interviews with young women will allow the research to expose the cultural and social discourses through which bodies are imbued with particular meaning – meaning that moulds how young women see themselves and their bodies (Shilling, 1993). The use of narratives will also allow the study to explore the psychoanalytic dynamics – those unconscious desires, fantasies and fears – that surround the body within the mother-daughter dyad.

Rationale

When it comes to the female body, much argument and debate ensues among different schools within the psychoanalytic and feminist paradigms. One thing seems certain, however: the body is worth discussing. Gardiner (1992) shows that it is around the treatment of the body that one of the basic dichotomies in contemporary psychoanalytic literature exists. Postmodernists accuse object relation theorists (Chodorow, 1989) of avoiding the body and its drives, while object relations theorists accuse postmodernists of transforming the body into discourse. In Returning Words to Flesh, Goldenberg (1990) laments the aversion of postmodernist discourse to deal directly with the body, and asks both sides of the debate to recognise that psychoanalysis is inherently physical. She explains: “In psychoanalysis all knowledge is carnal knowledge” and “feminists must study loathing of the flesh ... because women represent the body in human culture. We cannot learn to stop hating women without learning to stop hating human flesh" (Goldenberg, p.176; p.170).

Looking at the relationship women have with their bodies demands an interdisciplinary approach. The psychosocial framework is able to address both the social and psychological forces that influence this relationship. In support of the psychosocial agenda, Flaake (2005) comments on the failure of contemporary gender studies to consider the psychological mechanisms by which social and cultural forces are internalised. Gender studies, she argues, is dominated by social constructivist perspectives “that pay little attention to the inner-psychic dimension in which the symbolic order and social relations are processed” (Flaake, 2005, p.201). The popular notion of “doing gender”, based in interaction theory, reflects the attention that has been paid to the social processes of gender performance and perception (Bordo, 1993). Flaake (2005) stresses that what has not been taken into account are the inner-psychic foundations of these processes, or their consequences for the subject. She exposes the shortcomings of a solely social constructivist account of gender studies and argues for the merits of incorporating a psychoanalytic reading. By incorporating the latter approach, the present research aims to pay necessary attention “to the inner-psychic dimension” (p.201).

It is generally acknowledged that female experiences of sexuality are shaped by various contexts, including both specific contexts of intimate relationships, as well as the broader contexts of gender, ethnicity and social class (Lesch & Kruger, 2005). In their research with
black adolescents in South Africa, Lesch and Kruger (2005) focused on how these girls become aware of their own sexuality within these contexts. In their study, the data strongly suggests that

mother-daughter interactions are extremely important in this regard. Their research findings represent the result of one of the few research attempts conducted in South Africa that focuses specifically on the role of the mother–daughter relationship in female adolescent sexual development. In other parts of the world, researchers have consistently found this relationship to be crucial in the development of adolescent sexuality (Ogden & Steward, 2000; Hoffman, 2004). Lesch and Kruger's study on adolescent sexuality points to the general paucity of information that deals with how young South African women make sense of the relationship with their mother, and the impact this relationship has on their experience of the body and of their feminine identity. The present study looks not only at sexuality, it incorporates the range of facets that make up young women's perception and experience of their bodies.

The present study will assist in addressing the gaps in research by collecting the stories of young black and white South African women. The research stands at the intersection of two under-researched areas in the South African context – that of experiences of the body and the mother-daughter relationship. It is important to state that the research is not intended as a cross-racial comparison between black and white participants. The issue of racial differences is not a primary research question. However, due to the scarcity of this type of research in South Africa, it seems important to open up the possibility that race might play a role in how young women understand the relationships with their bodies and their mothers.

Development of research questions

Initially the aim of the research was to answer the question "What is the significance of the body within the mother-daughter relationship?" However the process of the interviews and the initial stages of the analysis saw the gradual reshaping and transformation of the primary question. It became clear that the primary research question was "the wrong way round". What stood out in the interviews was that the relationship that the interviewees have with their bodies was not foregrounded as problematic, as was implicit in my expectations as I began this project. Instead, the moving ways in which the interviewees spoke about their mothers revealed the profundity with which this first relationship pervades a woman's life.

So, having set out to look at the role of the body in the mother-daughter relationship, the question became, "What is the role of the mother-daughter relationship in how women relate to bodies?" This question, I fear, sounds all too familiar with readers accustomed to "mother blaming" literature that pervades both popular culture and psychoanalytic writing. What this research aims to show, however, is that the interaction is not as "neat" as such causal assumptions imply. Instead, the triangular relationship between self, mother, and body is a messy and confusing one. Alone these lines, the primary aim of the research evolved to be the uncovering of unconscious dynamics of this triangle. In this way, the research aims to explore the explanatory power of psychoanalytic theories of the mother-daughter relationship with regard to how young women relate to the body.

Thus, the primary question at which the present research directs itself is:

- How does a woman's relationship with her mother influence her relationship with her body and with bodies in general?

Secondary research questions include the following:

- How does the relationship with her mother influence a woman's sense of self, *as an individual and in relation to the other*?
- In what ways does the distinction between self and other influence a woman's experience of the body?
- How does the relationship with her mother contribute to how a woman places herself in relation to dominant social discourses of the body?

Structure of report

The introductory chapter serves to contextualise the present study, as well as to familiarise the reader with the overall aims of the research. In the second chapter a review of literature pertaining to relevant issues is presented. The literature review begins with a broad discussion of embodied notions of the self. The bulk of the literature review encompasses the mother-daughter relationship and the significance of the body in this relationship. The review ends with a discussion on Winnicott's transitional space as the location of cultural experience. The importance of transitionality – as it relates both to the mother-daughter bond and to the interface of the personal and cultural – emerged from the interview material and is central to this study. Chapter 3, which

follows the literature review, outlines the methodology of the current research. This chapter serves to contextualise the study within both the broader qualitative paradigm and the specific psychosocial approach adopted in the research. This chapter also introduces the methods of sampling, interviewing and data analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion on the role of reflexivity in the study and relevant ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 comprises the analysis of the interviews. The first section of the analysis serves to introduce each of the interviewees by presenting each woman's individual core narrative. The second part explores the general themes that emerged from the interview material as a whole.

The final chapter of the report discusses the findings of the study in relation to the wider conceptual debate surrounding the mother-daughter relationship and its influence of the relationship with the body. Theoretical implications of the findings are then considered. The report concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the study and potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Frustratingly elusive, the body has taken on different guises within both feminist and psychoanalytic literature. However, its importance is revealed in the intense controversy it generates. The current literature review points to various attempts, within the feminist psychoanalytical framework, to grapple with the body as it plays out in the mother-daughter relationship. The mother-daughter relationship has long been recognised as playing a fundamental role in the development of the feminine psyche (Flax, 1978). The significance to women's lives of the mother-daughter relationship has been substantiated by clinical material. Barbara Shapiro (2006), for instance, comments that most women in therapy or analysis spend extensive time working through this central relationship. Although consensus exists around the importance of the relationship, there is disagreement as to why and how this becomes so. While Chodorow (1978) argues for a new interpretation of the feminine oedipus complex that underscores the feminine relational ego, other theorists have concentrated on the body ego. Shapiro (2006) explains the centrality of this relationship by drawing on object-relations theory, while highlighting the importance of the physical connections. Mothers and their daughters are connected through a physical experience of close bodily contact. In these interactions, the mother-daughter unit creates early, intense attachments in which each party will project, internalise and identify with the other. The young girl's early erotic tie to her mother is vital in the development of her own adult sexuality (Notman, 2004; Marcus 2004).

The review will begin by looking at the dissolving of the traditional mind-body split within the social constructionist paradigm, and the welcoming of an "embodied" approach to gender and identity. It then examines the possible failure within this paradigm to consider sufficiently "the inner-psychic component". Using psychoanalytic understandings of the early infant-mother relationship, the review moves on to the mother-daughter relationship specifically, highlighting its importance in the construction of the self and showing how important different understandings of the body are to this crucial relationship. The subsequent section revolves around the relationship between the adult daughter and her mother, and the ever-present significance of the body. The

review then makes it ways way back to the interface between social discourse and psychoanalysis. Using Winnicott's concept of the transitional space, the review grapples with the relationship between the cultural domain and early distinctions of self and other. Finally, the review looks at how negotiations of the transitional space can influence a woman's symbolic use of her body.

The embodied approach to self

The dominant social construction of femininity has drawn on the anatomical differences between males and females as a resource (Bordo, 1993). Because of this, feminist writers have traditionally been wary of drawing attention to the body, for fear of reinforcing the oppressive and contentious Enlightenment distinctions between mind and body, and masculine and feminine. Historically, conceptions of the body distinguished between the materiality of the body on the one hand, and its symbolic and cultural construction on the other (Butler, 1988). However, the recent literature involving social constructions of the body reveals an obvious attempt to avoid reproducing the conventional Western mind-body split. Understandings of subjectivity have moved beyond the "rational, disembodied and universal Enlightenment individual" (Adelman & Ruggi, 2008, p.557). Adelman and Ruggi remind their readers that corporeality and subjectivity are connected within each individual and are only analytically distinguishable. This notion serves as the premise on which arguments for the centrality of the body to a person's identity are based. Recent sociological approaches to the social construction of bodies have argued that in fact it is impossible to separate the two. Instead, they ask us to understand the body within the context of the power balance of a particular social order (Adelman and Ruggi, 2008). In addition, increasing attention is being paid to how bodily practices become fundamental in the process of identity construction. Adelman and Ruggi (2008) explain that the body has become "the site of numerous social struggles in which identities - as well as a wide range of social and symbolic resources – are disputed and negotiated" (p.555). Laura Fingerson (2006), in her book *Girls in Power: Gender, Body, and Menstruation in Adolescence*, explains how embodiment taps into both the social and physical realms:

> "Embodiment focuses on the 'lived body'…The 'lived body' is how we experience our world through our bodies. Our realities are indeed socially mediated, but we experience reality by living in and through our physical bodies, which are divided into notions of men, women, masculinity, and femininity" (p.80).

Fingerson uses the term "embodied actor" to explain the ways in which "the condition and form of our body affects all our interactions" (p.4). Olafson (2006) sees the body as key to her analysis of

the individual and understands the female body as "simultaneously in nature and in culture" and as the "products of these biological, cultural and social interactions" (p.61). Baker-Pitts explains:

> "Body subjectivity suggests a presence in and perspective of one's body that allows for multiple feelings and meanings, a body that is affected by the milieu and by relationships, a cultural body that can observe how the outside is taken in and the inside is projected out" (Baker-Pitts, 2007, p.128).

The work of Shilling (1993) in *The Body and Social Theory* points to the role of social interactions in producing children's body-related attitudes and behaviours. Shilling's work falls neatly into the social constructionist paradigm in that the self and body derive their meaning within a specific social context. For Shilling and others who subscribe to symbolic interactionism (Synonot, 1993), the presentation of the body is an important component of identity work (Shilling, 1993; Ogle & Damhorst, 2004). Postmodern western societies have created specific codes with which the meanings of bodily appearances are interpreted. These symbolic notions provide a framework in which value can be attributed to some bodies, while other bodies are devalued (Adelamn & Ruggi, 2008). It is within this social and cultural system that physical attributes, such as beauty and sexual attractiveness, can be understood. For example, Bordo (1993) sees the anorexic's body as the rejection of the patriarchal mould for females. "Disidentification with the maternal body, far from symbolising reduced power, may symbolise freedom from a reproductive destiny and a construction of femininity seen as constraining and suffocating" (p. 209).

The recognition of the importance of the material body to identity was indeed an important progression in gender studies. However, theorists rooted in a psychoanalytic orientation argue that social constructionist accounts went too far, and neglect the inner-psychic component. According to Flaake (2005), discourse theories, especially those stemming from Butler's (1993) work, focus narrowly on the discursive construction of gendered bodies and overlook the processes through which bodily experiences and perception become part and parcel of the individual. Implicit in the social constructionist approach is the assumption that the inner world of a person corresponds directly to the wider symbolic order. From a psychoanalytic and psychosocial perspective (Flaake, 2005 & Chodorow, 1999), this assumption is inaccurate. Instead, inner psychic structures are treated as independent and distinct from the broader social organisation. There is not an inherent congruence between the individual and the social, or between psyche and culture. The psychosocial paradigm, in which the present research is situated, attempts to explain both existing social structures and the workings of psychic processes.

Advocates of the psychoanalytic approach are critical of an exclusively social constructionist perspective that overlooks the significance of personal life history and social interactions that shape an individual's habitual meaning making (Flaake, 2005). Messages from these interpersonal interactions can take both conscious and unconscious forms. Unconscious material can be defined as the emotions and desires that have been suppressed during the course of development. This material is shut off from consciousness if it is perceived as prohibited or inappropriate. Flaake (2005) explains how the individual and the social are bound together during this process. Social norms and values dictate what is experienced as improper by the individual. In this way, suppressed, and therefore unconscious, material is inextricably linked to cultural and social relations. (Following this logic, relations between genders also influences which material resides in the unconscious). However, Flaake (2005) warns us that the unconscious processes are not one for one replicas of the broader social relations from which they stem. Importantly for gender studies, these unconscious processes "contain a potential for resistance to the social given" (p.202).

My first border, my body

Since Freud first recognised that the "ego is first and foremost a body ego" (Freud, 1923), psychoanalytic theorists have been intrigued by the relationship between bodily sensations and the foundation for ego structure. Many have regarded the infant's awareness of her body as a separate object as the foundation of the self (Erikson, 1956; Hägglund & Piha, 1980; Kestneberg, 1982). Hägglund and Piha (1980) point out that while body image and self are conceptually distinct, and that boundaries of the body image involve a narrower conceptual area than do boundaries of the self, the two can symbolise one another. Paul Schilder (1935), in his pioneering work, *The image and appearance of the body*, suggests that the body is the source of all experiences and sensations and that people continually integrate these bodily experiences in their own unique way. In a review of psychoanalytic investigations into body image, Hägglund and Piha (1980) propose that all the literature point to the considerable influence which the attitudes of individuals towards their bodies have on behaviour. Opposing the implications Freud draws in his theory of primary narcissism - that for the newborn child only the body exists and the world does not - Schilder (1935) writes:

> When Freud states that on a narcissistic level only the body is present, he must be mistaken. The newborn child has a world, and probably even the embryo has. It is true that on such a primitive level the borderline between world and body will not be sharply defined, and it will be easier to see a part of the body in the world and a part of the world in the body… In other words, from the point of view of adult thinking, the body will be projected into the world, and the world will be introjected into the body (p.122 - 123)

Concepts of identification, introjection, and projection carry an image of something being taken out of or put into something else (Teising, 2010). For such an action to take place, the overcoming of some form of separation between the two is necessary. In the material world, borders separate different things from one another. Teising (2010) explains, "By using the language of borders, this spatial usage is carried over into the abstract phenomena of the psyche…Psychic life and experience organises itself around the body ego, which is a sensitive spatial unity with openings and exit points".[1] But the experience of a self with a boundary is not available to the infant upon her arrival to the world. In the first few weeks of life as the infant attempts to regain the physiological equilibrium it enjoyed in the womb, it enters into a period called "symbiosis" by Mahler (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975). "The infant behaves and functions as though he and his mother were an omnipotent system – a dual unit with one common boundary" (p.44). In this state of fusion with the mother, me and not-me are yet to be differentiated and the inside of the body and the outside are indistinguishable. This state of union is the "primal soil from which all subsequent human relationships form" (Mahler et al., 1975, p.48).

Lemma (2010) discusses the relationship between early union with the mother and the later experience of the body's boundaries. When the body's borders are experienced as sufficiently rigid, a person can rely on them as a barrier from others. However, when the body's borders are felt to be too frail and porous, "the person feels all too readily engulfed by the other" (Lemma, 2010, p.112). Achieving a satisfactory experience of "being-in-a-body" (Lemma, 2010, p.113), felt to be both whole and with a dependable boundary, Lemma (2010) argues, involves integrating the fact that the body can never be divorced from the porosity of the relationship with the mother and her body. Lemma (2010) points out that this "fact of life" (p.112) paradoxically challenges the notion of a boundaried, personal space. The process of the differentiation from the other, and the specific anxieties this process produces for the female child, will be discussed in the following section.

[1] It is necessary to point out the extensive literature on the mind/body debate, especially within the psychoanalytic paradigm. While conceptually relevant, this review will not be entering this discussion as it is not central to the current research aims.

Maternal bonds and the process of separation

Klein (1932), in her study of the sexual development of the girl, noted the stronger introjective drives in the young girl relative to the young boy. This orientation towards taking in, represented by strong oral impulses, was understood by Klein as the girl's urge to "fill her inner world with objects" (Lawrence, 2002, p.841). Underlying these introjective processes is the girl's innate knowledge about the receptive function of her genital. The fear of something damaging her inside lies at the core of feminine anxiety: the anxiety of invasion. (Lawrence, 2002). Klein (1932) understood the intensity of the girl's anxieties about the inside of her body to correspond with her own phantasied attacks on the inside of the mother's body. The primitive maternal object evokes envy in the girl, which in turn gives rise to anxiety that the damaged maternal object will get revenge and hurt her insides in return (Lawrence, 2002). Projection *into* the body is experienced as a means of control (Lawrence, 2002).

Theories concerning the origins of eating disorders are helpful here as they point to what can happen when normal development verges towards the extreme. Such formulations are used here, not to pathologise all women, but merely to present some of the dynamics that underlie all female development. In the wake of Klein's seminal influence, much psychoanalytic literature (Lawrence, 2002; Birksted-Breen, 1989) has argued that pathologies around food can be understood as the result of a failure to differentiate adequately from the mother, leading to difficulties in overcoming sexual anxieties of intrusion. Fears of intrusion then become concretely enacted in the refusal to ingest food. To restate, the fear of intrusion is not limited to anorexic patients only. Micata Squitieri (1999) suggests that anxieties of intrusion into the body speak to the general representations of the female body as being inherently fragile and vulnerable. Birksted-Breen (1989, 1996) has written extensively on a specific object relationship in which the main feature is a denial of any separateness between self and object. In the case of pathological functioning, there is an intense desire to merge with the object by getting inside in and controlling it. There is, however, a simultaneous protest at the felt intrusiveness of the object. Kristeva (1982) describes how in the child's earliest attempts at breaking away from the mother in an effort to become a separate person, the mother becomes an "abject". The child is partly consumed by the desire to remain "locked" in the perfect union with the mother, and partly terrified of separation. The infant thus surrenders to the comfort of the relationship. But with this surrender comes the threat of "being swamped by the dual relationship" (Kristeva, 1982, p.64). The threat, says Kristeva, is not that the child will lose *part* of herself, but rather that the totality of her identity will be wholly and irretrievably submerged

into the mother (Kristeva, 1982). In relation to separation from the mother's body, Chasseguet Smirgel (1985) discusses the significance of having an object capable of playing a containing role. Without such an object, annihilation fantasies related to differentiation from the mother's body may lead to intolerable psychic pain which must be defended against. In this way, any gaps or intergenerational differences are denied in a fantasy which returns the child and her mother to the "ancestral fusional situation" (Perrone & Russo, 2010, p.138).

Woman, mother and body

A recurrent theme in psychoanalytic understanding of female subjectivity looks at the perpetual conflict between the daughter's attachment and dependency on the mother and her need to individuate and separate. Notman (2006), in her examination of adult daughters' relationship with their mothers, reminds her readers that this conflict is a life-long process. Adulthood sees the continuation of the negotiation of longstanding struggles: ambivalence, sensitivity to loss and separation, and the tensions between dependency and autonomy. In Bernstein's (2004) review of psychoanalytic literature concerning the mother daughter relationship, the author comes to the conclusion that these fundamental dynamics are carried through into adulthood. Bernstein highlights the ongoing rivalry and jealousy that characterises their mutual ambivalence. As adults, daughters and their mothers have in common the female body. Mothers and daughters are allied through a common sexuality – a sexuality inseparable from the body and its functions: menarche, menstruation, conception, gestation, birth, and menopause. Fox (1980) describes the tacit sense of commonality despite disparate phases: "…mothers and their daughters are bound together in a time-lagged mutuality of shared sexual experience, a bond that is nonetheless potent for all its unspokenness" (p.21). Within the family unit, each member is compelled to mature in close contact with others who are at different life stages. This age-gap is an especially significant source of tension for mothers and daughters due to the fact that often the development of the daughter as an adolescent is occurring simultaneously with the tasks of mid-life development for the mother (Fox, 1980). Notman (2006) emphasises that the daughter's relationship to her mother's body and the mother's relationship to the daughter's body is an important aspect of their relationship. In her pursuit of accommodating the influence of innate drives and interpersonal relationships, Marcus (2004) takes up Hoffman's (1996) call to integrate drive and object relations theory. In her paper *Female Passion and the Matrix of Mother, Daughter, and Body: Vicissitudes of the Maternal Transference in the Working Through of Sexual Inhibitions*, Marcus (2004) focuses on the role of the girl's relationship to her mother in her experience of desire and body pride. Using observations

from two analyses, she proposes that the mother's capacity to convey her own pride and pleasure in her female body is vital for a girl to take satisfying possession of her own body, and to participate in the "privilege of passion" (p.680).

Clinical data has offered much material that points to women's difficulties in "establishing a narcissistically valued sense of femaleness" (Marcus, 2004, p.685). Following classical Freudian doctrine, traditional interpretations of such data view women's lack of confidence as evidence for penis envy and their sense that their bodies are fundamentally lacking. In a direct challenge to Freudian dogma, Tyson (1994) offers a much more complex approach to understanding obstacles in the development of female body pride. For Tyson, the difficulties are borne out of a daughter's ambivalent relationship toward her mother. Drawing on object relations theory, Tyson proposes that women's superegos take over the conflicts of early childhood when the idealisation of the mother is at odds with the need to separate from her. In the young girl, this conflict awakens intense aggression directed at her mother which in turn evokes concern that her aggression will damage the relationship. Tyson (1994) explains:

> "When anger at the mother is intense, it not only disrupts a sense of intimacy and interferes with the girl's self-esteem, it may also interfere with her pleasure in being female like her mother. A confident, narcissistically valued sense of femininity . . . relies on the girl's idealizing and making selective identifications with mother. . . The ability to form such an ideal and to make such identifications relies on internalization, compromise, and defenses in efforts to resolve painful, hateful, angry feelings about the mother" (p. 459).

In response to Tyson's work, Marcus (2004) highlights both its strengths and its shortcomings. While Tyson's model is praised for highlighting the importance of the mother-daughter relationship, the model is seen by Marcus (2004) as failing to explore the paths by which a daughter may fruitfully resolve the ongoing tension between identification and differentiation. Additionally, Marcus comments that Tyson does not address how the daughter's perception of her mother's attitude toward her daughter's sexuality may affect the daughter's capacity for bodily pride.

Balsam (2003) offers one of the few clinical accounts in the literature of the ways in which a daughter's loving appreciation of her mother's body is internally preserved and drawn on to develop a capacity for taking pleasure in her own body.

> "My mother always said, 'What beautiful hands you're blessed with!' She'd put her large square hands in mine and say mine were lovely, so artistic, so soft and white. She'd

> worked in factories all her life. . . . I still love my hands, in spite of arthritis and age spots. When I bit my nails, I knew they'd grow again. Isn't it odd that mother's appreciation in the end is still what makes them lovely to me?"
>
> ". . . It was her internalized mother's view that lingered over the passage of time, more enduring than the external world. In that moment she was inviting me to caress her hands through her mother's eyes. "This ring was hers," she said, and I knew before she told me. It was as precious to her as the crown jewels, a talisman of her mother's love for this part of her body, the seamless circle of treasured attachment" (p.1172-1173)

As her foundation for her exploration of the intersubjective nature of perception of beauty and ugliness, Lemma (2010) uses the earliest gazing relationship between mother and infant. It is in this gazing that the visual and tactile relationship between mother and infant is established. The self's earliest experience of itself is partly determined by the quality of the libidinal cathexis of the body by the mother. Lemma (2010) explores the role of mother as mirror to the baby and the function of the earliest physical exchanges between mother and baby.

> *If I make the lashes dark*
> *And the eyes more bright*
> *And the lips more scarlet,*
> *Or ask if all be right*
> *From mirror to mirror*
> *No vanity's displayed:*
> *I'm looking for the face I had*
> *Before the world was made*
> (W.B. Yeats, 1865 in Lemma, 2010, p.25)

Lemma (2010) opens the first chapter of her book *Under the Skin* with the above quote. Specifically, she explores the last two lines, asking the question "What exactly are we looking for?" (p.25). She understands the "face I had" to be the face who has not yet had to separate, has not yet had the experience of observing the self. Lemma also comments on the double connotations of the word "had", indicating its past tense usage in addition to its reference to a lost possession. In this way, "the face I had" is the face that the self once possessed. What we all lose, and what Lemma (2010) believes we will perpetually attempt to recreate, is the "…omnipotent state of mind in which one believes one is what one has…and in which what one has, is of one's own creation, that is, we are the artist *and* canvas" (p.25). What this narcissistic state conceals is the insufficiency, the lacking, that defines the individual. It allows a delusion of self-sufficiency in which we do not desire the other because the other does not yet exist. Lemma (2010) also explains that the past tense used by Yeats evokes a nostalgic longing not only for a physical face, but also a quality of being that is lost, and that we long to recapture in the mirror. But time does not stand still and as we love we unfalteringly move away from this quality of being. Our constantly changing

body is a reliable reminder of our loss of omnipotent control, of the internal and external forces over which we do not have control. The influence of our relationships with others is fundamental to how we negotiate these inevitable changes. Lemma (2010) explains:

> "How we integrate the biological changes that steadfastly and resolutely lead us towards death would be challenge enough, but our experience of our body is fundamentally shaped by the quality of our relationships with others and, more particularly, whether through our earliest exchanges with others we internalise an image of ourselves as lovable and desirable" (p.26).

Lemma (2010) goes on to explain that the realisation that only the other can bestow upon us an image of ourselves as ideal will inevitably force us to confront the separate existence of the other; for if the other can grant us this image, so this same person can take it away. In this way, an inescapable dependency on the other is revealed. How the infant, and indeed the adult daughter, tolerates the separateness of the other will be looked at in the following section using Winnicott's notion of the transitional phenomena. Winnicott's influential writing on the space that exists between the mother and infant also has important implications for how the meeting point of individual and culture can be understood.

Transitional space: the beginnings of cultural experience

> "Transitional phenomena are related to the progressive loss of infantile omnipotence and the gradual discovery of the independent existence of the external 'not-me' world" (Yates & Sclater, 2005. p.137).

As the quote above suggests, the discovery of the independent existence of the 'not-me' world is a gradual one. It is possible to argue that the 'discovery' is never fully complete, but rather that we come to experience the reality of the independence of our primary objects over and over again. At different stages of life, this realisation brings unique challenges, but the underlying questions revolve around core themes of loss and change: Will I survive without the other? Will the other survive without me? Is there an inner reality and an outer reality? The following section will explore transitional phenomena as they appear in the young women's search for an adult identity.

It was the intermediate area between mother and infant, and in between in and outer reality that captured the imagination of Winnicott (1953; 1967; 1971; 1989). Winnicott (1971) refers to the "potential space" (p.107) as a hypothetical area that both exists, and yet cannot exist, between the infant and the object during the phase of the infant's denial of the mother as separate, as not-me.

The real mother, withdrawing from her high degree of identification with her child and alert to the emerging need of the infant to experience her as a separate person, begins to lower the precision with which she meet the infant's needs. In order to explain the paradox of the potential space as functioning to both connect *and* disconnect the infant from her mother, Winnicott (1971) uses the analogy of piece of string that emerged from the case of a young boy Winnicott treated. Two objects are both "*joined and separated* by the string" (p.108). Winnicott (1971) states that he is willing to accept this paradox and in his surrender to the paradox he seeks to explain its function of the "space between" (p.108).

At the centre of Winnicott's account of transitionality is the idea that in order to recognise their existence, infants must experience their capacity to create. In relation to the maternal breast, Winnicott emphasises that there should ideally develop for the infant the illusion that the infant satisfies her own needs – the illusion of omnipotence. The infant is not yet aware that the breast belongs to a separate, responsive mother who meets the infant's needs (Winnicott, 1989). The presentation of the breast at exactly the right moment – the moment the infant imagines its presence - is the basis for the infant's discovery of her capacity to create. According to Winnicott, the mother's adaptation "gives the infant the illusion that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create" (Winnicott, 1953, p 13-14). This illusion is a necessary experience because it lays the foundation for the infant's sense of her existence and subsequent capacity for object-relating and usage. When the infant's needs are met she is rarely required to recognise the existence of others or to distinguish inner from outer, fantasy from reality. In the undifferentiated state of the mother-infant unit, the infant experiences her object relationship as entirely within her omnipotent control. In the experience of frustration at her needs not being met, the infant, aware of the widening gap between herself and her object, must learn to fill the space created by the mother's controlled abandonment. The ability of the young child to inhabit this realm, this potential space, represents her first entry into the realm of symbolism and culture. In this way, cultural life can be said to occupy the space between the subjective and objective. Winnicott (1989) writes that in addition to the inner world and external reality,

> "…there is the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, an intermediate area of *experiencing,* to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related' (1951, p. 230). 'This third area might turn out to be the cultural life of the individual' (1989, p. 57).

Winnicott (1971) conceptualises the intermediate area of experience as a “resting place” where the infant's self and nonself are only partially differentiated, and where the boundaries between reality and fantasy are not fully established. This intermediate area -also referred to as the potential space - is neither inside the individual nor in the outside world of shared reality. The foundation of this space is based on the infant's experiences of trust in the mother during the early phases of differentiation. In this way, this potential space is highly variable and unique among individuals (Galligan, 2000). Individual differences that exist in the capacity to engage meaningfully in the “potential space”, and the consequences for the woman’s body, will be discussed in the following section.

Symbols and the female self in culture

Winnicott's theory of transitional object relating and transitional space paved the way for psychoanalytic recognition that the space of the symbolic exists within the mother-infant relationship. There exists agreement amongst theorists that the capacity for symbol usage facilitates rich and meaningful cultural experiences. However, as will be discussed in this section, debate ensues surrounding the psychoanalytic trend to attribute to women deficient symbolic capacity. Van Buren (2007) argues that this trend can be traced back to the misconception that mothers encourage merger while fathers stimulate the use of symbols.

Arguing for the role of the father in promoting a healthy symbolic capacity, Lawrence (2002) notes the conspicuous absence of the father as a psychic or emotional presence in her anorexic patients. Lawrence (2002) argues that the nonexistence of the father in the mind of the anorectic serves to protect the “undifferentiated sense of oneness” (p.845) with the mother. Theorists such as Birksted-Breen (1996) have invoked Bion’s theory of thinking to discuss the consequences of such a sense of merger. Birksted-Breen (1996) describes the difficulties that arise when the penis-as-link is absent. She discusses how the lack of mental structure provided by the penis-as-link results in powerful fears of disintegration. Lawrence (2002) explains how in a healthier psyche, the penis-as-link functions to protect her from a sense of invasion. The mental structure supplied by the penis-as-link means that introjective capacities can be utilised discriminatively. Bolstered by her knowledge of her own internal space, this capacity to choose what she takes in may be the capacity which the internalised father, linked to the mother, provides. Lawrence (2002) explains:

> "It is the role of the father, representing the other or the third position, to come between mother and infant to create the mental space necessary for symbolic functioning to develop" (p.845)[2]

In her understanding of the reproduction of female subjectivity, Van Buren (2007) points to what she sees as the underlying misconception in psychoanalysis that the mother encourages merger and the father stimulates the use of symbols – as depicted in Lawrence (2002) and Birksted-Breed (1996). Van Buren (2007), in her book *Mothers and daughters and the origins of female subjectivity*, attempts to map psychoanalytic trends onto wider social discourses. Van Buren (2007) points to the historical silencing of women in the verbal world, and to the emerging recognition of her unique and powerful role in the pre-verbal world of the infant. Greater awareness of the emotional life of the infant before words has contributed to greater appreciation of the mother's role. But her silenced voice is not undone through acknowledgment of her maternal capacity. Instead,

> "I think that the silencing of mother's voice or the undervaluing of her subjective contributions is passed on through projective identifications into the fetus and into the offspring" (Van Buren, 2007, p. 6)

The patriarchal system in which a woman mothers has also been written about by Flax (1980) and Chodorow (1978). The recognition of the woman's maternal role has also served to strengthen the notion that the symbolic domain belongs to men. According to Van Buren (2007) the attribution of inferior symbolic capacities to women maintains the subjugation of the subjectivity of women. Wholeness is attributed to men while the fear of whole is attributed to women. But what this distinction masks are the fundamental anxieties from which neither man nor women are ever free:

> "The paradoxical knot that maintains the concept of sexual difference, as based on the inferior capacities of women to symbolize, is a manic defense against the realization that neither man nor woman is insulated from the uncertainty of postnatal existence" (p.12)

The terrified infant can be found in both adult males and females. But the daughter is vulnerable to the toxicity of the mother, while the son can re-project the feelings of uncertainty back into the mother and in this way deny it in himself. The earlier discussion of psychoanalytic understanding of eating disorders represents such a split. However, as Van Buren (2007) highlights, the dominant understanding of eating disorder merely speaks to the more general depiction of the fragility of

[2] While Lacan's contribution of the notion of the Symbolic Order of the Father is indeed relevant here, his work has not been examined extensively for the purposes of this literature review. Similarly, Kristeva's vast contribution to the relationship between the maternal and the body cannot be given adequate attention in this review.

women's symbolic capacities. The battle women must fight is then the power of the mind versus the power of the body:

> "The female person is linked with the failure to attain symbolism and to forever remain unborn or in pieces; psyche subordinated to soma" (Van Buren, 2007, p. 12)

Interferences in the area of mental functioning known as symbol formation have also been understood in reference to Winnicott's theories of the transitional space between infant and mother. Psychodynamic theorists (Birksted-Breen, 1996; Sugarman, 1991) have applied Winnicottian concepts of transitional space to Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa. As stated previously, the reference to pathology is used to highlight the general underlying dynamic. In both pathologies, the theorists identify interruptions in the development of the transitional space, and consequently a lack of symbolic engagement. As the transitional space is the area for creative engagement and in which symbols are utilised, a disturbance in the transitional space is a disturbance in the area of symbolisation. With anorexic women, for example, food is experienced literally as the mother instead of symbolically representative of her care (Birksted-Breen, 1996).

> "But I think we really do find a third area, an area of living which corresponds to the infant's transitional phenomena and which actually derives from them. In so far as the infant has not achieved transitional phenomena I think the acceptance of symbols is deficient, and the cultural life is poverty-stricken" (Winnicott, 1989, p. 57)

The achievement of transitional phenomena is the foundation for the engagement with the world of symbols. Winnicott's words also speak to the relationship between the capacity for symbol usage and the richness of the cultural life of the individual. The position of the current research holds that regardless of the qualities attributed to the maternal and paternal, it is only when boundaries develop in the relation to the infant's first undifferentiated state between self and other that experience can take on a symbolic quality (Newton & Redfearn, 1977). As discussed, this achievement has important consequences for how women relate to their bodies.

Conclusion

Clearly the body is a site of contention and debate within the feminist and psychoanalytical literature. It has been a site of battle not only for the theorists who disagree over how we should place it in understanding ourselves but, as Adelman and Ruggi (2008) argue, the body has become a site of confrontation where we forge our identities in the face of strong social and symbolic forces. We experience the world, and the other people in it, through the body. As we have seen, one of the first and most important "other people" in a woman's life is her mother. These two facts – the fact of the "body" and the fact of the "mother-daughter relationship" hold many of the keys to unlock the doors of understanding. The broad intersections and overlaps between these two difficult, contested notions provide a rich and fertile terrain for learning about the construction and development of female identity.

CHAPTER 3:
METHODS

Research paradigm

The present investigation falls under the broad umbrella of qualitative research. Qualitative research is used to shed light on research participants' subjective meanings by exploring the subject matter from the perspective of the participant (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999). Despite its emphasis on the "particulars of human experience and social life" (Elliott et al., p.217), qualitative research does not subscribe to relativism. Instead, qualitative research identifies its conceptual framework and bases its understandings in empirical findings. The qualitative research methodology is informed by both the interpretive and critical research paradigms, which stress the significance of attempting to understand the meanings of human actions and experiences. To achieve this objective, both interpretive and critical research undertake to generate accounts from the viewpoints of the people involved (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). It is how each paradigm approaches these accounts that distinguish the interpretive and critical world views. Interpretive approaches place emphasis on the intrinsic meaning in human experience, regardless of the individual or collective source of that meaning. Critical approaches, on the other hand, try to uncover the social and historical origins and contexts of this meaning, with little or no attention paid to how this meaning is manifested or expressed at the individual or collective level (Fossey et al., 2002). The present research is situated at the meeting point of these two paradigms – it seeks to understand both the individual meaning of participants' subjective experience, while at the same time exploring how the social context sets boundaries as to what 'identity positions' are available (Frosh et al., 2003, p.39).

Within this framework, the present research can be further characterised as utilising a psychosocial approach. This approach must be contrasted with an earlier tradition of psychosocial study (usually hyphenated, as in psycho-social), which concerns itself with the exploration of psychological issues *in relation* to social factors (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). A more recent psychosocial tradition attempts to mark out a space wherein the social and psychological elements of the human subject are recognised as necessarily interdependent. To represent its interest in the meeting point of the social and psychological, this approach, wherein the present research is situated, uses the non-hyphenated spelling: psychosocial. Instead of the conventional distinction between the 'individual'

and ‘society’, the psychosocial is conceptualised as a seamless entity. Frosh (2003) describes the psychosocial subject as “a meeting point of inner and outer forces, something construct*ed* yet construct*ing*…” (p.1564). The origins of this form of psychosocial study – inherently interdisciplinary – lie in psychoanalysis, sociology, critical social psychology, poststructuralist theory, social constructionism, queer theory and feminist social research (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008).

Epstein (1993) argues for the power of psychoanalytic theory to help address a central gap in constructionist theory. Because constructionist theory has focused on demonstrating the fluidity of individual identity, Epstein (1993) maintains that constructionist theory as a whole has been unsuccessful in accounting for *how* culturally constructed labels of selfhood come to resonate so powerfully in the inner world of individuals. The constraints of individual self-determination within a wider social system mean that identity can be conceptualised as neither ‘in here’ nor ‘out there’. Epstein (1993) makes a useful distinction between the words *self* and *identity*. While *self* connotes an individual’s conscious and unconscious striving for continuity and personhood over time, *identity* refers to the location of self in relation to social categories. Thus:

> “Identity is a socialized sense of individuality, an internal organization of self-perceptions concerning one's relationship to social categories, which also incorporates views of the self perceived to be held by others” (Epstein, 1993, p.827).

While constructionism did pose a challenge to the essentialist orthodoxy concerning identity, there exists an absence in the theory at the point where social structure and human agency interact. In the case of the influential French theorist Michel Foucault, critics have focused on his treatment of individuals as solely passive in the face of power relations. Critics point out his failure to provide accounts for the active role of people in understanding themselves on relation to socially available categories (Jefferson, 2008). Hollway and Jefferson (2000b) argue for the use of psychoanalysis as guarding against what they perceive as “discourse determinism” inherent in much of the constructionist paradigm after Foucault:

> “The Foucauldian idea that subjectivity is a product of positioning in discourses is now a sociological commonplace. However, the increasing tendency to read subjectivity only through the discourses that subject it, has resulted in a discourse determinism…If we are to understand subjectivity in other than a socially determinist fashion of discourses producing subjects we have to address the issue of *how* discursive positions are occupied by subjects. To do this in a way that does not simply replace discourse determinism with the idea of individual subjects voluntaristically choosing positions entails a more complex understanding of subject positioning. Psychoanalysis, with its core notion of a dynamic unconscious, can conceptualize people’s actions as unconsciously, as well as consciously, motivated and conflictual” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000b, p.136)

Object-relations theory has been singled out by theorists attempting to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and constructionist theory (Chodorow, 1985; Epstein, 1993). Chodorow (1985) argues for the use of object relations theory as a basis for psychoanalytic social theory. In contrast to Freud's dualism that located social bonds as necessarily conflicted with the individual's fundamental drives, object relations theory argues that there exists from the beginning of life a basic social "need" (Chodorow, 1985). The libido, then, is primarily object seeking and not pleasure seeking. This substitution of object relatedness for drive discharge as the central motivating impulse of human psychology bears a number of significant corollaries. Firstly, object-relations theorists have been responsible for recognising the significance of the preoedipal period in the construction of the psyche. Object-relations theory develops its account of "primary sociality" (Chodorow, 1985, p.307) by describing the relational construction of the self. Secondly, it means that human nature is fundamentally social. Winnicott's (1964) now famous phrase: "There is no such thing as baby…A baby cannot exist alone but is essentially part of a relationship." (p.88) encapsulates object-relation's essential tenet that an infant cannot be seen outside of its relationship to its caregivers. Critiquing Freud's primary narcissism, object-relations theorists highlight that the infant is born in a state of intense relatedness to this environment (Balint, 1937/1949, Winnicott, 1953). Object-relations theory, in so much as it recognises how early maternal care provides the context and material from which the individual forms and shapes her psyche, is an appropriate theoretical lens for the present research.

Research Participants

The data for this study was collected using a purposive sample sourced from a convenient sampling group (Marshall, 1996). The researcher actively selected the most productive sample to satisfy the research questions. This involved developing a framework of the variables that potentially influence an individual's contribution and was based on the researcher's knowledge of the research area, as well as the reviewed literature.

The criteria for selection concerned the participants' age and ability to represent South Africa's population diversity. With respect to age, the participants were selected so as to include young women over the age of 18, who have no children of their own. This age group was chosen to allow the exploration of the young adult daughter's relationship with her mother. As with all relationships, the mother-daughter relationship changes and evolves over time. As Notman (2006) discusses, there are distinct constellations of "mutual adulthood" that reveal different nuances of

the mother-daughter relationship. The mother-daughter relationship is continually adjusting as both women negotiate different life stages. Balsam (2003) notes significant shifts in the relationship when daughters become mothers. In order to preserve the focus of the research, participants did not have children of their own. Additionally, participants were selected in order to create a sample that reflects South Africa's racial diversity. Statistical representation was not necessary; however the sample did include both black and white women who met the other criteria.

Potential participants were reached by approaching post-graduate students from the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand. Once necessary permission from the head of the school was received, as well as permission from the appropriate course coordinator and lecturer, the researcher addressed students from the General Psychology Honours and Industrial Psychology Honours classes for a few minutes at the end of a lecture in order to communicate the nature of the research and invited students to participate. The address included brief details of the research, what participation in the study entails, as well as criteria for participation. The address made explicit the fact that participation is voluntary and entails neither direct benefits nor risks to the participants. After the address, the researcher asked interested students to leave their contact details with the researcher. Six names were then contacted randomly. If the student was unavailable, a new name from the list was contacted. The researcher arranged interviews at a time and date mutually convenient for both student and researcher.

The final sample comprised 6 participants, with equal numbers of black and white women. All participants were between the ages of 21 and 25 years of age. All the participants' mothers were alive at the time of the interviews. All the participants are South African citizens, although two of the three black participants are originally from Central Africa. They have both been living in South Africa from a young age.

It is important to acknowledge that the chosen sampling method has important implications for the findings of the study. The psychology department attracts students of a particular nature and with specific interests. For example, both general psychology and industrial psychology constitute training in the 'helping professions'. Honours students from these classes may well be drawn to these professions based on their personalities. The findings of the study will necessarily be influenced by including a fairly homogenous group. Furthermore, it is also recognised that women with certain types of relationships with their bodies and with their mothers may be more likely to decide not to participate in the study. Alternatively, women with particularly difficult relationships with their bodies and/or their mothers may choose to participate in an attempt to begin to access

help. In this regard, referral details for accessing therapy services were provided to all participants. (See ethics section for further details). All these considerations were kept in mind when analysing the data and compiling the research report.

Interview procedure

Research participants were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview constructed from questions raised by the literature (See Appendix A for the interview schedule). Within a qualitative approach, the semi-structured interview, or "general interview guide" is popularly used for its flexibility (Patton, 2002). Relevant topics are covered in the order that best fits the unique interaction between interviewer and interviewee. While providing adequate structure, the tool allows the researcher to adjust the questions according to the spontaneous unfolding of the interview. This process facilitates deep exploration and assists in the elicitation of meaningful information, as well as accommodating the emergence of unexpected material.

An interview format was used as a guide to ensure that particular areas were covered but that room was left to follow responses idiosyncratically, in order to explore more individual meanings with participants (Burck, 2005). On commencing the interview, I made it clear to the participants that I was interested in their own thoughts about the topic. I added that the participant should feel free to tell me what was on her mind, even if to her it may have appeared irrelevant or off the topic. Cartwright (2004) suggests that this assists in ensuring the interviewee feels at ease to talk freely, and in so doing aids the productions of free associative and narrative material. In order to further facilitate a non-restrictive atmosphere and allow for a wide range of responses, the interview questions were broad and open initially. The questions became progressively more focused as the interview developed. This structure facilitated the development of trust between the participant and the researcher and helped to establish rapport.

Individual interviews were 'interviewee centred', with the researcher taking a facilitative role as interviewer (Frosh et al, 2003). The researcher picked up on issues the interviewees raised and encouraged them to develop and reflect upon these in order to create illustrative narrative accounts. In order to bring the interviewee's life story to the fore, Hollway and Jefferson (1997) suggest that interviews are designed to allow the interviewee to lead the process. The interviewee should be responsible for structuring the account, generating its content and moving the narrative in a particular direction. Hollway and Jefferson (1997) explain that this requires asking few questions,

which are open ended, but which at the same time draw out concrete stories related to a person's experience. Hollway and Jefferson (1997) found that minimal input from the interviewer facilitates the generation of narratives that reveal interviewees' preoccupations, meanings, conflicts and defences. The interviews began with an exploration of the participant's associations with the word "body". For all interviews, this initial question was followed with a discussion on the interviewee's relationship with her body. If the interviewee did not introduce her mother in this initial phase of the interview, she was explicitly asked about their relationship at an appropriate time. Despite the open-ended nature of the interview, prompt questions were used to ensure that particular areas were addressed. As Cartwright (2004) notes, adopting a more direct approach at times allows the researcher the opportunity to ask specific questions about historical and personal details that did not emerge spontaneously in the interview. These questions were designed to uncover how the young women feel their bodies are perceived by their mothers, and what impact they believed this has had. Questions concerning family background, such as number of siblings and mother's upbringing, were also put forward. Questions of body satisfaction and identifications were also posed. The interview format was structured in order to tap into how participants position themselves and their mothers in the broader social context.

Pursuing a psychoanalytic research perspective, it was important to keep in mind my own feeling states and responses during and after each interview (Cartwright, 2004). Taking a facilitative role during the interview allowed me to make mental notes of any salient thoughts and feelings that were evoked by the interview. Although the interviews were recorded and transcribed, I documented initial impressions of each interview following the session. This process helps in the analysis process to understand the context within which certain narratives were formed (Cartwright, 2004).

The interview with the first participant was treated as a pilot interview. After this initial interview, I met with my supervisor to receive feedback about the interviewee in order to refine existing questions as well as to discover potentially overlooked areas of exploration. It was decided that this initial interview offered sufficient material for analysis and was thus used in the final analysis. The interviews for the study took place in the researcher's office in the Emthonjeni Community Centre on the East Campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. With the informed consent of the participants prior to involvement, each interview was tape recorded (See Appendix 4 for the recording consent form). The interview tapes were subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

Data analysis

The research is situated within a psychosocial paradigm in order to accommodate both the wider social forces through which value is attributed to the body, as well as internal psychic processes by which an individual creates personal meaning around her body. Using Frosh and Baraitser's (2008) definition of psychosocial studies, the present research situates itself "as a critical approach interested in articulating a place of ''suture'' between elements whose contribution to the production of the human subject is normally theorized separately" (p.348). The individual's psychological world and her social influences are both understood as contributors to agency.

A psychoanalytic lens will be used with the psychosocial approach to investigate this interplay between the ''external'' social and ''internal'' psychic formations (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). The use of psychoanalysis within a psychosocial framework has generated much debate (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Hook, 2008). Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) justify using a psychoanalytic approach within a broader appreciation of normative discourse:

> "Our starting point is the notion that there is no such thing as 'the individual', standing outside the social; however, there *is* an arena of personal subjectivity, even though this does not exist other than as already inscribed in the sociocultural domain. Our argument is that there are psychoanalytic concepts which can be helpful in exploring this 'inscription' and thus in explaining the trajectory of individual subjects; that is, their specific positioning in discourse". (Frosh et al, 2003, p.39)

An interpretive approach within qualitative research can accommodate this multifaceted nature of individual identities. Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) argue that "If we wish to do justice to the complexity of our subjects an interpretive approach is unavoidable" (p.3). In this way, self-reported accounts cannot be taken at face value. Their argument rests on the premise that people often see themselves in contradictory and conflicting terms. In line with this approach, interviews were transcribed and subjected to a continuing process of narrative analysis (Frosh et al., 2003). A piece of narrative is simultaneously deeply personal and reflective of the wider social dynamic within which the story took place and the telling occurs. As Reissman (1993) explains, "The study of narrative does not fit neatly within the boundaries of any single field. Inherently interdisciplinary, it extends the "interpretive turn" in the social sciences" (p.1). A psychoanalytic reading of narratives is a meaning centred approach that strives to:

> "explore unconscious processes, self-and object representations, defenses, and so forth through the analysis of narratives as they are constructed around the subject of the interview" (Cartwright, 2004, p.212).

The narrative tradition in psychoanalysis emphasises the processes that "lie behind" (Cartwright, 2004, p.217) the development of meaning and interpretation. One of the key assumptions of the psychoanalytic narrative approach is that the interviewer and interviewee co-construct a narrative around the topic of interest. Recognising this assumption guards against seeing the interview process as a tool to elicit the historical or factual truth. Rather, it reminds the researcher that the interview process itself is about facilitating the construction of a story or narrative. This narrative, far from being a historical "truth", is a "narrative of the self" (Cartwright, 2004. p.217). In this sense, the emphasis shifts away from 'factual' reality to *how* the self constructs particular life events.

Using the work of Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) and Cartwright (2004), the present research drew on a continuing process of narrative analysis. Two main analytic strategies were employed. The first component comprised the summary notes written up after each interview. Following each interview I documented initial impressions of each narrator and any outstanding features of the interviewee and the interview (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). These notes were used to record impressions of the process of the interview, for example, if the interviewee was particularly easy to talk to or noticeably defended. I also recorded my own feelings and reactions to each interview (Cartwright, 2004). Taking notes about the timing and emotional climates of the interviews is also suggested by Anderson and Jack (1991) because these factors are liable to affect the subsequent interpretations made.

The second component entailed the transcription of the digital recording of the interviews. The transcription processes proved to be a useful entry into engaging with the material. As Reisman (1993) notes, analysis cannot be easily distinguished from transcription. Careful and repeated listening to the interview, together with methodic transcribing, often results in insights that shape how the researcher presents a narrative in the final report. The time-consuming process of transcribing permitted me to gain a better understanding of how the narratives unfold, as well as to observe and reflect upon my role in co-constructing the narrative. As Cartwright (2004) reminds us, "it is not only the content of the narrative that is of interest here, but the way the narrative takes form" (p.218). This first draft transcription included the entire interview, getting all striking features of the conversation on paper (for example: crying, laughing, long pauses).

Once each interview was transcribed I sent it to my supervisor for her to read. I then met with her to discuss her impressions of the interview and the material generated. These discussions were extremely helpful in laying the foundation for the later psychoanalytic analysis of the narratives. In these discussions, each interview was discussed in its entirety, allowing me to see the emerging core narratives. Broad narrative themes common to all the interviews also began to surface. It was at this stage of the process that my preexisting assumptions regarding what I was to find became most apparent. I was very aware that my expectations of what the narratives would reveal were not met. Instead of the 'neat' formulations I expected, the material appeared 'messy' and difficult to cohere around a theoretical framework. Making note of these assumptions and discussing them with my supervisor proved to be a pinnacle point in how I came to understand the material and ultimately the conceptual 'tools' that were utilised.

Once all the interviews had been transcribed and discussed with my supervisor, I began the process of a more formal analysis. This process entailed examining the transcripts for commonalities and differences that existed among and between the participants. This process entailed comparing and contrasting the content, style and tone of the different speakers (Fraser, 2004). Using the broad narrative themes discussed with my supervisor as a foundation, segments of the interview material fitting each theme were clustered together for analysis. As discussed above, the interview material did not lend itself to neat categorisation. Each narrator presented a web in which self, mother and body could not be easily disentangled. In trying to separate out the 'self' from the mother, and in trying to distinguish the 'self' from the body, it became clear what happens in the 'space between' these constructs is important. Winnicott's notion of the "intermediate area of experience" (1953), or the "potential space" (1967) between mother and infant was in this way instrumental at this juncture of the analysis.

As the remainder of the analysis unfolded, two distinct process emerged. The first part of the analysis was closely aligned with Cartwright's (2004) suggestions for the psychoanalytic reading of a research interview. This part of the analysis looked mainly at the narrator's self and object identifications, as well as the personal meaning associated with the body. The second part of the analysis was more closely aligned with Frosh and colleagues' (2003) approach, and looks at how the narrator places herself in the larger social context.

Following Cartwright (2004), the next step of the analysis thus involved reading and rereading the material in order to isolate core narratives, to extract segments of the interview that best illustrated these chosen narratives, and to identify key identifications and object relations that could be

discerned in the chosen narratives (Cartwright, 2004). The narrative approach relies on the metaphorical treatment of language (Squire, 2005; Cartwright, 2004). Language itself is thus understood as a metaphor for parts of the self and is *always* saying something about the self, even when apparently describing something other. A narrative analysis is thus a mode which concerns itself with looking at the ways the self constructs meaning to create narratives (Cartwright, 2004). Of particular interest to this research is Schafer's (1989) argument that all narratives can be traced back to the experience of the body. Although this assumption is not unquestionable, it was useful to see how the elaboration of narrative themes led to metaphors of corporeality.

Drawing on the technique used by Frosh et al (2003), the material was also read with a view to identify both 'canonical narratives' (Bruner, 1991) and personal narratives. The distinction between canonical and personal reflects the aim of the research to simultaneously engage with both social power relations and the ways in which particular woman subjectively account for themselves as feminine subjects within this system (Frosh et al, 2003). Canonical narratives can be described as general stories about how lives may be lived in the culture and are drawn on by individuals in their talk about their own lives and relationships. They can provide a logic for talking about personal circumstances, life stories and decisions (Taylor, 2006). Personal narratives refer to sections of the narrative in which interviewees makes sense of their own specific position within the available cultural identity constructions.

Using Reisman's (1993) framework, the researcher was guided by the following questions when making sense of the canonical and personal narrative accounts: 1) How and why is the narrative structured and organised this way, with this listener?; (2) What are the tensions within the narrative?; (3) What metaphors and social, cultural and institutional discourses do the women use?; (4) Are there gaps in the women's accounts? These questions helped me to maintain a critical and reflexive stance. For both canonical and personal narratives, I tried to focus on how elements of the stories are sequenced and possible reasons why some elements are given more attention than others. In this sense, it became clearer how the past shapes perceptions of the present, how the present shapes perceptions of the past, and how both past and present shape perceptions of the future.

Narrative: finding the psychosocial subject

How one conceives a psychosocial subject will be affected by the version of psychoanalysis that is applied (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000b). For example, from a Freudian perspective, motivation is located primarily in libidinal drives which are then cathected on to objects. In contrast, a Kleinian psychoanalysis privileges object-seeking, not pleasure-seeking, as the seat of primary motivations. Where Freud posits conflicts occurring primarily *within* the individual, Klein understood unconscious defences against anxiety to operate *between* the self and other – through splitting, projection and introjection. Chodorow (1989) describes Klein's legacy in recognising a relational self:

> "Object relation theorists, emerging from and reacting to the work of Melanie Klein, image a course of transactions between self and other(s) that help form our first subjectivity and sense of self, and that throughout life are renegotiated to recreate the sense of self and others in term of connection, separation and in between. These transactions give depth and richness of meaning to experience, by resonating with the past and with constructions of the past" (Chodorow, 1989, p.10)

The present interviews revealed narratives of the young women's relations to their body and to their mother. Using an object-relations lens, I understood references to the body and the mother as potential insights into objects populating the subjects' internal worlds. The relationship between the subject and her mother, and the relationship between the subject and her body, both lent themselves to an analysis of this kind. However, in attempting to understand how all three - the subject, her mother, and her body - are situated in relation to one another, I became interested in understanding not only the nature of the relationship but also what happens in the spaces in between. Adding to the complexity, I was also interested in conceptualising a subject that lives in culture, a subject that is not static, but one that is both influenced and influences culture. For this task, the writings of Winnicott proved to be useful. Yates and Sclater (2005) argue for the usefulness of Winnicott's theories in understanding the relationship between culture and psychology:

> "Winnicott (1971: 99) emphasises the 'experience' of culture; he acknowledges the importance of cultural traditions but also pays attention to the interaction of subject and object in the continual creative production of experience, self and meaning" (p.137).

The previous quote, from Chodorow (1989), was chosen not only because it describes the seminal influence of Klein but, more importantly, because it calls attention to the particularities of the current research. It highlights the importance of what takes place *in between* self and other. It also emphasises the way in which our constructions of the past echo our interactions with others.

Reflexivity

The personal engagement of the researcher with the participants - characteristic of qualitative research – facilitates the researcher's capacity to conduct research in a way that is responsive and open to the participants (Fossey et al., 2002). This receptivity, in turn, allows the researchers' understanding of the responses to be better influenced by the data itself, instead of by the researcher's prior conceptions or biases. As Fossey et al. (2002) explain, in order for this receptivity to occur, the researcher must be reflexive; that is to "develop awareness of these preconceptions, to reflect on actions taken, their roles and emerging understandings, while engaged in the research process" (p.728).

From an interpretative perspective, Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) explain that reflexivity takes into account the unconscious inter-subjective dynamics in the interview relationship and demands that attention be paid to the role of the interviewer in the production and analysis of data. The authors sum up the interpretive challenge: "This research subject cannot be known except through another subject, in this case, the researcher" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000a, p.4). From a more critical standpoint, the notion that knowledge is constructed by the social world has informed the way many researchers understand the relationship between the researcher and the research participant. This relationship can crucially affect the 'production' of the research material, in so far as the researcher is positioned as similar and different to the research participants. The present study, situated at the intersection of psychic and social ways of knowing, thus necessitates that the researcher is aware of how she may implicitly affect the findings of the research.

Cartwright (2004) explains that researchers are drawn to certain topics for particular internal and external reasons. These personal dynamics will inevitably have some bearing on the both the interview process and subsequent analysis. In this regard, it is important for me to acknowledge that my own personal relationship to my body and to my mother have played an important role in the path leading to the decision to conduct this particular research. The interpretative nature of the data analysis necessitates that I constantly keep in mind how these personal experiences of the body and mother may impact on the interpretation of the material. While I have attempted as far as possible to bracket this personal history during interviews and analysis, it is unavoidable that the researcher will be prone to interpreting data in a certain way. In this respect, my discussions with my supervisor at the various stages of the analysis process have served to ensure that my previous

understandings do not become self-fulfilling (Cartwright, 2004). I have also been aware of the possibility that my body may have taken on significance during the interview and may have affected how the participants responded to certain questions.

During the writing of the following analysis chapter, I endeavored to be as transparent as possible with regards to the potential for personal impact on the interpretations. Aiming to write reflexively, I also point out where my existing assumptions may have influenced the type of question asked or the way in which I responded to participants' answers.

Principles of good practice in qualitative research

Reflexivity, as outlined above, is a necessary component of self-monitoring that lies at the foundation of good practice in qualitative research (Elliot, et al., 1999). As reflexivity is inseparable from the analysis of the data, this concern has been dealt with in the above section. Reflexivity is but one component of the tools that qualitative researchers must utilise to ensure the standards and quality of the research methodology. Qualitative research is embedded in the phenomenological approach to knowledge, emphasising the particulars of human experience and social life (Elliot et al., 1999). However, efforts must be taken to ensure that such an exercise of investigation is not solipsistic. In this regard, qualitative researchers are encouraged to ground understandings of the subject matter empirically, and to make transparent their conceptual framework. In order to facilitate the validity of the observations and data and the trustworthiness of interpretations of the current research, I have consulted Elliot and colleagues' (1999) *Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields*, in which the authors outline guidelines of good practice pertinent to all qualitative research. I have combined Elliot et al.'s checklist with Cartwright's (2004) suggestions for the enhancement of reliability of the psychoanalytic research approach. I have noted my engagement with these principles at the various stages of this research process.

Situating the sample: I have described the research participants and the circumstances of their lives in order to allow the reader to assess the extent to which the findings of the research might be relevant to other groups of people and situations. I have included the participants' age, race and specific details of the mother-daughter relationships.

Grounding in examples: Cartwright (2004) explains that the quality of the research depends largely on the reader's being able to understand the inferences made by the researcher. I have provided examples of the data in the analysis section in order to make apparent the analytic procedures used, as well as interpretations made. Examples of the interview material allow the reader to evaluate the congruency between the data and the researcher's interpretation. They also allow the readers the opportunity to formulate alternative understandings of the data.

Providing credibility checks: Throughout the research process, and particularly during the analysis of the data, I have consulted my supervisor in order to evaluate my interpretations of the transcribed material. While my supervisor cannot be said to be strictly independent of the research situation, as suggested by Cartwright (2004), she was able to use her experience to point out flaws and limitations in the original analysis.

Coherence and comprehensiveness: Both Elliot et al. (1999) and Cartwright (2004) emphasise the importance of presenting a final account that is able to incorporate the totality of the person's experience, while still preserving the nuances in the data. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Cartwright (2004) explains that "if the interpretive account of the psychodynamics of the individual is adequate, one should be able to understand various events, past and present, using the same interpretive framework" (p.237). The analysis section of the current research begins with an overview of all six participants. This section of the analysis attempts to provide a holistic summary of the women's experiences as presented to me in the interview. The formal analysis is then undertaken and includes many quotes that illustrate the findings in a more nuanced way.

Accomplishing general versus specific research tasks: While hoping to offer understandings that may be applicable to other settings, it has been stated at the outset that my sample is fairly homogenous – six women who are completing their honours degree in general or industrial psychology. The limitations in extending the findings to other contexts and groups of people will be discussed in the concluding chapter

Resonating with reader: I have tried as far as possible to present psychoanalytic concepts in way that allows readers who are unfamiliar with such concepts to engage, and hopefully connect emotionally, with the report. The aim is to expand or clarify the reader's understanding of the relationship between the mother-daughter relationship and the experience of the body. I have tried to bring the interviewees' experiences to life using jargon-free language wherever possible. The

young women I interviewed shared openly with me and I hope to convey to the reader their unique voices.

Ethical considerations

Criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research are interconnected with standards for ethics in this research paradigm (Fossey et al., 2002). As discussed, these criteria include principles for good practice in the conduct of qualitative research, and for transparency in the interpretation of data. Ethical considerations pertaining to the conduct of the procedure will now be discussed.

Participation in the research study was strictly voluntary. Potential participants were made aware during initial contact that participation in the study entails neither benefits nor risks of any kind. Participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and subsequently transcribed. It was also made clear that at any time the participant may remove herself from the study. Participants received an information letter containing the relevant details regarding the procedure (See Appendix B). Participants were also asked to sign consent forms prior to the interview taking place (See appendix C).

Once each interview was completed and transcribed, the names of the participants were removed and replaced with pseudonyms in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. To maintain anonymity to the readers, no names or personal details, except broad demographic information, appear in the results.

Prior to and during the analysis the digital recordings were kept in a password-protected computer and transcripts were kept safely in my care and in the office of my supervisor. In this way, only my supervisor and I had access to the transcripts. Upon completion of the study, the digital recording and transcripts will kept by the researcher for a period of two years if publications should arise from the study, or alternatively for six years if no publications arise. Thereafter raw data and transcriptions will be destroyed. A summary of the report can be made available to participants upon request.

After each interview, information as to how to access individual psychotherapy was provided in the case of the interview eliciting interest or a need for further exploration of the participants' relationships to their body and/or mother. The Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU)

on the university campus provides individual psychotherapy for a range of problems. The services are provided to students at a reduced rate.

CHAPTER 4:
ANALYSIS

Introducing the narrators[3]

The following section will be used to introduce the reader to the young women as individual narrators in order to outline the core narratives that emerged in the interviews. These central narratives have been composed through the process of reading and rereading the transcripts, in addition to thinking about how my own counter-reactions during and after each interview align with the stories told. Discussions with my supervisor about each interview have also greatly influenced the way I have been able to conceptualise each story. Following Cartwright (2004), I have attempted to identify key identifications and object relations for each narrator. In the following pages, I have condensed each young woman's relationship with her mother and with her body into a core set of identifications and object relations. This will allow the reader to have a prior understanding of each young woman before a more formal analysis is undertaken. As Cartwright (2004) explains, traditional interview analyses, in which specific segments of the overall interview are pulled out, often lose sight of the entirety of the story presented. I am therefore hoping to capture something holistic about each woman's story, while simultaneously recognising that no one person's story can be simplified in such a neat manner.

Becky: *"I always felt a bit alien"*

Becky, the youngest of four siblings, moved to South Africa from central Africa when she was a young girl. Becky is a tall black woman with a large build. She has a strikingly deep voice and tends to speak with little variation in tone. Her substantial presence belies what I experienced as a timid and compliant interaction style. When asked to speak about her body in the beginning of the interview, Becky used the words "frustration" and "enjoy". She explained her use of the word frustration with reference to some weight that she has put on over the previous year. She understands her weight gain as due to university demands interfering with her time to play sports. Her sense of joy was explained as emanating from coming to "accept who I am over the past years". Throughout the rest of the interview Becky's expressions of difficulty were easily identified. In addition to feeling like an "outcast" and "a bit alien" because she was one of the few

[3] All original names have been replaced with pseudonyms. The presence of … indicates that sections of the transcribed material have been omitted.

black students in her school and a foreigner in the country, Becky also describes a rapid growth spurt during early adolescence in which she went from being one of the shortest people in her class to one of the tallest in a brief space of time. She recalls a sense of her mind having to "catch up" with her body:

> *I was ok and now I just feel like everyone notices type of thing… so like you standing out, kind of like you're the last one to find out that you're standing out.*

Despite admissions of difficulties "back then", Becky was quick to qualify her stories with reassurances to me that, in fact, she had come to peace with her body. She told me repeatedly that because she comes from a family of tall and big people, it makes sense that she will be tall and big as well:

> *…well my dad's like 2 feet tall, I can't, my brother as well (small laugh), I can't really, I just well, it's just genes, I think coming to terms with that, made it ok for me to accept, oh well, this is how it's supposed to be…*

Becky's awkward interactional style reveals some of the lingering discomfort she may feel inside her body. Upon reflection of the interview, Becky's repetitive statements of achieving a sense of joy from her body were noted as incongruent with the joyless quality of Becky's speech. In Becky's mother a further illustration of being unaware of one's feelings was found. When asked about how bodies are spoken about in her family, Becky explained that "your body will kind of show the life that you live". When asked to elaborate, Becky spoke about a time in which her mother was depressed but did not appear to know what was wrong. Becky described how she gained an awareness of her mother's depression through her mother's body:

…if we had to ask her are you depressed, 'I don't think so', everything in her body showed it, she wouldn't do anything, always in bed, her body worn out, she just looked worn out.

In that she was aware of her mother's depression without her mother's confirmation that anything was wrong, Becky can be understood as the recipient of her mother's state. Although Becky may experience her mother as depressed, it appears that she is nonetheless left feeling isolated from her mother. Her strong self-identification as being "alien" can be seen in her communication about her mother's attitude to her body, even as a child. As a young girl Becky "wasn't very into dresses", preferring to climb trees and play roughly on the jungle gym, much to her mother's disapproval. Described by Becky as "petite" and a "drama queen", Becky's mother takes pride in her feminine appearance. Becky described how she transitioned from being "rebellious" to coming to see that "you know what, mom actually knew best".

Within Becky's overriding self-identification as alien – from her body, from peers, from her mother - there is an alternate and co-occurring narrative which conveys Becky's sense of wanting to be close to her mother. While she feels different from her mother in the body she has, she longs to please and abide by her mother. In her relationship with her mother, Becky's tension resides in managing the feelings of distance with the desire for closeness.

Jade: *"I'm completely my mother's daughter"*

Jade, a slim and attractive white woman, revealed early in the interview that her mind was "consumed" by thoughts of food and weight. The hour-long interview became a manifestation of this preoccupation. Despite efforts on my part to broaden the scope of the narrative, Jade would consistently return the focus to issues of weight and body image. From the outset, her mother was spoken about as an ally in her efforts to maintain her ideal figure. Describing her mother as having dieted from a young age, it soon became clear that Jade's relationship with her mother is founded on matched ideals. Jade describes herself as "like a mother" from a young age:

> *Like, I've, I've always been like a mother. Like even when we were little, like in nursery school, and we'd have like tea at other people's homes, like all the children would be running around playing outside, and I'd be sitting with the mothers having tea (laughs)*

Jade spoke descriptively of how her weight concern manifests in her everyday functioning – erratic eating, feeling uncomfortable when she gains weight, and hours spent getting ready in the morning. Noticeably absent, however, were expressions of dissatisfaction or conflict with this state of affairs. Instead, she talks about feelings of gratitude to her mother for making her conscious of her weight. Seemingly concerned that I would not think that her mother was one of *those* critical, and criticised mothers, Jade felt it necessary to defend her mother. When I asked her if her mother had ever encouraged her to lose weight, Jade described what she experiences as words of motivation during periods of dieting. She promptly qualified her description by saying:

> *So ya, she does tell me, but I know it's… like some people will see it as a bad thing. I don't. At all.*

Jade's identification with her mother pervaded the interview. She spoke often of the various characteristics they share. A significant comment was made following a question I had asked concerning any possible differences between them. Jade hesitantly raised the fact that while she is attending university her mother did not. She swiftly moderated this statement by explaining:

> *Like my mother says, it wasn't the thing to do to study back then, for girls. Like she got married very young and she was just a housewife, um, but she says she wishes she had*

studied. So I think if she was like born, and she was like my age, we would be even more alike, but just because of the times we were born, and obviously she wouldn't be my mother if we born at the same time (small laugh) but um I think, just the generational gap is where we're different, but otherwise, like I'm completely my mother's daughter, I'm exactly the same.

In light of Jade's foundational identification with her mother, her unvarying focus on weight during the interview gives an indication of how the body is used to bolster and sustain this key appreciation of likeness. Mother, and daughter in her mother's image, draw on the body in the exercise of self- and body-scrutiny. However, it may be in the denial of the pain of such scrutiny that Jade's identification with her mother is best illustrated. Her denial of any conflict may preserve the identification by keeping experiences of difference and conflict concealed. Jade's narrative left me, as the interviewer, with doubts as to my technique due to the seeming superficiality of the discussion. After repeated readings, it became more apparent that the surface nature of the interview exposes Jade's distance from the underlying dynamics of her experiences. Through her identification with her mother, a denial of her own pain is simultaneously a denial of her mother's pain. The corollary is even more threatening to the integrity of her identification: a connection to her own pain could signal the possibility that her mother is responsible for causing such pain. In this picture of "doer and done-to" (Benjamin, 2004), two-ness would be inescapable. To keep this experience of separation at bay, both Jade's internal response and her external expressions remain impervious to anything other than "all is well".

Claire: *"I think part of my self definition is not my mom"*

I have chosen this quote to introduce Claire to portray the extent to which Claire's relationship with her mother colours the self-construction of her identity. Claire, a white woman with a petite build, was the only interviewee to cry during the interview. She explained the immense conflict that defines how she experiences her relationship with her mother: "I don't really like her, much". At the heart of her explanation of the relationship, Claire referred to her mother's differential treatment of her children. Claire referred to her brother's Attention Deficit Disorder as "special needs". Describing how her brother was thus shielded from their mother's criticism, Claire explained:

It's got a lot to do with having a brother with special needs…my brother, was never like disciplined or anything, so my mom couldn't put her criticism into him, so I got two children's worth of criticism all on me.

This quote illustratively speaks to the notion of projections *into* the child. Possibly having internalised much of her mother's emotional expulsions, Claire may resort to her own expulsions in

order to protect herself from what she experiences as the weight of her mother's personal dissatisfaction – "She doesn't like her life". While discussing how she tries to break the family mould, Claire describes the awareness of possessing some of the qualities she would like to eradicate.

> *It's more like I'm not my family, like aspects of my family I really don't like and it's probably because I don't want to acknowledge it in myself… I try very hard not to criticise people or at least make them feel criticised, which never has occurred to them, because they, my mom's very critical, I don't think she realises how critical she is.*

There was clear lack of attunement in Claire's narratives involving difficulties in "taking in" what the other offers. Claire elaborated on her distaste for her mother's cooking: "…Some of it's nice, but the rest of it's horrible." For Claire, the stark distinction of good and bad, of harmful and helpful, shapes her personal interactions. Preoccupied with the criticism leveled at her by her mother, Claire appears to be desperately seeking opportunities for receiving untainted approval. Possibly reflecting a yearning for familial affection, Claire has moved in with her boyfriend's family. It seems significant that it is another family in which Claire is hoping to find the comfort she seeks. Claire's belly-dancing pursuits also reveal the seeking of what she does not find in her mother. In the opening few minutes of the interview, Claire described how she and her mother attended belly-dancing lessons together. While her mother stopped soon afterwards, Claire continued and now teaches and performs. She explains the appeal of performing for an audience:

> *…with the whole belly-dancing thing it's nice to be the centre of attention because you know everyone is looking at you in a good way, so there's no like ambivalence about it.*

Desperate for more of the "good", Claire seeks external sources. But she struggles to receive it from the person she craves it from most – her mother. When asked how she thinks her mother has experienced her daughter's body, Claire's response again called attention to the contamination of the good and its consequences:

> *…with a little bit of envy, I guess. (Pause) Just with the fact that I could wear what I wanted. And I don't know if she could when she was my age.*

Abby: *"I wanna really like get out of life as much as I can, and I feel like she hasn't done that"*

Abby, a young white woman with a dancer's physique and cheerful countenance, presented herself as accommodating and eager to please. Abby is an only child who describes her mother as "overprotective" while she was growing up. However, the relationship is also defined by Abby with emphasis on the "huge generation gap" between them. Abby explains: "my mom was quite old when she had me so I guess there's that, that gap between us". Abby's current relationship to her mother can best be described as the negotiation of these contrasting experiences of proximity and distance. When talking about her mother's constant and reliable presence, Abby explains: "so she was always there with me, um, sometimes I felt a bit too, too close". Abby has recently moved into a flat of her own and describes how the new-found physical distance has improved her relationship with her mother.

> *I just moved out recently so our relationship has gotten much better because we don't we not we don't live right next to each other and we're not on top of each other all the time*

In Abby's current pursuits of an independent life, the negotiation of loss is a pervasive reminder of the struggles that individuation brings. Striving to stay active, Abby fills her days with a variety of activities. As a dancer, Abby explains that her prioritisation of staying fit means that she tries to exercise every day. During the interview, Abby wondered aloud whether her quest for staying healthily active was a reaction to the inactivity she witnesses in her mom. Her concern for her mother was palpable:

> *Ya, I feel she's letting go a bit, which is which is sad. Ya, definitely less active. She doesn't really do much um anymore, which is sad, cause that's I feel like she still could, she's still completely there with her mind and her body but she she won't she's just sort of not given up but she's just, maybe she's tired or I don't know she just not not doing that much.*

What stands out in the above quote is the fear that Abby holds about the potential loss of her mother. In Abby's story we see the attempts of a mother and her daughter to answer the questions: are we going to be together, or are we going to be apart? Do I have you or do I lose you? Abby's narrative reveals the overlap of both mother and daughter's fears. It is in this overlap that the possibility of identifying with and taking ownership of someone else's anxieties becomes evident. In a story imbued with unresolved and unfinished endings, Abby tells me how her mother has not been to visit her own mother who has been diagnosed with dementia overseas. Abby defends her mom's decision in the face of family criticism:

I mean the family they saw the gradual process and my mom hasn't seen her gran her mom um for the last two years so to now all of a sudden be shocked with this person that doesn't even remember you, I don't know if if that's really really fair on her to be cross with her that she's not there

Is Abby's confusing 'gran' with 'mom' a clue to the entangling of two internal worlds? In this we see how Abby may wish to protect her mother from experiences of loss, as well as the projection of Abby's own fears of losing her mother. While Abby pursues independence, she is protecting herself from carrying too much of that which belongs to her mother. Abby tells me matter-of-factly that her parents still live together despite their relationship 'ending' a long time ago. She explains:

I've also blocked it out, I I as I said I tried to help and I tried to talk to my mom about it, and I tried to get her to open up about it and it didn't work so I just sort of gave up and thought ok, that's their thing, I've separated myself from it.

Wanting to be 'separate', Abby's internal struggle centres around an awareness of not wanting to bear the weight of her mother's conflicts. In moving out of home, Abby demonstrates the search for emotional and physical distance from her mother. But in so doing, the consequences of having 'held' her mother are exposed. As she moves further away, so her doubts about her mother's capacity to 'hold herself together' grows. Her worry about her mother "letting herself go" are awakened as she 'lets her mother go'.

Dawn: *"As much as you are their kid and you are a whole lot a part of themselves, you are also you, and there are also things that you'd want"*

Observing my response to Dawn's transcript after the interview was very instructive for how I came to understand some of Dawn's key dynamics. After having spent a considerable time reading the transcripts and thinking about the findings, I suddenly noticed that I had been paying significantly less attention to Dawn relative to the other interviewees. What was it about Dawn that allowed her to so easily slip under my radar?

Dawn is a petite black woman who presented herself to the interview in casual clothing. Dawn's mother fell pregnant in high school and Dawn was raised by her grandmother amongst "about twenty grandchildren". Dawn described moving in with her mother and father at the age of eleven as an "alienating" experience:

It felt like you were missing something. Because all of a sudden there's just the three of you…it was a different environment altogether, because before there was just a lot of uh people around, and now there's just three people in the house, and ya. That that felt a bit boring, alienating I think (small laugh)

When asked to speak about her mother, Dawn's descriptions remained brief and one-dimensional. Throughout the interview, Dawn revealed little of her own personal struggles and not any relational conflicts. However, towards the end of the interview, Dawn described how her parents encourage her to take advantage of the opportunities that they did not have. In the following quote we see the possibility of Dawn as the recipient of her mother's personal disappointments:

> *not just my mom, but all the moms, most of the moms, I'm not going to say all, they I don't know they they, they they they just have this thing of this is how I want to see my daughter, and some of the things are just the things that they would want to do, or would have liked to do, now they want you to do them, it's like they are living their lives through you, in a way*

As the quote used in Dawn's heading reveals, Dawn is aware of the struggle to be her own person. She described her career ambitions as in conflict with what her parents wish for her. However, what becomes strikingly apparent when reading the transcript is how little Dawn used the word 'I'. I came to think of her as the one 'with so little I'. It is clear that Dawn has been searching for a way to find her own voice from a young age. A key to understanding how Dawn has tried to find her 'I' lies in her descriptions of the distinction between the mind and body.

> *because the body it is just the physical part that represents the inside, so I think that it should be the inside that is that is speaking, so um, I don't think, I think that you should have control*

Dawn emphasised the importance of exerting "control" over her body. One story in particular stands out as illuminating just how important this sense of control is. Dawn described herself as a young girl of five or six who attempted to test the limits of her will-power. She explains:

> *I would say that, OK, I'm never going to drink tea, I know that I can do this, and I would stop, or I would say that I'm never going to play with that new toy, it was a favourite toy, and just the joy of saying that oh well I can control myself, I do, uh have that bit of uh self discipline would, excite me in a way, like I wouldn't feel like a complete failure, ya.*

Significantly, this sense of self appears to be founded on a clash between two opposing wills – Dawn versus her parents, inside mind versus outside body. The above story was also powerful in relaying the extent to which Dawn relies on herself to discover a sense of self. Nowhere in Dawn's narrative are there examples of her calling on others for help. Instead, she strives to find the 'I' independently of her relationships with others. Possibly lacking the experience of having her self mirrored in the other, it appears that for Dawn, the notion of seeing one's self in the other is foreign. My experience of losing sight of Dawn after the interview may be understood in light of Dawn's self-containment within her relationships.

Bella: *"I was daddy's little girl"*

Seeing Bella - a young black woman of above-average height - for the first time, I was first struck by the combination of her brightly coloured football jersey and tall, feminine build. My initial perception of an incongruence in Bella's physicality corresponded with the significant themes that emerged in her narrative. When I first asked her about her own body, the dominant word used was "confusion". Like Becky, Bella describes herself as a "tomboy" in her younger years. Describing herself as having surrendered to the criticisms of her boyish mannerisms, Bella spoke about her efforts to "show my femininity" in recent years. However, Bella also admits to feelings of regret for having "cared so much about what people thought". Bella describes her current state of uncertainty:

> *…now I'm supposed to I'm trying to find my own identity within myself, and what I'm comfortable with, not necessarily what I'm supposed to be, which I'm not sure what I'm comfortable with now, it's just you know one of those transitional periods, so that's why I say confused, because I'm trying a bit of this, and trying a bit of that…*

Bella's boyish behaviour was described as a great source of tension in her relationship with her mother. Describing her mother as a woman who places great value on stereotypical expressions of femininity, Bella emphasised the notion of rebellion contained in her childhood expressions. In the following quote, Bella describes how she made the decision to try and embrace a more feminine style of dress and behaviour when she started university:

> *This is what big girls do, whatever (laughs) I'm grown now, I should act my age blah blah blah, I should let go of all these little childish things, ya.*

Through Bella's humorous style of speech the sense of conflict is apparent. Evident in Bella's use of phrases, such as "this is what big girls do" and "act my age" is the seeming echo of her mother's instructive voice. Also coming through in the above quote is how, for Bella, gendered expectations are embedded in the distinction between childhood and adulthood. The struggle to embrace 'adult' desires was also evident in Bella's ambiguity about her emerging sexuality. The notion of rebelling against her mother's views on sexuality also dominated her narrative. Bella spoke animatedly about how she struggled to connect with her mother's religious values as a child. With Bella's mother as a highly religious woman, the family atmosphere was experienced by Bella as stifling. Bella spoke openly about her sexual experiences at university in defiance of her mother's expectations. Bella spoke about how she saw sex as "natural" and disagreed with her mother's teaching that a woman's virginity is a "gift to your husband". Telling of her current confusion, Bella describes her recent

reevaluating of her opinions about sex. Attending talks at her church, Bella tells me that she is beginning to see the value in what her mother was trying to teach.

The notion of meeting one's desires emerged as an essential connecting thread in Bella's accounts. When asked why she thought her mother was troubled by her boyish behaviour as a child, Bella offered an insightful observation that called attention to what may lie at the centre of the tension that exists between mother and daughter, and between self and body:

> *I was more like daddy daddy daddy than mom. Um, I don't think I made her feel like a necessity in my life at all, ya.*

Having earlier described how her mother thrives on being needed, the above comment highlights the role that 'needs' play in Bella's relationship to her mother. What has it meant for Bella to leave her mother's desires unfulfilled? Bella's own unresolved questions about the place of a woman's sexuality are captured in her descriptions of her parent's union. Bella spoke revealingly about her reaction to finding out that her parents were married when her mother was sixteen and her father twenty six:

> *You know I was like sis a 26 year old man what is he looking for in a 16 year old girl? You know and I was just like eeuh! What were you guys doing?*

Bella's reaction to the origins of her parents relationship calls into play both her conflicted sexual and gender identifications. Linking Bella's key narratives, her current state of confusion may be better understood in light her early oedipal identifications. Being "daddy's girl" has come at the expense of her mother's needs. Aware that she did not fulfill her mother's desires, Bella's current search for an identity she is "comfortable with" reflects her conflicts around the meeting of her own desires. Bella is in the process of finding a balance in the tension of how she is both like and unlike her mother. As she finds herself in a woman's body, Bella questions what it means to be a "big girl".

Analysis: Introduction and structure

The following analysis begins with an exploration of the mother-daughter relationship. This first section displays how early developmental processes remain active in the adult psyche. I have isolated three features of this relationship. The order in which they are presented parallels roughly the developmental achievements in the life of the daughter. The first feature is the distinction between self and other as manifested in the relationship with the mother. This inevitably painful separation is partly modified by the capacity of the infant to represent the mother as a presence housed within the infant's psyche; that is, an internal object. Thus the second feature to be explored is the internal maternal presence and its vicissitudes. The third feature is an investigation of an identificatory process – how the young woman's identification with her mother, or lack thereof, impacts the transition to adulthood, with specific attention paid to the role of desires.

The second part of the analysis looks at the relationship between the young woman and her body in the context of self-other differentiation. This section begins by looking at how the young women's narratives expose the function of the body as defining the "me" as opposed to "not me". Then I look at the role of the mother-as-mirror (Lemma, 2020, p.78) in establishing the notion of an ideal body. The third part of this section considers the possibility that the origins of the pervasive scrutiny of the body are located in identificatory processes with the mother.

The final part of the analysis looks at the woman and her body within the social realm. This exploration necessarily draws on a productive engagement with the previous sections. It is through understanding the foundational aspects of identity that we can understand how the interviewees position themselves in socially available discourses. Firstly, I look at the way in which each subject responds to dominant social representations of the body. Secondly, I look at the ways in which each subject enacts her desires and appetites in the transitional space. I end the analysis by looking at how race entered the discussions, and the possible implications for how race mediates engagement with self and other.

Me and my mother

Same but different, near but far: negotiating separateness

Flax (1978) makes a helpful distinction between the terms separation and individuation. Where separation refers to the establishing of a firm sense of possessing one's own physical and mental boundaries, individuation means the development of a range of personality traits and characteristics which are unique to the self. The literature review outlined various theorists' take on the tension inherent in the daughter's differentiation from her mother. The common denominator was that the process of becoming one's own person is one that continues throughout life. The interview material confirmed this notion, with the conflict between autonomy and merger evident in all six interviews. Evident in the material were two conflicts shaping the path to independence: similarity versus difference, and proximity versus distance. How each woman navigated these conflicts revealed underlying attitudes toward the maternal object's independence.

For Jade, her strong identification with her mother appears to obstruct the surfacing of anxieties relating to the possibility of her mother as "not me". As discussed in the introductory narrative, Jade revealed early in the interview that her mind was "consumed" by thoughts about food and weight. Her mother was spoken about as a fellow dieter and supporter of her efforts to maintain her "ideal weight". While Jade's interview content was dominated by the topic of weight, her style of speech revealed clues as to the potential for unspoken conflict. Discussing her own and her mother's perception of her current weight, Jade said the following:

> *I know I'm not fat. And she knows I'm not fat. But like we both exactly the same. We think it's nicer to be thinner. Um just because you look better. And I feel better about myself.*

Jade's use of pronouns in the above quote may indicate the tension that exists for her between separateness and union with her mother. She begins with the self as observer and then immediately moves on to the mother as observer. This distinction between self and mother was quickly refuted with her qualification that, actually, mother and daughter are "exactly the same". Their shared belief that it is "nicer to be thinner" is explained by Jade in two parts. Where the first justification is distanced from her own experience ("… *you* look better"), the second is owned by Jade ("*I* feel better about myself"). Jade's switch from *you* to *I* may demonstrate that what in fact makes her "feel better" is not merely being slim and "looking better", but more personally to her, being matched by her mother. "Looking better" is located in the outside "you", dependent upon the

engagement in wider social arrangement of meaning. However, "feeling better" is located in the individual creation of meaning.

Where Jade's narrative revealed a unified desire to be *like* her mother, the rest of the narratives rendered a more complex conflict between sameness and difference. For Bella, she recalls her anger with her mother as a child for not accepting her for "the way I was". Her narrative then exposes a rapid shift in her appreciation for her mother when she moves out of home to go to university. Bella describes how she came to look at her mother's approach in a different light:

> *…maybe when I was younger, yes, my mom did compare me a lot to other girls and stuff which I don't think was a good thing, she probably should have just accepted me the way I was, but then once I got to high school, I think she was just trying to make me a little more lady-like, and like trying to teach me like how to cook and to clean and stuff, because one day I'm going to be out on my own and stuff, like I was when I was in Cape Town, and I wouldn't be able to do all these things and then I was just like aish, she actually had my back you know.*

Bella's words invoke the sense of ambivalence with which the object's independence is faced. Bella felt safe enough to experience hatred of her mother when mother and daughter orbit one another. But when Bella is faced with being "out on my own", she may wonder whether she will be able to survive without the presence of her mother. Her aggressive feelings cannot yet be integrated with her simultaneous appreciation for the loved object. Perhaps in order to realise that she can both love and hate her mother would entail an appreciation of the object's independence which may still be too threatening for Bella. The above quote suggests how Bella had to exchange hatred for love to ward off feelings of separation.

The topic of moving out of home proved to offer a rich symbolic demonstration of separation and individuation as they manifest in the life of the adult daughter. For some, the topic was initiated in a way that emphasised the move as representative of greater independence and the achievement of adult status. For others, the consequences of the move on their relationship with the mothers were foregrounded. For Claire, her moving out of the family home into the house of her boyfriend's family was described as an informal process in which she "gradually stopped sleeping at home". Claire's description of the move and its consequences are illustrative of her strained relationship with her mother:

> *My mom's very upset that we never had a formal discussion about it. I was waiting for her to mention something about it, like 'oh I see you're not at home so often' or something. She just got upset with me after I wasn't home for a month …She was very angry, like as if I*

disrespected her by not discussing it with her, and I was like well you never seemed to notice, so, it obviously wasn't a big issue for you, cause if you'd noticed something you would have said something.

When I asked Claire why she thinks her mother never said anything about her absence, her response was:

She was hoping I would come back, I think. Or, I don't know.

Claire's obvious desire to draw a response from her mother may highlight a residue of the infantile fantasy of omnipotent control of an object yet to be experienced as distinct from the self. Her craving for greater connection with her mother seems to have resulted in an unconscious desire to control her mother's feelings, and in this way recreate a sense of oneness. Her answer to my question about the possible reasons her mother voiced no concern seems to demonstrate clearly Claire's own unconscious hope that she can find a way back to the mother's care and affection. When I queried a statement in which she defined herself as "not my mom", she clarified:

It's more like I'm not my family, like aspects of my family I really don't like and it's probably because I don't want to acknowledge it in myself.

In Claire's awareness that she possesses the traits that she dislikes in her family it is possible to see the struggle of deciding what belongs to "me" and what belongs to "not me". Claire's conscious and conflicted awareness of her attempts to define her adult self as "not my mother" may in fact mask her unconscious wish to have her in her grasp.

The inner mother

The establishment of the importance of the pre-oedipal mother for female identity development has heralded examination of subsequent developments in the relationship with the mother, "both as she is experienced in the world and as she is held in the psyche" (Vivona, 2000, p. 243). The relationship to the inner maternal presence is altered and reexamined throughout the lifecycle (Dalsimer, 1986).The interview material revealed the significance of the young women's relation to her mother as an *inner* presence. Given that the interviews presented the voice of only the daughters, it became important in the analysis not to take their accounts of their mothers as transparent. Instead, descriptions of the mother were understood to offer potential insights into the nature of the internalised maternal object. To do this it became important to recognise the daughter as both the recipient of the mother's projections, while simultaneously the 'projector' of disowned aspects of themselves.

Lemma (2010) uses Klein's notion of projection *into* a body to explain how meaning is inscribed on the body through early maternal projections. Lemma (2010) describes how the mother's projections and the inevitable experiences of loss may stimulate violence in the one who is projected into. Claire's narrative involving her mother was perhaps the most easily identifiable illustration of such possible projections. In the following extract, Claire talks about her wish to "hurt" her mother as an act of retaliation. Claire teaches belly-dancing at her local gym and occasionally her mother attends her class as a student. Claire describes the provocation of aggression by her mother's presence in the class:

> *so I have to try not be, mean to her, in class, like I have urges to be mean, I think it's kinda like I want to hurt you because you hurt me kind of thing, so I have to like not be mean, and especially in class, because I'm trying to like treat all the people in my class like equally, so…*

Aware of the retaliatory motivation behind her desire, Claire also hints at the recognition that perhaps her experience of her mother is coloured by her own internal world when she says:

> *…but I perceive everything from her as critical, so I'm never sure anymore if it's me or her, but just…*

This last quote is useful in its capacity to demonstrate the cyclical nature of projections. Claire may project into her mother in the same way that she has been the recipient of her mother's projections. In Claire's words we see her alertness to the possibility that the "reality" of her mother may be different from her experience of her mother. Throughout Claire's narrative, she underlined her mother's critical nature and her experience of having to bear the full brunt of her mother's discontent. However, Claire's words suggest awareness that she too has a role to play in her experience of being criticised. During a discussion of her mother's experience of her body, Claire spoke of what she described as her mother's attempts to bolster her "body confidence". Despite this recognition, Claire's dominant representation of her mother paints a picture of a bad, damaging person. This may imply that Claire's relationship with her mother is clouded by part-object relating, in which the good object and bad object cannot be integrated. In Claire's internal reality, her mother maintains the qualities of a sadistic and withholding caregiver who cannot offer the nurturance she craves. Instead she looks elsewhere, whether in her boyfriend's family or her belly-dancing audience. But sadly, the process of projection - *never sure anymore if it's me or her* – masks the possibility that the good, loving object she desires may be found in her mother, whose goodness seems sharply split off. As highlighted in her introductory narrative, Claire seems

preoccupied by the process of finding a source for the "good" she craves, and extricating herself from the "bad" with which she feels contaminated.

While Claire is seemingly engaged in a continuous battle against the threat of a damaging mother, Abby appears to relate with concern to a mother experienced as wilting and frail – a maternal object not damaging but vulnerable to damage. As presented in the introductory narrative, Abby voiced concerns about the robustness of her mother in the face of her aging body:

> *I think generally cause she is getting quite old now and um she's got grey hair and I think that does take a toll, um I think that would take a toll on anyone um so I think she's quite quite sad on, on getting quite a bit older*

When I asked Abby if her mother expresses sadness at her aging body, she replied that her mother is "stubborn in that way" and that maybe "it's just me reading into things". While Abby's mother may not offer her thoughts willingly, Abby's "reading into things" can also be viewed as an expression of Abby's projected fears. I was also struck by her comment that an aging body would "take a toll on anyone". When I asked her about this comment, Abby's answer exposed the extent of concern for her mother in the face of mortality:

> *I do think it can it can affect you though cause you you getting closer to um, gosh it's going to sound it's going to sound so dark, but you are getting closer to death and to old age and your your body's giving way and I think it does take a toll on everyone but you know you can work on it in a constructive way, deal with it in a constructive way and I think my mom particularly doesn't deal with it in a constructive way*

Abby laments the fact her mom is not fighting the unavoidable in a more "constructive way". In the above quote we see Abby's ambivalence feelings of loss of the internal maternal presence. On the one hand, the death of the object is inevitable. On the other hand, the object has autonomy outside the will of the subject. Throughout the interview, Abby described the distress of trying in vain to get her mother to take better care of her body. There is also a sense however that Abby has surrendered to the notion that she cannot control this aspect of their relationship. Abby has moved out of her parent's home and describes the positive effects this has had on their relationship. But her statements of independence carry with them concerns for a fragile mother. As Abby moves out of home she tests the strength of her mother in the world, and her mother as she is held in her psyche.

The introductory narratives suggested the presence of the internal relationship with the mother in all six women. However, the above two examples have been used to deepen the presentation of my finding that the internalised mother plays an important role in the women's understanding of themselves and their mothers. Throughout the rest of the analysis, references to the mother will always connote reference to the internal mother. The next section will look at the identifications of the self in relation to the mother

Maternal identification and the transition to womanhood

Oedipal conflict of desire is solved through maternal identification. As Vivona (2000) succinctly puts it, maternal identification at the oedipal stage of development is "a girl's agreement to wait until adulthood to emulate her mother's way of wanting" (p.247). The transition to adulthood signifies the pursuit and potential experience of autonomous desire. But as a young woman enters adulthood, it is this maternal identification, the unconscious agreement to be like her mother that conflicts with her desire to be the maker of her own feminine self and destiny. Vivona (2000) sums up the developmental challenge that presents the young woman at the threshold of adulthood: "How can she release herself from the inhibiting childhood identification without losing the maternal presence, which is both a treasured emotional bond and a vital source of self?" (p.245). Applying Winnicott's notion of transitionality to the post-oedipal phase, Vivona (2000) highlights the provocation of early struggles of separation during the transition to adulthood, and the resulting need for post-oedipal transitional objects. She argues that early maternal identification is a temporary solution that must be reworked in adulthood if a woman is to pursue desires of her own resolve. She explains: "Adult capacities, building on a foundation of pre-oedipal processes, potentiate a reworking of the oedipal identification to enable greater differentiation from the inner mother, which maintains a facilitating maternal connection" (p.248). Bridging the divide, the transitional space allows the young woman to tolerate this psychological separation. It is in this space that she can create an adult self who is both "like and not like her mother but is necessarily connected to her" (Vivona, 2000, p.251).

Using the framework of the transitional space, and the inner mother, the next section of the analysis will look at how the young women handle the process of pursuing their adult desires. Using what we have already looked at in terms of moving away from the physical mother, we are able to look more closely at differentiation from the inner mother. As a useful starting point, discussions about personal sexual experiences with their mothers are considered.

Abby, who repeatedly emphasised the generation gap between herself and her mother, describes the difficulty in talking to her mother about her sexual experiences:

> *…for example my sex life I really don't I can talk to her generally about sex and I can talk to her generally about um maybe what other people are going through but I've never engaged with her about that sort of thing, um, about me personally…*

Asked why she thinks she cannot talk to her mother about her sex life, Abby offered the following motivation:

> *Um, I just I like the idea of her seeing me as her daughter and a certain way and I don't want to want to break that um that image I guess.*

While she finds it appropriate to discuss sex in general, the intimacy of sharing her own personal experiences is felt to be off limits. What is the image that Abby does not want to break, and who is she protecting by doing this? Abby seeks to protect her mother from seeing her as a woman with autonomous desire. In doing this, Abby protects both herself and her mother from the betrayal that threatens the valued maternal closeness.

For Bella, her adult desires have been the site of active rebellion against maternal identification, and more recently, recognition of her identification with her mother's ideals. As a young girl, Bella resented what she felt to be her mother's stifling religious attitudes. Upon leaving home, she reveled in the independence to experiment with her sexuality. However, Bella explained in the interview that she has recently begun to appreciate her mother's point of view:

> *I knew my mom wouldn't approve so whenever we spoke I was like "no we don't do anything!" you know (laughs). But now I see it very differently I think, I think also because I've become I've started going to church more and stuff and I'm just like "hmm, ya, maybe I should put a bit of more worth to this, it's not like, <u>just</u> my body" you know (small laugh). Ya, I think my mom's really influencing me a lot now, I'm starting to see things like how she's starting to see it, I think.*

Like Abby, Bella did not disclose her sexual activities to her mother. The contrasting texture of the two accounts reveals different relations to the inner maternal presence. While Abby's narrative evokes images of a fragile mother, Bella's inner maternal presence is one of authority, a mother who must either be lied to or acquiesced. While the above quote from Bella does draw attention to the precarious nature of her personal attitudes towards sex, it was difficult to find a single quote from Bella that captured the level of doubt and uncertainty with which she speaks about sexuality. Also telling may be Bella's slip of the tongue when she says she is "starting to see things like how

she's starting to see it". In the process of adopting her mother's values, it may be that Bella wants to see herself and her mother as "starting" together on equal footing.

In contrast to Abby and Bella, Becky did not initiate conversation around her own sexual experiences. However, she does offer useful material in which the conflict in becoming an adult woman, like her mother, can be observed:

> *…I'm sure everyone's gone through you just don't want to be like your parents, but you can't really defeat that (laugh) I um ya, I don't know, I'm pretty much ok with it, um I've come to peace with it, I can't really change my face, I can't change my laugh, I can't change the things I laugh at, so ya*

In looking at the above quote in the context of Becky's core identification as 'alien' amongst her peers and in relation to her mother, it became important to ask what it would mean for Becky to "come to peace with" becoming like her mother as she becomes an adult woman. Later on in the interview, Becky may reveal the answer to this question:

> *I do feel that ok, my mom should learn to appreciate more about herself that I don't think she is, and for me I want to learn to be more appreciative of who I am, so that I I don't end up being like that*

In the first quote from Becky she describes that she has come to accept that certain characteristics exist outside of her control. While the issue of control will be looked at in more depth in the following section, the above two quotes were placed at this point in order to highlight the challenge of autonomy inherent in differentiation from the mother. While Becky maintains her connection to her mother through similarities in their face and laugh, she may be beginning to exert autonomous desire in imagining that she may not have to "end up" like her mother. The following section will explore further the function of the body in differentiating self and other.

You, me and my body

Whose body is it?

As discussed in the literature review, Lemma (2010), found that finding comfort in one's body entails awareness of the body's original porous boundaries in relation to the mother. The reality of "being-in-a-body" (Lemma, 2010, p.113) thus means that while we feel separate we can never escape our dependency on others. The following section explores ways in which the young women I interviewed use their bodies, both consciously and unconsciously, to mark out a space and identity that is their own. Lemma (2010) reminds her readers of the inherent tension in accepting the reality of the body:

> "it means simultaneously taking ownership of the body, its desires and limitations, and integrating the fact that the body is the site where we meet the other, where we negotiate the meaning of sameness and difference, of dependency and separation" (p.27).

In her work with patients who modify their bodies, through tattoos, piercing and so on, Lemma (2010) found recurrence of the question 'whose body is it?' She recognised that even everyday modifications, like the clothes we wear, can be understood in part as the manifestation of an attempt to signal the body as 'belonging to me'. What matters here is that the body is experienced as separate from the object. The notion of control emerged as an important method of managing the relationship with an 'unmanageable' body. Issues of control are consequences of the first time the question "whose body is it" is asked by the infant. When the object first becomes known as separate, the infant is confronted with the inadequacies of her control of the object. The infant, realising that her mother's body falls outside of her control, comes to experiment with power over her own body.

For some of the girls I interviewed, the idea of differentiating between that which can be controlled and that which cannot seemed to create a significant narrative that provides 'rules' which govern the extent of body acceptance. For Becky, understanding that she cannot control her 'body', but she can control what she eats, is an important partition by which she lives. The following comment was made during a discussion about the standard 'profiles' of beauty:

> *I came to the realisation that not everyone actually fits the profile, and, um, kind of you need to accept you to be happy, and I think that's literally how I've been living, well this is me and you can know when it's just you and your bad habits, like eating and whatever*

Becky's narrative was pierced with many instances in which she has felt 'alien'. From the above quote, it may appear that Becky has required a means with which to mediate her feelings of alienation, stemming from the fact that she does not 'fit the profile'. Becky also speaks about her body becoming more womanly with a mixture of both discomfort and pleasure, but cannot seem to hold onto both at the same time. The transition to womanhood as exposed by the body was also something out of her control:

> *I would understand maybe in terms of weight, I could kind of control that, but everything else, I'm like well, I can't really control getting wider hips*

Like many women, Becky has come to the realisation that the quantity of the food she eats is one thing that she does have control over. Dawn revealed a similar sentiment:

> *What I have accepted and what I haven't…now I'm weighing like 60 kilogram, I wished I weighed 50, (laughs) so I haven't really accepted that, but um, ya, but it doesn't really bother me that much. Only if I were to change something, it would be that, but it doesn't really much of a problem because it's something that you can change it, it's something that you um yourself have control over, now if it's something like that I don't think it's much of a problem…but then again there are other things that um would be problematic if I don't accept, like for example if I didn't uh accept my eyes, if I wanted like a certain shape of my eyes, that would be a bit of a problem because it would be something that would be difficult to change*

As first discussed in her introductory narrative, Dawn is primarily motivated by a resolve to locate a coherent sense of self. Standing out in the above quote is the differentiation between what exists within the domain of her self-will, and that which lies outside of her control. I was particularly struck by her comment about the 'shape of my eyes', which is suggestive of hereditary traits, inherited from one of her parents. In this way, Dawn is giving clues as to what approach she takes with the remnants of the 'other' that exists within and as part of her. It seems that Dawn is saying that what is 'taken in' can be controlled with sufficient self-will, but the 'other-in-me' must be accepted if one is to live comfortably in the body.

For Bella, her body was used early as a tool with which to actively dissent her mother's wishes. Whether as a young girl, or a young adult, Bella found ways to experiment with her body in direct opposition to her mother's values. Bella paints a vivid picture of the tenacity with which she pursued this exercise of individuation:

> *I think when I was younger I would use my body to rebel against my mom, like doing things that I knew she wouldn't approve of, I think once I remember I even peed standing up with the boys*

This quote is strongly suggestive the way in which a phallic position can be adopted as a psychic position even as a female. The phallic position represents a stance of complete self sufficiency, and is in this way a direct attack on otherness (Lemma, 2010). The theme of 'otherness' is ever-present in Bella's narrative of her relationship with her mom. Bella described early in the interview how her boyish behavior worried her mother. When asked why she thought her behaviour concerned her mother, Bella replied:

> *I don't know I think it worried her that I wasn't being like her, probably, cause ya and like I was the, the different daughter. My sisters would listen to my mom a lot, like they were good kids, like they were disciplined and they feared my parents and stuff, so when my mom expected something they would come through with it, and they didn't give her a lot of problems, um and I think it scared my mom that I I don't know like had my own mouth*

The above narrative sets up both Bella's self definition of herself as an autonomous subject, as well as her experience of being the object of her mother's fears and anxieties. Bella's awareness of her mother's desire for her to be "like her", and her mother's fear that she may have her "own mouth" indicates the body's function in holding the fear of separation and 'otherness'. In a closer look at the mouth, it seems fitting that it is Bella who uses this phrase. The mouth is the seat of many desires, the first being at the breast. In Bella's introductory narrative, the overall anxieties surrounding desires was evident. Hagglund and Piha (1980) describe how the oral cavity forms the prototype of an inner space because it is connected with the stage in which the narcissistic drive and object are still undifferentiated. Bella's awareness of the fear of having one's own mouth speaks to the fear of an independent object.

The ideal body in the mirror

Lemma (2010) describes the individual ideal body as being shaped not only by broad cultural standards, but also importantly by meanings attributed to the body by significant others. Examining the mechanism of idealisation, Lemma (2010) emphasises its connection to identificatory processes. Lemma explains that it is through idealisation that a person invests an other with the power to make the self perfect. Through this promise of perfection, the self is placed in an identificatory relation to other. Linking the pursuit of the ideal to the first, and most important narcissistic injury, Freud commented: "What man projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood" (Freud, 1914, p.94). Lemma (2010) explains the anxiety evoked by coming to terms with the fact that it is only through the "(m)other-as-mirror" (p.78) that one can either discover or rediscover an image of ourselves as ideal. She explains the inevitable

realisation that the person who can bestow on us an image of the self as ideal is the same person who can withdraw it. It is this realisation, explains Lemma, which confronts the self with the separate existence of the other. Importantly, it is ultimately how the self manages the separateness and autonomy of the other that determines the vicissitudes of identification.

In the following excerpt from Abby, it is as if she has to 'admit' to me a forbidden experience of pleasure in receiving confirmation from her boyfriend that she 'looks fine":

> *Um, as horrible and disgusting as it sounds, it's almost like a little stamp of validation, that you look fine and it's just ok (small laugh) um especially if you constantly have that reinforcement from from him I guess, um which is which is terrible to say - I'm not saying I wasn't happy without that, but it does, it does obviously change, in that way, I think, um…*

In her boyfriend's eyes, Abby finds an image of herself which pleases her. Yet she is reluctant to admit that her self esteem is raised by her boyfriend's "validation". Considering the connection between the self as ideal and the relationship to the other, Abby's reluctance to admit dependence on the other may reflect her anxieties about the role of dependence in her relationship with her mother. Abby's core narrative reflected concerns about the fragility of her mother, especially in Abby's recent effort to gain independence. The above quote suggests, however, that Abby may also worry about the fate of the self in the absence of the other's admiring gaze.

In a seeming reversal of roles, in Claire's descriptions of interactions with her mother it is Claire who serves the mirror function, not her mother. The following was said during an explanation of how Claire tries to help her mother in selecting an outfit for a function. She describes how her mother tries on an assortment of clothing but never feels satisfied. Evident in the following is the mis-attunement between mother and daughter and the tension that exists in giving and receiving confirmation.

> *…and I just get tired of playing mirror, so I'm like ok fine, wear whatever you want to wear. (pause) So she says she wants my opinion but I'm never sure how much she really wants it.*

In Claire's efforts at providing a mirror for her mother, it may be possible to imagine that she is trying to provide an alternative way of seeing her mother, and in so doing hoping to find a different reflection of herself. Failing in her effort to help, it appears that she surrenders unwillingly to the idea that her mother will select clothing independently, without consideration of her point of view. Also in the above quote we see that Claire's relationship to a separate person who can 'take in' what she offers remains ambiguous. In the same way, Claire's earlier elaborate descriptions of her

distaste for her mother's cooking suggests that Claire may also resist taking in what her mother offers. Not finding what she desires in her mother, Claire seeks alternative mirrors through professional belly-dancing performances in which she finds her ideal-self mirrored in the eyes of her observers.

> *…with the whole belly dancing thing it's nice to be the centre of attention because you know everyone is looking at you in a good way, so there's no like ambivalence about it. People who aren't looking at you in a good way probably don't want their husbands or boyfriends to be looking at you*

Earlier in the interview Claire described how she would stay with a dancing teacher until she became "gatvol" because they told her she was not "perfect". As a belly-dancer, Claire enjoys the opportunity of having a 'non-ambivalent' experience of seeing herself reflected in the other's eyes. The image she sees is one of pure good, uncontaminated by the bad. The above quote further points to Claire's internalised female objects as critical and envious- two words with which she describes her mother. The wives and girlfriends in the audience, becoming imbued with Claire's projections of a critical maternal presence, become resentful and cannot experience Claire "in a good way".

Comparisons of the body between self and (m)other

Traditionally in psychoanalytic literature, the genitals have been identified as providing the basis of girls' reactions and phantasies upon which gender identity is built (Kestenberg, 1982; Mayer, 1995). Balsam (1996) argues to broaden the territory of primary femininity to include the whole exterior of the body, not just internal and external genitals, as the basis for "female-to-female body comparison" (p.402). According to Balsam, the young girl's perception of the mother's pregnant body critically affects the developing body image of the daughter and contributes to her eventual gender role identity. Balsam (1996) highlighted the ubiquity of same-sex body comparisons in her analyses with adult female patients. Balsam was particularly struck with the regularity with which these comparisons concern the form and shape of body exteriors. Additionally these contrasts are invariably imbued with affect, such as envy or triumph.

> ""How do I occupy space as compared to other women?" seemed the underlying question as an originator of feelings, fantasies and memories that sharpened in the transference. "How do I shape up?" is a preoccupation that implies built-in comparison. "How is my body like my mother's?" is a question for a girl that encodes a present and future of changing shapes. I suggest that the questions, "Who's pregnant, who was, and who is not?" are a special unconscious dimension" (Balsam, 1996, p.423).

Balsam (1996) reminds her reader that comparisons with the mother are not necessarily confined to actual experiences of mother's pregnancy, but instead represent "a wider scope of female preoccupation with the female body potential in general" (p.427). Given the absence of explicit information regarding the interviewees' experiences of actual pregnancies, it was necessary to implement this more general approach. In line with Balsam's findings, references in the narratives to own and other women's bodies mainly concerned the 'outline' of the body. It became apparent in the interviews that the six young women's awareness of the contours of their bodies is especially heightened during awareness of surveillance. Whether observing the body of another, or alert to the possibility of being observed, the shape of the subject's body falls under scrutiny. Bella spoke of the anxiety of others' gaze:

> *…like when people are looking at me, I'm like oh my god! They've noticed, my tummy is like protruding and my jeans are so tight…*

Claire spoke about seeing other women's bodies as a cue to inspect her own appearance:

> *…if I see someone else who isn't aware that their you know their top's rising and their pants aren't fitting them properly, then I'll check mine…*

It seems that Claire's observation of the other prompts her awareness of her physicality. For Becky, the changes in her body meant changes in how she is perceived by others. It is important that when other people look at Becky they see a woman's body, and not "just a girl".

> *I just started realising that my body is changing…it's made me feel, I am, I'm transitioning from being a young adult, if you, if I can say that, into a woman, like woman, like people can look at me and say that's a woman and not just a girl*

Becky's words illustrate the idea that what cements the transition into womanhood is not simply biological changes but in addition, she must be seen to be a woman.

Jade refers to the ease with which she perceives the weight changes of other women:

> *…I notice when other girls have gained or lost weight. Like it's an automatic. Like I can just see it. When they've lost weight I'm like "wow she looks so good"…*

Jade's comment seems to capture the essence of how women 'size up' the shape and outline of other women's bodies. The body is constantly something that can be measured and assessed just by 'looking'. Throughout life, "the body never escapes from the imprint of the other through the other's gaze" (Lemma, 2010, p.27). For Becky, having the body perceived by others reinforces her evolving self-definition. In the comments of both Bella and Claire, it is possible to detect the

particular sensitivity concerning the abdominal region. Reactions to the contours of the abdomen, Balsam (1996) argues, retain the affective qualities of early unconscious phantasies involving the mother's body. Rooted in the Kleinian and object-relations tradition, the primal scene, as well as the mother's body cavity and its occupants, play an important role in the child's development. For Klein (1928), unconscious phantasies first arise in relation to the mother's body as the source of both male and female part objects. Klein (1928) noted the primary envy that is directed to the maternal breast and womb and its phantasised contents. In adulthood, these early affective states concerning the discovery of the mother's body are then projected onto other shapes of women, usually with an undercurrent of comparison.

Of the six interviews, four included references to pregnancy. The following section of the analysis will examine such instances in relation to the mother-daughter dynamic that emerged in the interview. In Jade, Claire, Dawn and Bella's mentions of pregnancy the core relational theme, as outlined in the introductory narrative, is clearly reinforced. While Jade described worrying that she will put on weight when she is pregnant because her mother put on weight, Dawn relays her mother's concern for Dawn not to have a teenage pregnancy like her mother. For Claire, her reference to pregnancy appeared in relation to her experience of her body while belly-dancing:

> *It's nice because, I don't know, it's, it's the one time I don't have issues with my belly, like, it's like the one time that I can show my belly off and not think about, I don't know, how it looks, pregnant, or how it's muffin-topping over the sides of my pants, or anything like, it's the one time it looks, good.*

The above reference to her belly 'looking' pregnant is again typical of women's sensitivity to the convexity of the abdomen. A psychoanalytic understanding allows us to wonder also about the possibility that in Claire's desire not to 'look pregnant' she hopes to find the possibility of escape from the relentless criticism of her internal mother. Later on in the interview, Claire was asked about her mother's relationship to her (the mother's) body. Claire answered:

> *Not good. She doesn't like her body. I think cause she doesn't like her life, and her body she can have some sort of control over, so.. she doesn't have a good relationship with her body at all.*

The above comment closely followed Claire's reflections on her mother's effort to build her body confidence. However, despite her mother's compliments of her body, Claire only has "one time" in her life in which she feels free to embrace her body. Through active reveling in the belly, Claire

finds the inner permission to have a more fulfilling relationship to the body than her mother has been able to experience.

The Socialised Body

Body discourse and the self

It is in the following section of the analysis that it is particularly evident how, in developing their identities, people utilise culturally available resources in their immediate social networks and in the wider society (Frosh et al., 2002). Hollway (1984) argues that any attempts to explain how subjectivities are formed "requires an account of the investment that a person has in taking up one position rather than another" (p.238). This section looks at the powerful dominant social representations of the body and explores the early developmental processes that may account for the positions taken by the interviewees as they negotiate them.

Many of the social discourses upon which the women rely became evident through their implicit expectations for the interview. Having all read an information letter prior to the commencement of the interview, each woman knew that I was investigating the body in relation to the mother-daughter relationship. Nowhere in the information letter was "body image" mentioned, yet many of the interviews were at times steered by the anticipation that I wanted to discuss body image. Of particular interest was that many of the women predicted that I was trying to confirm the hypothesis that mothers are "to blame" for their daughters' poor body image. Taking into account my preexisting assumptions keeps open the possibility that I portrayed this message implicitly through my questions. In this way, both interviewer and interviewee may have contributed to this idea being "alive" in the room. The following analysis looks at the way the young women reacted to this notion as it became present in the interview process.

Both Claire and Jade were quick to tell me that their mothers are not one of "those" mothers. Claire expressed relief that her mother does not make critical comments about her body:

> *I watch other people with their moms, and like their moms make certain comments which I'm glad my mom doesn't make.*

For many of the interviewees, it was important for them to communicate that their mothers are not responsible for their concerns with the body. Having "ruled out" the mother as a potential source of

body concerns, many of the discussions turned to the standards of beauty portrayed in the media. For most of the women, they described the inevitability of being influenced by these standards despite recognising that the standards themselves are "unrealistic". Dawn captures this sentiment when she describes the conflict between wanting to accept herself 'the way she is' but also wanting to conform:

> *…well you're always gonna actually conform somehow to those standards but there's that time when you reach a point of self-acceptance, but unless you reach that point you'll always want to uh measure up those standards and so on…*

Dawn's approach, similar to the others', reveals how she draws on two conflicting yet simultaneously available social discourses - one that says she should make peace with who and what she is, and the other that dictates a particular yardstick of beauty and desirability. For Dawn, like the other women interviewed, the negotiation of this conflict is influenced by individual dynamics, made up of how she relates to herself and to others. Dawn consistently emphasised that she has to reach the "point" of acceptance on her own terms, without ever alluding to the possibility of help from the outside.

Like Dawn, Becky speaks about the happiness within herself as ultimately overriding society's expectations. While this attitude represents a common social discourse, what is significant for Becky is that her mother does not share this view. Becky spoke often of "figuring things out" on her own. Talking about the dominant portrayal of women in the media, Becky said:

> *I do think a lot of it is very unrealistic, um, ya, it's very unrealistic, um I do I do also think that I think it depends how you've grown up, and how you think it affects you, I'm sure everyone goes through a trial and error stage and then they finally make up their minds on how to live, what to wear what to eat…*

Early in the interview, Becky described her mother as a "drama queen" who pays much attention to her appearance. Becky, on the other hand, describes herself as more relaxed about such things. In the above quote, Becky acknowledges that while she has taken up a different stance to her mother, she is also aware of the possibility that she has been influenced by her at the same time. Implicit in her statement is the idea that your upbringing can mitigate the effects of the "unrealistic" media representation of women.

In Bella's musing on societies' expectations, the voice of her "inner mother" is strikingly identifiable. Bella describes the conflict she experiences in deciding how much of the "societal pressures" she is willing to absorb:

Ya and I think about that a lot, and like why are we so obsessed about the way that we look, and do we have to value ourselves through other people's eyes? And I don't like that I've become like that, ya it's, so now I'm supposed to I'm trying to find my own identity within myself, and what I'm comfortable with, not necessarily what I'm supposed to be, which I'm not sure what I'm comfortable with now, it's just you know one of those transitional periods, so that's why I say confused, because I'm trying a bit of this, and trying a bit of that, I don't know, ya (small laugh)

For Bella, succumbing to society's pressures is experienced as a weakness. Wanting to be comfortable "within" herself may reflect Bella's fantasy of self-containment, of not having to rely on the gaze of the other to find a desirable image of herself. When I asked her to elaborate on what she means by "trying a bit of this and bit of that", Bella explained that "it all depends on the environment I'm in". She described how her style of dress and even attitude will change depending on which group of friends she is with. Searching for an identity that feels comfortable, Bella is experimenting in identification with a range of 'others'.

In Abby's descriptions there is further evidence of the pull to overcome societal standards. Throughout the interview, the idea of "priorities" was weaved into her narrative. Abby positions herself firmly as someone for whom appearances are not a priority. In the following quote, Abby presents the notion of being overpowered despite the effort to circumvent cultural pressures.

... this perfect image is sort of in in the media, perfect image of what a woman, or a man should look like, um, and I think even though even though one tries as much as one can to not be like that, I think everyone tries to be like 'No! I don't have to be like that', in the end it does sort of affect you.

In an assessment of her influences, Abby differentiated the media's messages from the more immediate environment of her friends:

I don't really know, I cause I often think of where do I get my influences from, about how do I want to look, how do I want to do my hair, how I want to dress, and it's often my friends not really you know the the media as such, I I don't buy products that are, that are advertised really (small laugh) I'll buy products that people have told me are good, you know…

While Abby positions herself outside of the wider influences of the media, she feels comfortable in disclosing her susceptibility to the influence of her friends. Abby seemed to ascribe certain superficiality to the desire to achieve a certain standard of beauty as dictated by the media. As discussed above, "coming to peace" with the body is seen as a more valuable and important endeavor. Aware of the possibility of being evaluated as 'shallow', most of the girls drew on the

importance of ‘looking after’ the body as opposed to merely making it ‘look good’. While Jade and Abby explained their eating and exercise habits as a way to keep “healthy”, Dawn and Becky explained the value of “taking care of the body”.

Both Jade and Dawn further differentiate the goal of “looking good” into those who strive to be beautiful for “others” and those who do it “for themselves”:

> *I’m probably a bit more superficial than my mother is. Um, like she, I, like I do care what other people think. My mother doesn’t care, like she likes to be like thin completely for herself.*

> *…and when you are at a stage whereby you look at yourself and you say that this is me, and I’m fine with who I am, and if you do exercise, and you say that I am exercising it’s ok if I lose weight and I want to be healthy and you buy clothes and so on…and you do your hair just so that you do look good and so on, and it’s not about somebody else*

Wanting to “look good” for “somebody else” is deemed more superficial than if you want to appear beautiful for ‘yourself’ seems to be a way of splitting. It appears that in this split, the women can make a distinction between self-imposed and other-imposed measures standards of beauty. In this way, the integrity of self-determinations is preserved, despite acknowledgment of outside influences.

Both Claire and Jade were eager to tell me that while they are conscious of their weight, they are not “sick”. Drawing on the possibility of cultural stigma associated with body-image disorders, both girls attempted to differentiate themselves from ‘those’ girls. Claire clarified her assessments of her body image:

> *But I don’t see myself as like overly huge, you know, or, I don’t think I have one of those mirror-image issues. It’s just, I know where I want to be, I’m just not there.*

In the following quote, Jade’s identification with her friends serves to normalise her relationship to her body:

> *I don’t look in the mirror and think oh I’m fat. And I have two friends that are exactly the same as me, like small people, not like huge, but also put on two or three kilos and get uncomfortable. So we relate well, because, like we don’t think we’re obese. Like we know we’re not. Like we’re not sick.*

While both women admit to wanting to lose weight, they do not classify their concerns as constituting "real" body issues. They draw on stark social divisions to identify themselves. While other women have real pathologies, their problems are within the "normal" range.

Appetites and the transitional space

Winnicott (1951, 1971) explicitly makes the link between cultural experience in adult life and the "transitional phenomena" of infancy. More specifically, he describes the capacity to engage in cultural experiences as originating in the space that emerges between the mother and infant for play. Boris (1984) discusses fusion in terms of the lack of a 'not me' and 'not you' space. Making use of Winnicott's (1971) idea of the transitional he says, "the transitional space is like a buffer, a neutral zone between two bodies (as if a demilitarised zone) which makes room for the play of imagination and the apprehension of reality – both". For Winnicott (1971), subjectivity is deeply imbued with cultural experiences and at the same time our cultural experiences reflect our anxieties and desires. The following section investigates the ways in which the young women enact upon their bodies as a means to engage symbolically in this space.

As discussed in the literature review the body can be used as an interface where the potential conflict between cultural and personal desires is mediated. The narratives of the six women I interviewed exposed the many different forms that this mediation can take. What I hope to show in the following section is that the nature of their relationships with their mothers informs, to a significant extent, the manner in which their appetites are enacted. While reflective of the current cultural value of thinness, the narratives also exposed the variety of forms in which food serves as a symbolic representation of underlying anxieties. Where food was raised as an issue, this involved themes of control and power.

Dawn expressed concern that she is often tired and struggles to keep awake during lectures. Concerned that people will not look past the psychical exterior, she explained her fears that her lecturers would perceive her as an uninterested student – an inaccurate description of her sense of self as motivated and ambitious. As outlined in her introductory narrative, Dawn experiences her "outside" as merely a manifestation of the more important 'inside'. In her battling of the fatigue, it seems that her body is letting her down. Because of this, she finds other ways to gain a necessary experience of control over her body:

> *I've got this problem, um, I struggle to keep awake, um, it's like my body's always pushing me to sleep…you know this morning I wanted to wake up and I couldn't, it takes me like two hours to get out of bed, and um, so that that lack of control is a bit of a problem sometimes, you just wish that you could wake up, like other people do wake up…so it's a bit of a problem if you can't have control over your body, and because of that, a lack of me being able to control the sleeping, it makes me wanna control other things, like what I would have to control, like if I say that I'm not gonna eat that I'm not gonna eat that.*

Dawn recognises that her relationship with food is mediated by other areas of her life. It is important for Dawn's mind to triumph over a body that can sometimes be experienced as a betrayal of the self. In Dawn's pursuit of a stronger sense of self, food is thus used as a tool with which she engages the battle between her "inside" mind and her "outside" body.

For Jade, the consumption of food sways between strict control and reckless indulgence. She explained at the outset of the interview that she "diets" for about three weeks of the month and she "binges" for about a week. Jade explains the psychological and bodily sensations during her "binges":

> *Like it's just, I don't feel full. I just eat and eat and eat and eat until finally I actually feel sick. And I'm like ok, on Monday, I only start diets on Monday.*

Jade's narrative told the story of food as a forbidden object of pleasure. The paradox of this forbidden object is that it only contains pleasure if it can be controlled. But if the forbidden object is allowed its own authority, the pleasure is lost:

> *I find I actually enjoy eating more when I'm on diet, like the food actually tastes better. Like when you're not on diet and you're just eating whatever you want, nothing tastes nice, nothing's enjoyable. You just eat. Like I really feel like I'm eating for the sake of eating. Because I'm not getting any pleasure out of it. I'm eating because I can.*

What is telling in the above quote is the different guises of control. She eats 'because she can' and 'whatever she wants'. But eating whatever she wants comes at the expense of enjoyment: "nothing tastes nice". Underlying the dramatic changes is Jade's tug-of-war with the object forbidden to her. It is interesting to note the early separation from the mother's breast may be experienced by the infant as out of her orbit of control, and in this way gratification may be felt to be forbidden to the self. Will Jade let the object be autonomous or will she be the one in control, and how is the experience of pleasure accessed? As discussed in the opening section of the analysis, Jade may fear the experience of separateness from the maternal object. Perhaps her relationship with food reveals the same dynamic at work.

For Bella, there was also a telling link between her relationship with her mother and her current relationship with food. Early on in the interview, Bella provided a descriptive account of her mother's enactment around food. When I first asked Bella to describe her mother, her answer was as follows:

> *She's very ladylike. Um, she's like a Barbie (small laugh) um she's also very tall, she has a really good body, she takes care of herself a lot, um, she's very conscious of her actions…she doesn't go out a lot but she likes to entertain, and when visitors come over she'll, like she'll make a big grand meal but she won't eat, like she'll go to the table and she'll serve everyone blah blah blah make sure that they eat and she'll just walk up and down the kitchen and I realised that my mom has like one meal a day or something, cause she's just so busy caring for other people, and she takes a lot of pride in being a mother and a grandmother, like just being needed is very very important for her I've noticed.*

As evident in the above quote, food is treated quite markedly as a symbol of love and nurturance. If one eats, then one is the recipient of care. Her mother forsakes food in the service of others. Bella's mother is "so busy caring for other people" that she does not eat. What is also evident in the above quote is that Bella recognises that her mother's taking care of others is to some extent fulfilling her "need to be needed". Also evident in this quote is the association of food with that which must be denied to the self. With regards to her relationship to food, Bella explained how her appetite for food has changed over the years:

> *…when I was in Matric, I did a lot of sports back then but I didn't eat, like I ate like a bird…I didn't like food much, and once I started having sex I enjoyed indulging, in food and like in good tasting things, I just started having such an indulgent little like appetite for good things, like sex and food.*

As discussed above, Bella's mother's religious stance permeated the family atmosphere. Sex was not spoken about in the family home except in expression of the value of abstinence. When Bella moved out of home, she began to experiment with her sexuality and expressed in the interview a sense of freedom in this rebellion. What manifests in the above quote is that Bella's engagement in sexual activity - a contravention of her mother's values - provoked her appetite for food. Food and sex are both physical pleasures which in her mother's eyes should be denied to the self in the service of others or in the service of religion. As Bella transitions to her adult life, she is experiencing confusion about whether her fulfillment of her desires will be the same or different from her mother's. Bella's narrative exposed a great level of confusion as she experiments with her identifications with her mother. Her rebellious period has been followed with a recent appreciation

of her mother's view. But the overall standing of identity appears precarious – the internalised mother seems to invoke much ambivalence and confusion for Bella.

The raced body

Embarking on this research project, the primary aim was not to formally compare the experiences and narratives of black and white participants. However, due to the dearth of research of this nature in South Africa, it was important to keep open the possibility that race might play a role in how young women experience the relationship with their bodies and their mothers. Purposely choosing to include both black and white women in the sample allowed the opportunity to observe the raced body as is played out in the interview process. When issues of race were raised, both the content of the speech and the manner in which it became part of the dialogue were central in exploring their significance.

In line with the overall finding that the mother-daughter relationship took up relatively more 'space' in the interviews than the body, the notion of race was not a salient feature in the material. However, the analysis pointed to two pertinent observations that bear importance to understanding both the specific role that race may play in the identities of the young women I interviewed, as well as nature of the research process itself. Firstly, the notion of race, or more specifically, the colour of one's skin, featured only in the interviews with the black participants. The second observation is that in two of these interviews I introduced the notion of race into the discussions. This was unplanned on my part and played itself out subtly through the use of my questions. The following is the question that I asked Becky early on in the interview:

> *…if you could think of how in your family and specifically in your relationship with your mom, how do you think bodies in general are understood? The colour of your skin, the shape of your body.. What role do you think it plays?*

Reflecting on this question in the context of the interview process as a whole, it appears that my preexisting assumptions of what I expected to find were at work. This question reveals that I was expecting that the "colour of your skin" and the "shape of your body" would matter in her relationship with her mother and with her body. Possibly aware that these expectations had not been met so far in the interview, I unintentionally phrased the question to guide the answer in a particular direction. Becky's answer to this question did not engage with the topic of colour or shape:

Mmm, what role (long pause) *kind of like it's yours, you own this, you own it, kind of like you need to look after it, um like, your body will kind of show the life that you live, I don't know, if you understand?*

Looking at the above answer in the context of Becky's entire narrative may suggest that she is here unconsciously speaking to the question of a raced body. Becky's answer reflected her feelings about bodies as possessions that require great care because they can reveal important aspects of the self. For Becky, both the shape of her body and the colour of her skin have been important in setting her apart and establishing her core experience of feeling 'alien'. Later on in the interview Becky spoke about her experience of feeling different:

I think it's from a lot of things, not just my body, like um, I think going to, being the only black person in an all-Afrikaans school, I think that was really hard, being a foreigner in the country, that was even harder.

Going back to her answer to the question I posed, it seems possible that when Becky said "I don't know if you understand" she was pointing to the potential difference in experiences that we have of being white and back. For Becky, her blackness in the context of her life has been important in how she has come to experience herself as an outsider. The colour of her skin means that she cannot help but reveal important aspects of herself through her body.

For Dawn, the topic of race was introduced by her during a discussion about her ideas of the different components that make up a person. Dawn had emphasised the notion that there is an "inside" and an "outside" of a person. The colour of one's skin belongs to the "outside" component:

Um, I feel like it, well, like I said, I feel like you know people look at you with what they see, you know and it's your body, it's the colour of your skin, it's your eyes and whatever, and from then on you get like that impression, like you get impressions like uh she's black, she's a woman…just by looking at the body, and um, I think like in terms of friendships or whatever or relationships, you choose people because of their body, not realising that there's more than that, you know, there's that uh emotional one, spiritual one, like how is a person inside…

In the "impression" of people looking at her, Dawn lists the perceptions starting with "she's black" and then followed by "she's a woman". In Dawn's imagining of the other's appraisal of her, the colour of her skin and the fact of her blackness are foregrounded. The colour of Dawn's skin is experienced as an integral aspect of her "outside", and a part of the self that cannot be changed. The above quote also reveals Dawn's fears that her "inside" will not be acknowledged. Only after

Dawn's interview did I became aware of how frequently the discussion revolved around the non-personal. As mentioned previously, Dawn freely offered opinions and attitudes around the topic, but revealed little of her personal experiences. At one point in the interview, the discussion turned to the influence of the media. At this point again, Dawn speaks openly about the positive changes she sees in the presentation of wider variety of role models in the media and the potential for these changes to impact the experiences of women.

> *it's changing…there's another alternative that the minority or that group that has always felt inferior can actually feel that you now what I am also beautiful in a way, and I can also accept myself for who I am, it's ok to be like this, ya.*

Reading Dawn's words, I was struck again by the way in which we both steered clear of talking about what it has meant for her to be part of the category of women who have "always felt inferior". Her fundamental attempts to locate and recognise a sense of self manifested in the way in which the topic of race was approached. Similarly to Becky, Dawn is aware that she reveals aspects of her self through her body. But Dawn appears concerned that she will be identified as more than just a "black woman".

Importantly, at no point in the interviews with the white women did the topic of race emerge. This is a descriptive example of how whiteness as a privilege remains tacit in its manifestations. McIntosh (2003) writes about the ways in which racism as a topic is framed to depict blackness as a disadvantage, but the corollary of this – the advantages of being white – continues to be underplayed. In the same way, the colour of her skin is not a foregrounded aspect of the white woman's identity. The interviews revealed that this is not the case for the black women of this study.

What has been addressed here is the notion that race can have important effects on the way that women relate to their bodies. What is also apparent is that each woman's personal dynamics will bring to bear influence on what effect race will play in her identity. The implications of the above finding draw attention perhaps to her limitations of the current research focus. This will be looked at more closely in the conclusions of the report.

CHAPTER 5:
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion and conclusions

Aims and structure of the discussion

The aim of this discussion is to consolidate the analysis, taking into account what the study set out to explore and the subsequent development of the research questions. The discussion also aims to locate the findings of the research within a broader conceptual debate concerning the "self, mother, body" triangle. The first, and major, part of the discussion looks at the three broad themes that emerged in the analysis in relation to literature reviewed. Conclusions are drawn bearing in mind the extent to which the findings of the current research align with an existing body of knowledge. The discussion concludes by looking at the possible theoretical implications of the report. Through an integration of the findings, the current research may suggest new ways of understanding the triangle of self, mother, and body.

During the initial stages of conceptualising the topic of the research project, I was interested in the particular "shape" that the body takes in the mother-daughter relationship. As a young woman myself, I have spent a lot of time thinking about my relationship with my body and how this important relationship has been influenced by my relationship with my mother. Having also spent many hours in conversation with female friends and family members, I have come to know that the body takes on a particular, and peculiar, significance in regard to the mother-daughter relationship. I was interested to know if I could translate this personal experience into a research project, and in the end say something general about the triangle consisting of self, mother and body. However, when I interviewed the young women who constituted my sample, I was confronted with narratives that did not align with this previous personal experience. I found myself confused by the multiple and ambiguous ways in which each interviewee understood her mother's influence on her relationship with her body. Some of the women I interviewed had never posed this question to themselves. For those who had, the answers surprised me. After sitting with the confusion and trying to think through it, I came to see that the confusion was not as a result of any

misunderstanding, but rather, it was a manifestation of the inherent complexity of the triangle. Once I understood this, I could set out to explore the nature of this complexity.

Me and my mother

The analysis under this section was broken down into an investigation of separateness, the internalised mother, and how maternal identifications affect the young woman's transition to adulthood. These themes all call attention to the well-rehearsed notion that the mother-daughter relationship is important throughout the life-cycle, and that the early processes of separation and individuation are never fully complete (Flax, 1978). The women I interviewed all revealed that the process of individuation – of finding a unique identity detached from their mother's – is an ongoing process. This conflicted process was also shown to influence, both consciously and unconsciously, various aspects of their lives. The interviewees all grapple with how they, as adult women, will be both like and unlike their mothers, and how they will manage to become autonomous and yet stay connected. This ongoing tension that exists in the simultaneous desire for separateness and closeness permeated the interviewees' narratives.

A twenty-year-old female patient of Flax (1978) commented:

> "My mother's worst fantasy is that she will end up like her mother. My worst fantasy is that I will end up like my mother, and I know that as soon as I have that fantasy, I am already trapped" (p.171)

This quote encapsulates the inescapable reality that women face, "knowing that one's life as a woman must inevitably reflect upon the life of one's mother" (Chernin 1986, p. 37). While Flax's patient had insight into the vicious circle that characterises her struggle of wanting to be "different" from her mother, many of the interviewees in the current study remain unaware of their "trappedness". The interviews communicate a common navigation of the conflicts between similarity and difference, between proximity and distance. For the young women I interviewed, recognition of the independence of self from other, and of other from self, invokes primitive fears concerning the capacity to survive without the other. These anxieties have profound implications for the way each woman *is* in the world.

The interview material also revealed the significance of the young women's relation to her mother as an *inner* presence. The analysis looked at how the daughter is both the recipient of the mother's projections, and at the same time the projector of disowned aspects of her self. The decision to

interview daughters in the absence of their mothers offered the opportunity to explore the internalised mother. The interview material confirmed Dalsimer's (1986) observation that the relationship to the inner maternal presence is altered and reexamined throughout the lifecycle, and that it remains an integral part of the female psyche.

In the section "Maternal identification and the transition to womanhood", maternal identification emerged as an important guiding force for the interviewees' transition to adulthood. The analysis exposed how the young women's various identifications with their mothers inform and complicate their experience of their own sexuality. The fulfillment of her own needs and desires is so difficult because it reminds the daughter of her separateness from her mother. Negotiating the ongoing process of separation means the adult woman is faced with differentiating her mother's desires from her own in order to fulfill her own needs as an autonomous self.

You, me and my body

The analysis of the body in relation to self-and-other distinctions was divided into the themes "Whose body is it?", "The ideal body in the mirror", and "Comparisons of the body between self and (m)other". From the outset it was understood that it is a physical connection that characterises the early mother-daughter bond, and that the body is important in the infant's recognition of herself and mother as separate (Marcus, 2004; Notman, 2006; Shapiro, 2006). It is in this bedrock of physicality that the very first projections, internalisations and identifications begin to take shape, and the analysis of the material explored how these early physical processes of connection and separation manifest in the life of the adult woman.

The interviewees offered rich material in which to see the depth at which the relationship with the mother and the relationship with the body are interwoven. From the earliest physical union with the mother, the infant engages with her body in order to understand that there is both an inside and outside. In this way she begins to recognise the possibility that the mother may be a separate person "outside" of her self. The young women expressed a variety of ways in which the enactment of the body is used, often unconsciously, to distinguish self from other. Lemma (2010) emphasised that the experience of "being-in-body" can never be divorced from the primary fusion with the mother. The women's narratives brought this idea alive, by showing the difficulties the young women faced in coming to terms with a body that is at once boundaried yet permeable to the other.

In the analysis of the "Ideal body in the mirror", the findings pointed again to the notion that, as an embodied self, one can never escape the imprint of the other through the other's gaze (Lemma, 2010). It is in this gaze that the paradox of the self-other relationship is experienced: the gaze of the other reminds us that we are both connected to, and separate from, the other. Recounting experiences from their childhood, the interviewees spoke to the enduring interaction between the mother-daughter relationship and the daughters' experience of the body. The interviewees could all remember how, from a young age, they had an awareness of how their mothers perceived their bodies. What was compelling was that in these reflections, it was the relationship with the mother that was foregrounded, and not the relationship with the body.

The interviews also called attention to the prevalence of bodily comparison among females. Confirming the findings of Balsam (1996), the interview material included many examples in which these comparisons concern the shape and form of body exteriors. Instances of anxiety about the body in the narratives were imbued with the notion of being both an observer of other female bodies and the body being observed. The narratives of the women all contained references to concerns about being seen or watched, with some also making references to visual aspects of the pregnant body. Balsam (1996) interprets such comparisons as a "preoccupation with the female body potential in general" (p.427). Once again, Lemma's (2010) observation that the body can never escape the "imprint of the other through the other's gaze" (p.27) is pertinent is borne out.

The socialised body

The analysis in this section examined the dominant cultural discourses that permeate women's experience of their bodies, and explored how the individual attaches her own meaning to these social influences. The interviewees' experiences of their bodies allow for individual meaning-making in the face of powerful social standards – standards that mediate how women understand themselves as female and as possessors of a female body. The female body is thus a crucial site at which much of the negotiation between the inner and outer takes place.

In her argument for the use of psychoanalytic concepts as being important to understand the psychosocial subject, Flaake reminds us that the inner life of a person contains a "potential for resistance to the social given" (p.202). This idea became important in exploring the ways that the interviewees engage with social norms around the body. The narratives revealed different ways of resisting, or accepting, the social given. The analysis attempted to explain how each woman's

specific relational dynamics, in particular her relationship with her mother, influence the way she "takes in" the "outside" (Baker-Pitts, 2007).

The section "Body discourse and the self" pointed to the various, often conflicting discourses that women draw on in their relationships with their bodies. The narratives revealed how identifying with, or rejecting, certain social standards, is important in how the women identify themselves. This section of the analysis, which built on the previous parts of the analysis, exposed how early, fundamental self-identifications influence a woman's interaction with the prevailing social norms. In the analysis of the narratives it was made evident how the interviewee's salient self-identification and object relations shaped their attitude towards dominant portrayal of the ideal female body. This has important implications for how we understand the influence of dominant representations of women. Pervasive as they are, these influences are neither uniform nor self-evident.

In "Appetites and the cultural space", Winnicott's (1953, 1974) notions of the transitional or potential space became useful in understanding how the interviewees enact upon their bodies symbolically. While reflecting the cultural value ascribed to certain physical criteria, the narratives also exposed the ways in which eating and food can serve as a symbolic representation of underlying anxieties concerning the self and other. Where food was raised as an issue, these narratives often contained references to issues of control and power. These findings echo Winnicott's assertion that the achievement of transitionality – accepting the paradox of being both joined and separate from the object – is the foundation for meaningful cultural engagement. The findings suggest that the negotiation of an autonomous self influences the way in which women relate to appetites, which, as shown throughout the report, play a powerful role in the differentiation between self and other.

Selecting both black and white women in the sample allowed for the opportunity to observe the role that race plays in how young South African women experience their bodies. The section "The raced body" was conspicuously difficult to formulate within the context of the research questions. Race was at once salient and marginal in the interview material – sometimes conspicuous by its absence. It did not feature at all in the narratives of the white women, but surfaced in the interviews with all of the black women. Twice though, this was prompted by me as interviewer. The presence and absence of race in the narratives, as well as the process through which race emerged, speak to the insidious and subtle ways race can affect identities, often in ways that remain unspoken. The findings also remind the reader that I had played a part in co-constructing the narrative. As a

female and a white person, I entered the interviews with preconceived ideas about the ways in which race may shape one's identity.

Theoretical implications: Confronting the triangle

The extent to which both psychoanalytic literature and "pop psychology" have looked to the mother to explain women's experiences of the body became evident to me during initial surveying of available literature. However, most of the explanations I encountered seemed to imply a neat causal relationship between a mother's role as parent and model, and her daughter's experience of the body. On the other side of the explanatory spectrum, cultural theorists look to dominant social influences to explain women's attitudes to their bodies and to the body in general. The notion of "the media" now connotes a powerful and somehow impenetrable force that regulates and governs women's relationships with the body. According to this view, women are passive recipients of the prevailing social order and its constructs. Both of these causal accounts – "mother-blaming" and "media-blaming" – are readily employed to understand the female experience of the body, and more specifically to account for the ubiquity of women's body-image concerns. From psychological and sociological perspectives, such theories are popular for the ease with which they identify "the problem".

The narratives of the women interviewed in this study paint a very different picture. The analysis of the interviews became a difficult task as I attempted to separate out "self", "mother", and "body" while acknowledging the interaction of personal and cultural forces. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, and in particular, object-relations theory, it became manifestly clear that the reason for this difficulty lies in the fundamental enmeshment of these three constructs. From the earliest development of the person, both mother and body are constantly absorbing meaning for the female self. This fact – that meaning and significance are attached to both mother and body – is generalisable, and well documented. However, as the narratives in this study highlight, such meaning is multiple and highly personal. My research supervisor, in a conversation I had with her concerning the significance of this triangle, described the mother and body as "points on a compass". I have included this analogy here for its illustrative power in describing how our individual meanings absorbed by these "points" guide the self on its course of self-identification. This report demonstrates how early self- and (m)other-differentiation lay the foundation for later experiences of the transitional space between self and other.

It is here that Winnicott's ideas of what constitutes the transitional space are instructive in how they illuminate understandings of a self immersed in a wider system of "others". He foregrounded the fact that a culture can never be understood as existing separately from the people in it. Our cultural life, and indeed the social discourses that mediate how lives may be lived, can always be seen to reflect personal processes. He illustrates this paradox in this now famous quote, in which he reminds us that we cannot ask whether the infant created the breast or it existed already:

> "…it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question, "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without"" (Winnicott, 1971, p.14)

In the same way, we cannot ask of young women whether they construct their personal and cultural realities or whether these exist independently of the self. This is because we both create and find the (m)other. We both create culture and are created by it. The paradox, as Winnicott reminds us, must be tolerated. It is this paradox that makes neat causal explanations of the "self, body, mother" interaction unhelpful, necessitating a complex and dynamic approach.

Limitations of the current research and implications for future research

While interested in the particulars of human experience and social life, qualitative research aims to draw conclusions that are not merely situational (Elliot et al., 1999). Although commonalities within and across similarly located inquiries can be drawn, the ways in which the findings may have been influenced by the particulars of the women interviewed must be noted.

All six participants, as students of a higher education institution, can be assumed to represent a more privileged sector of the population. This fact may have had bearings on the findings of the study. Future research may therefore be directed towards an understanding that includes of more marginalised groups of women. There are not many precedents to build on in this regard. Lesch and Kruger's (2005) *Mothers, daughters and sexual agency in one low-income South African community* study explored the relationship between experiences of sexuality and the mother-daughter relationship in female adolescents from a low-income community in Cape Town, South Africa. This study is one of the few formal investigations in a South African context that looks at the mother-daughter relationship and its effects on the daughter's experience of the body. However, this study did not adopt a psychoanalytic lens but used social constructionist ideas as the foundation of the investigation. More studies that investigate the interplay between psychic and

social forces may thus be useful in a South African context. It would also be important to expand the use and application of psychoanalytic concepts across a more diverse range of women.

Lesch and Kruger's (2005) study called attention to the prevalence of sexual health problems such as HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy among young South African women from low-income populations. Their study found that the mother is a powerful agent in the young woman's constructions of her sexuality, and that the mother often contributes to her daughters' limited sense of sexual agency. A broad topic for future research, therefore, could be how to combine the theoretical implications of the current research with studies such Lesch and Kruger's (2005). Such a combination could have important implications for understanding the underlying causes of these common South African phenomena.

While this study left open the possibility for comparison of raced narratives, it was not the central focus of the research. Future research could be directed towards a more extensive investigation of the notion of the "raced body". Future studies may foreground the ways in which race influences young South African women's experience of the body, particularly as understood within the mother-daughter relationship.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Good morning/afternoon,

I will be asking you some questions to guide the interview along. Please feel free to answer only the questions that you want to. If something comes to your mind that I have not asked, please feel free to mention it to me.

Let us begin by talking about the body:

- What comes to mind when you think about the body?
- How would you describe your relationship with your body over the years?
- What comes to mind if I ask you to tell me about your body today?
- Can you tell me about your relationship with your mom?
- Can you think of any stories that show how you and your mom spoke about bodies?

The following questions will be used as prompts if the above questions to do not elicit lengthy narratives:

- What do you remember about your relationship with your mom from when you were growing up?
- How do you think you and your mom are similar or different?
- If I ask you to think about your mother's body, what comes to mind?
- If your mom was with us in the room today, what kinds of things do you think she would say if I asked her how she feels about her own body?
- If your mom was with us in the room today, what kinds of things do you think she would say if I asked her how she feels about your body?
- Can you tell me what you know about your mom's mom? What was/is their relationship like?
- What stories does your mom tell you about her childhood/ about her mom?
- Where did you grow up?
- How many siblings do you have?
- What was it like growing up in your home?

- What sorts of activities were encouraged in your family?

APPENDIX B:
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

School of Human and Community Development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559
Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Cara Browde, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is that of young women's experiences of the body, and how the mother-daughter relationship is viewed in relation to these experiences. The mother-daughter relationship has long been recognised as key to understanding feminine identity. For most women, their relationship with their mothers remains important throughout life. The research will explore how a young woman uses her body, as well as her relationship with her mother, to construct her feminine identity, and how these two forces interact. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by myself, at a time that is convenient for you. Interviews will take place at the Emthonjeni Centre on East campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. The interview will last for approximately one hour. With your permission, the interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and you will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study.

Once each interview is completed and transcribed, your name will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym in order to ensure strict confidentiality. No information that could identify you will be included in the research report. The recordings will not be heard by any persons other than me. The written transcripts will not be seen by any other persons other than me and my supervisor. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

Results will be reported in a research report, and possibly published in academic journals. A summary of the report can be made available to you upon request.

Upon completion of the study, the digital recording and transcripts will kept by me for a period of two years if publications should arise from the study, or alternatively for six years if no publications arise. During this time the digital recordings will be kept in a password protected computer and transcripts will be kept safely in a locked cupboard on the university campus. Thereafter raw data and transcriptions will be destroyed.

Participation in the study entails neither direct benefits nor risks. Although not anticipated, if participation in the interviews should noticeably distress or upset you, you will be debriefed during or after the session and given necessary details for accessing free counseling services. Both LifeLine and the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) provide confidential counselling and debriefing services available at no cost or

reduced student rates. The contact number for LifeLine is: (011) 728-1347 and the contact number for the CCDU is (011) 717-9140.

If the process of the interview makes you aware that you would like to explore further your relationship to your body and/or your mother, you may contact the CCDU for individual psychotherapy provided to students at reduced rates. The CCDU can be contacted on (011) 717-9140.

If you choose to participate in the study please fill in your details on the form below.

I can be contacted telephonically at 011 646 0501 or via e-mail at cbrowde@gmail.com
My supervisor, Professor Carol Long, can be contacted telephonically at 011 717 4510 or via email at carol.long@wits .ac.za

Kind Regards

Cara Browde

APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW AND RECORDING CONSENT FORMS

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Cara Browde for her study on the self and the body within the mother-daughter relationship. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- Participation in the study entails neither risks nor benefits to the participants.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- Direct quotes may be used in the research report.

Signed _____

I _____ consent to my interview with Cara Browde for her study on the self and the body within the mother-daughter relationship being tape-recorded. I understand that:

- The digital recordings will not be heard by any persons other than Cara Browde.
- The transcripts will not be seen by any persons other than Cara Browde and her supervisor.
- Prior to and during the analysis the digital recordings will be kept in a password protected computer and the transcripts will be kept safely in a locked cupboard so that only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to them.
- Upon completion of the study, the digital recording and transcripts will kept by me for a period of two years if publications should arise from the study, or alternatively for six years if no publications arise. During this time the digital recordings will be kept in a password protected computer and transcripts will be kept safely in a locked cupboard on the university campus. Thereafter raw data and transcriptions will be destroyed.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed _____