



Female Beauty Evolved: A thematic analysis exploring body image and life satisfaction amongst mature women.

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ABSTRACT

Considerable research suggests that body image influences individuals psychosocial functioning, however limited research observes this in relation to life satisfaction. This qualitative study aimed to explore how older women perceive their body image through personal experience of life satisfaction. Previous literature on body image focuses on a younger demographic (Grogan, 1999). Therefore, the present study explores body image from a grandmother demographic. The epistemological framework for this research is social constructionism. To create an account of different perspectives, feelings and experiences, five individuals who were over the age of fifty and a grandmother were recruited using an opportunity sample. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis. Four highlighting themes were elicited: 'Changing Perceptions of Beauty', 'Bodily Changes', 'Sociocultural Pressures on Ageing' and 'Engagement in Physical Activity'. These findings suggest that older women's perceptions of their body image may have an impact on their life satisfaction. Limitations of these results are discussed in full.

KEY WORDS:	BODY IMAGE	LIFE SATISFACTION	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM	SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	THEMATIC ANALYSIS
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Introduction

Context of the research

As individual elements, body image and life satisfaction are two thought-provoking and fascinating concepts, within psychological research. However, there exists a gap in previous literature, which explores a combination of these two experiences together. To develop an understanding of these two concepts, an insight into personal experiences is appropriate. The existing research into these two separate phenomena's has overlooked those of an older age group, specifically grandmothers. Therefore, the present research is significant as it aims to add to previous literature around body image and life satisfaction, whilst exploring older women's personal experiences.

Body Image

A definition of body image, created through ones attitude towards themselves combined with personal experiences of embodiment, comes from Grogan (2007) who defines body image as a person's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about their own body. The concept of body image relates to both an individual's mental ability and evaluation of their appearance in which these elements influence their behaviour (DiGioacchino, Sargent, & Topping, 2001). There is a large body of literature around body image, however many previous studies focus mainly on individuals between the age group of 18 to 25 years old (Grogan, 1999). For example, Tiggemann (2004) found that there are numerous changes that occur in the female body, which have an impact on women's attitudes towards their appearance. However, this specific study focuses on those of in a college age group and there is a lack of information around age effects. Further research is needed into this area. The current study aimed to fulfil this gap in literature by exploring an older women's perception of embodiment.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be defined as 'a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria' (Shin and Johnson, 1978:478). In relation to this, individuals are constantly comparing themselves to one another when assessing their body image; therefore, this has an impact on their personal perception of appearance. Diener et al (1985) created the satisfaction with life scale; consisting of a multi-item scale to measure life satisfaction, which examined various aspects in life contributing to overall satisfaction. This method allows judgement on individual's standards of life satisfaction. However, it is understood that additional research is needed for a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between life satisfaction and influencing factors. For this reason, the current research conducted in-depth interviews to collect detailed data around body image and life satisfaction.

Developing from this, Stokes and Frederick-Recascino (2003) conducted a study on the relationship between body image and happiness in mature women. Their sample consisted of one hundred and forty-four women with the average age of forty years old. Findings suggest that body image plays a huge part in the level of life satisfaction that

women experience. Nevertheless, this research does not offer an understanding of this conclusion from an older women's perspective. Therefore, the present study fills this gap in literature through the exploration of grandmother's experiences. More specifically, previous literature indicates that a major contributor linked with body image and life satisfaction is exercise. Hausenblas and Fallon (2006) carried out a meta-analysis to examine the impact that physical activity has on body image. Results indicated a more positive perspective on body image for those of engage in exercise. This research is relevant in the study of body image and life satisfaction, however, it stems from a quantitative approach. Therefore, the present study focused on a qualitative approach, satisfying this gap in literature.

Body image and ageing

Body image plays a huge factor in female's well-being (Cash & Fleming, 2002); however, this research has focused mainly on European American women of a younger demographic (Poran, 2006). Therefore, the current research embraces the experiences of older women, in particular grandmothers. Previous research indicates that participants reported a more positive attitude towards their body satisfaction as they aged (Oberg and Tornstam, 1999). Similarly, Runfola et al. (2013) also conducted a study examining body satisfaction on females over the age of 50 who reported an increase in body satisfaction. Both these findings suggest that as females age increases, they become more satisfied with themselves. Developing from this previous literature, more recent research from Hurd (2000) analysed unstructured interviews of women between the ages of 61 and 92 to explore their perceptions on their ageing bodies. Conclusions illustrate that older women are encountered with challenging elements in regards to maintaining their self-appraisal. Additionally, participants claimed that health had a higher significance than attractiveness for the ageing process (Hurd, 2000). Likewise, Mangweth-Matzek et al (2006) carried out a quantitative study to examine attitudes towards the body from an elderly women's perspective. Results exposed that over 60% of participants stated body dissatisfaction. These findings conflict with earlier research and suggest that in more recent years, females were less satisfied with their body image as they aged. However, quantitative studies do not explore the participants experience in depth; therefore, these results may be less accurate than qualitative findings. There are numerous factors that may be influencing this change over the years, such as an increase in social media; a major platform for comparing appearances in today's society.

A theory to develop an understanding of body image and ageing is gerontology. This can be defined as 'the study of the biological, psychological and social aspects of ageing' (Hooyman and Kiyak, 2008:3). Moreover, an area within this is social gerontology, which refers to both ageing and social constructions around this; including attitudes and how these have an impact on the elderly. A study to explore the strength of relationship between growing old and life satisfaction was conducted over a period of eight years, using multiple growth models (Gana et al., 2012). A significant factor that arose from the results was age and the link that this has to each individual's life satisfaction. For example, Mroczek and Spiro (2005) found an increase in life satisfaction of women between the ages of sixty and seventy; this then began to

decrease. Evidence to support this comes from Berg et al. (2009) who established a decline in the level of satisfaction within women over the age of eighty. This research adds relevant information to the body of literature around ageing and life satisfaction, however the present study aims to develop this further and focus on grandmothers experiences as this may have an impact on individuals happiness.

Theoretical Framework

A large body of theoretical research exists, which assists in the understanding of embodiment and ageing. Social identity theory has an emphasis on individuals social selves; the selves which ascend from association with social groups and categories (Rogers, 2003). Groups, which provide individuals with a sense of 'belonging', are inclined to have psychologically benefits for that person. They boost one's self-esteem and act as a safeguard for their well-being (Haslam et al, 2009). In regards to body image and social identity theory, there has been a lack of research in previous literature to the connection of these two factors. This current study aims to fulfil this gap in literature by exploring individuals understanding and meaning of their body image in a social context.

Grogan (1999) states that even though body image has been researched for many years, only recently has the topic been linked to social construction. Social constructionism follows a postmodern stance and contradicts the views of realism, suggesting that as a society we construct our own ideas around reality and construct our own facts (Burr, 2003). Body image research, which investigates into individual's thoughts, feelings and perceptions towards their appearance, measures the construction of satisfaction through society's ideals (Kates, 2007). In regards to cultural standards and body image, there are conscious expectations of what the female body should look like. However, the majority of studies used to support this ideology consists of a younger demographic sample. Reasoning behind this being a limitation is that it lacks an older women's interpretation, which will most likely be a completely different perspective than that of a younger female. Grounded within the epistemology of social constructionism, interpretative feminism can be used as a means of understanding how women perceive their bodies in a social context (Clarke and Griffin, 2007). This theory spectacles 'meaning' of the female body in relation to society and the world we live in. Attributing factors to the social context in which the female body is exposed consist of social media, interactions with others and beauty principles (Bordo, 2003). Today's generation has been brought up through a heavily, media influenced platform which influences people's expectations of the beauty concept. Therefore, to fulfil our desire of understanding body image and life satisfaction the present study focuses on these experiences through a social constructionist perspective.

Current Study

Since existing research focuses predominantly on the younger generation, the present study aimed to explore older women's perceptions of body image in relation to life satisfaction, through their own personal experiences; specifically focusing on grandmothers as this is an under researched demographic (Poran, 2006). Numerous

theories has previously aimed to explore body image as a phenomenon, including objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). However, the present research is underpinned by core theories of social constructionism.

Research Question: "How do older women perceive their bodies through personal experience of life satisfaction?"

Methodology

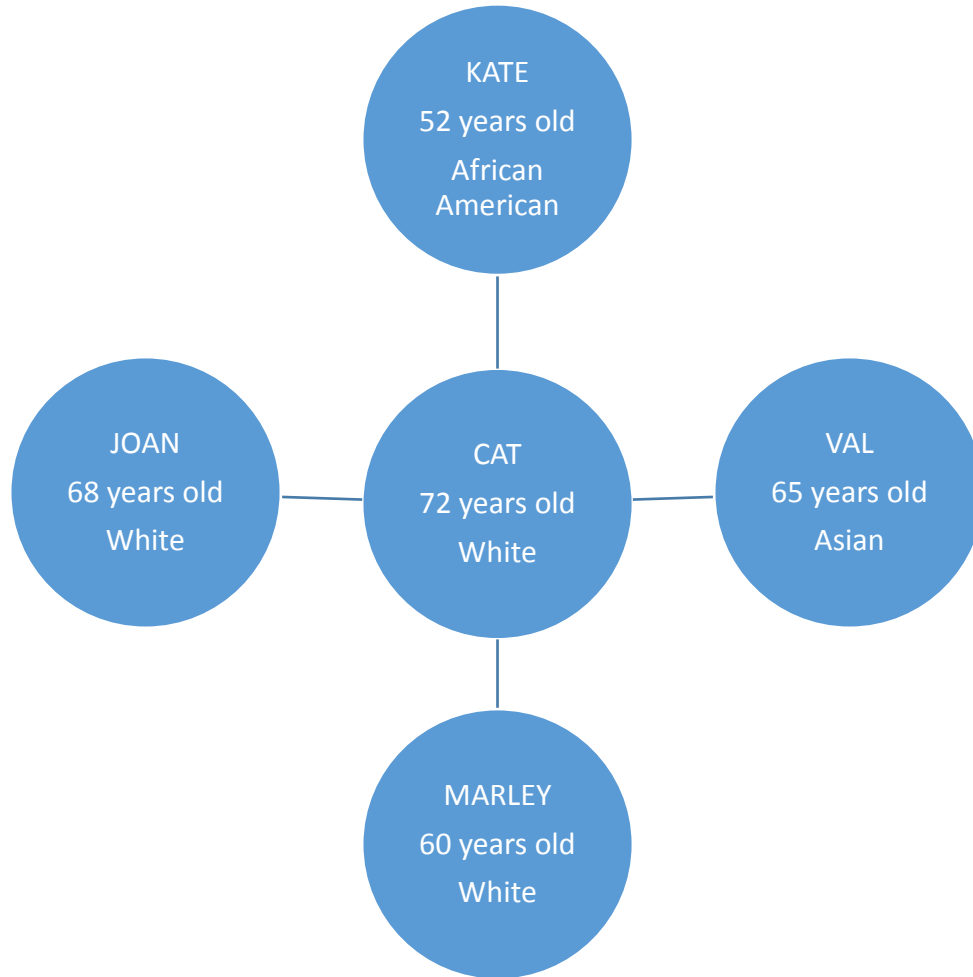
Design

A qualitative approach was most appropriate to explore how older women perceive their bodies through personal experience of life satisfaction. Qualitative research can be defined as data, which signifies a representation of the participant's feelings, thoughts and emotions (Quinlan, 2011). Through exploration of these factors, qualitative research aims to understand the individual's perspective, which is significant for this study. Rather than offer participants an assumption to respond to, which is often the case in quantitative methods, the use of qualitative methods allows exploration of a more complex picture of their own experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research has a natural openness and flexibility which allows modification on the design; leading to the pursuit of new relationships and discoveries (Maxwell, 2012). Due to the present study wanting to explore older women's perspective on body image and life satisfaction, this method allowed the researcher to develop a deep understanding of participant's personal experiences.

Participants

In order to collect rich data, it is important that chosen participants can provide relevant information around the topic (Lapan et al. 2012). For the current study, a sample of five females who were over the age of 50 was interviewed. In order to differentiate this study from existing studies, these females belonged to the grandmother demographic. To ensure a high level of representativeness, a variety of both age and ethnicity was used for the sample to develop understanding from different experiences. Participants were chosen through an opportunist sample, considering they met the research criteria of age fifty plus and a grandmother (appendix 3). This age group was chosen because until recently, research into body image has mainly focused on the younger demographic (Lewis and Cachelin, 2001). Due to the nature of the study, it was essential to have a full understanding of the participants experience; therefore, a small sample size was used to achieve in-depth data (Behan, 2015). All participants were aware that the study had gained ethical approval (appendix 1) from Manchester Metropolitan University Psychology Department and followed the 'Codes of Ethics and Conduct' ethical guidelines from BPS (2009).

Figure 1. Characteristics of Participants



Data Collection

Due to the study exploring older women's experiences, individual semi-structured interviews were chosen to build conversation with participants and gather the most effective data. Semi-structured interviews allow freedom around direct questions, which can raise conversation on topics not previously considered (Sullivan et al., 2012). This implicates an element of structure throughout the interview; however, leaves room for flexibility. The researcher designed an interview schedule (Appendix 7) for guidance focusing on both body image and life satisfaction, which was constructed around previous literature. However, the schedule was very broad to allow room for elaboration. Before the interviews took place, all participants received an invitation letter (Appendix 3) and signed a consent form (Appendix 5). After permission was granted, the interviews were conducted within a quiet, safe environment at Manchester Metropolitan University and recorded using a Dictaphone. On completion of the interview, participants were given a debrief sheet (Appendix 6) containing the university

counselling service contact details encase they were affected by any of the questions asked.

Data analysis

After data was collected, it was transcribed onto a password-protected computer, which can only be accessed by the researcher. Anonymity of participants was kept by using pseudonyms. NVIVO was used to support the researcher in transcribing and managing the data. NVIVO is a computer software, developed from QSR International, which consists of a wide range of tools used in assisting data analysis (Bazeley, 2007). This software allowed the researcher to organise all of the data together and explore any reoccurring themes or codes, which were then categorised. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the proposed study as this is the most effective method in regards to identifying hidden meanings within a transcript (Guest et al, 2012). Thematic analyses go further than the proposed phrases and look more into 'identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data', which is referred to as themes (Guest et al., 2012:9). A theme 'captures' significant elements relating to the research question and is continuous throughout the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The findings of this research developed additional, undiscovered literature in regards to body image and life satisfaction combined, from the experiences of older females. 'Thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework seeks to theorise socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions that enable the individual accounts that are provided' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:14). Therefore, this is relevant to this piece of research as it focused on a social constructionist viewpoint.

Analysis & Discussion

The application of thematic analysis established four key concepts manifested within the data. These fundamental themes encapsulate an understanding of grandmother's experiences of life satisfaction through perception of body image. In this section, the analysis of qualitative data aims to answer the research question: "*How do older women perceive their bodies through personal experience of life satisfaction?*" Four key themes were revealed: 'Changing Perceptions of Beauty', 'Bodily Changes', 'Sociocultural Pressures on Ageing' and 'Engagement in Physical Activity'. There were no evident differences between participants of different ethnicities. A range of all participant's quotes is included under each theme.

Theme 1: Changing Perceptions of Beauty

In response to questions on perceptions of beauty, participants exemplified a change in this over the years. The majority of women described this ideology of appearance versus health. Discussions revealed the importance of health to elderly and that this is a priority for them in relation to body image and life satisfaction. There was a general

relationship between the physical state and appearance of the body and the majority of women's perceptions of beauty are now focused on their well-being and contentment.

The following quotes support a previous study exploring beauty norms, which found that older women believe that their physical health is more vital to them than their physical appearance (Hurd, 2000). They suggest that ageing is a beauty in itself.

"I think that you would need to be healthy, because if you are not healthy then this could reflect on your image and mean that you are not going to look as good. So yeah, for me satisfaction is a combination of being healthy and also looking good"
(Marley, line 21-24)

"Health is key for me. Especially as you are getting older. If you do not have good health, you do not have anything. You never need to worry about this when you are younger as most people are usually fit and healthy. Therefore, that is why many girls focus mainly on their appearance – even if it is risky to our health!"
(Cat, 22-25)

Changing perceptions of beauty can be influenced by many social factors, such as the perceptual developing layers of social media. Media plays a huge part in many aspects of today's society and it is a dominating area within body image concern. Elderly, as a developed generation, may have various beliefs and attitudes towards appearance as they experienced life without influencing elements such as the internet or magazines. However, women are now expressing how these factors have an impact on their principles and choices. This may be due to the constantly evolving viewpoints of demographics exposed to increased types of media at different stages of life and shifts in image standards:

"Especially for us older women, when I look at a magazine and see, say a twenty-one year old model, with an amazing figure. I think to myself, I never looked like that even at that age, never mind now!"
(Val, 11-13)

Contrastingly, not all women exhibited a change in their perceptions of beauty after ageing. One participant states that she has always felt the same way about her appearance and is very beauty orientated; this is not something that has altered for her during ageing:

"I have always been very conscious of the way I look. Even when I was younger, I wanted to put a full face of makeup on before I left the house. I enjoyed having my nails and hair done – this made me feel good. I have always had this mind-set, really"
(Cat, 12-14)

Theme 2: Bodily Changes

Changes in the ageing body was a dominating area through participant's experiences. This key theme was evident through quotes about how older women's appearance is increasingly difficult to maintain and requires higher upkeep due to changes in their bodies. Sabik et al. (2012) states that changes which occur in the body through ageing, such as overall functioning and appearance, has an impact on the well-being of older individuals. Bodily changes can be separated into two subthemes:

(a) Natural bodily changes

Women referred to facial transformations, through ageing, to lower their self-esteem, which in turn played a huge impact in their level of life satisfaction. Macia et al. (2015) explores the relationship between the ageing body and stigmas around this. Findings suggest that when females reach the stage of developing wrinkles and grey hairs start to appear, this influences their attitudes towards their body image in a negative way. The following extract offers a contrasting view of how older women feel about their bodies in two different time frames:

"I think when you get to a certain age you feel a bit... when you're getting older you em, there are things that happen to your appearance such as your wrinkles become more visible and I believe that you need to do more things to keep up your appearance as you get older"

(Marley, 16-19).

"...you get up in the morning and you look in the mirror, and it is not the women that you want to see. It is just some old women that has suddenly taken over and the smile has then gone off your face"

(Joan, 40-42)

"I think when you are younger you always look better anyways because your skin and your appearance was better"

(Marley, 30-31)

(b) Active bodily changes

This subtheme refers to active changes that older women take as a way of 'keeping up appearances'. They are active participants in the process of treatments or procedures used to enhance their body image. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) states that there is a large number of individuals who change something about their body at some stage in their life. Supporting evidence of this comes from two participants in the current study, which is almost half of the sample:

“To enhance my body image I regularly have beauty treatments every 2 weeks I have my hair dyed as I am going grey every 3 weeks and I get my nails done. I ensure that I have my legs waxed when needed...”

(Cat, 28-30)

“A few years ago I had a breast reduction because I was suffering from back and neck problems”

(Kate, 20-21)

There was a strong relationship between health issues and life satisfaction, in regards to ageing. Participants develop on their idea of body image from a physically functioning perspective and state that this has a huge impact on both their happiness and everyday lives:

“I have been attending hospital quite a lot recently due to my health not being as great as it used to be. Therefore, I felt down during this time and did not feel like I looked like myself, I looked drained and my appearance was not great”

(Cat, 50-53)

“I had knee surgery two years ago and this dramatically affected how I felt about myself. I had to have a replacement, which meant I could not leave the house for a few weeks.

This really got me down and I could tell I put on some weight within this month, as I could not leave bed”

(Cat, 80-84)

In comparison to this, some women discussed ageing in a positive way. This supports successful ageing theories (Baltes and Lang, 1997) which views ageing in an optimistic way and believes that women’s bodies may improve with age. Studies from Oberg and Tornstam (1999) and Runfola et al. (2013) report an increase in body satisfaction, as women grow older. The following quote captures this phenomenon:

“Nobody can love you until you love yourself. I am satisfied with my body and this is what makes me happy. Being content in myself. The older you get the more knowledge you acquire and this in itself improves your image, in my opinion”

(Val, 85-87)

Theme 3: Sociocultural pressures on ageing

This theme focused on pressures that elderly face from society. Today’s society has created a negative image on older women due to expectations of beauty. These expectations are established through the image of a younger generation that is heavily influenced by the media (Palmore, 1999). This concept is associated with social

constructionism. Due to this stereotype of what an ideal woman should look like, females then construct themselves around reality and expectations. They are constantly surrounded with 'media-generated images' which they use to build meaning within the social contexts that they live in (Gamson, 1992). All women believe that there is a sense of comparison between themselves and unreality or youth. For instance:

"There is lots of, I think, younger people that kind of look at magazines with very slim models and things. (Pause)... and they are given an image of what we are supposed to look like at a certain age"
(Joan, 15-17)

"I do think I am constantly comparing myself to the beautiful images that, in reality, are not real. They have all been airbrushed to look that good!"
(Val, 14-16)

"I believe that if it were not for the media then we would not have an ideal figure to compare ourselves to"
(Val, 10-11)

The following evidence supports a study from Yoo (2013) who examined the relationship between socio-cultural values and appearance in women. Results from this research found that body image is a dominating influential factor between socio-cultural values and an individual's appearance.

"I do not believe that this idea of body image is something that comes from within really. You know, the world around us is giving us rules and then we kind of have to abide by them"
(Joan, 20-22)

"Well I think body image is (pause) kind of forced upon us rather than something that is in your head. I think the image is something that is manufactured. Em, and I don't think that really just for older people I think that body image is forced upon younger generation as well"
(Joan, 3-8)

"...how others see me, reading my magazines for ideas on how to improve my looks such as what makeup to wear, what styles to wear my hair, top tips on my body figure and then trying to use some of these ideas to make me feel and look better"
(Val, 4-6)

Body image and nutrition was an area acknowledged by participants throughout the interviews. They established how the media and society is dominating the food industry and creating this idea of what an 'ideal body' is. There is a stereotype that in order for women to be satisfied, they must become diet experts:

"I have recently purchased 'Lean in 15' which is a cookbook filled with healthy eating recipes. I do believe I was heavily influenced to buy this due to the 'craze' of eating healthy and when you get to my age this is something which society makes you believe you should keep at the core of your mind as your body is a temple, and all that!"
(Val, 80-84)

"I enjoy cooking healthy nutritious food and enjoy sourcing ingredients for recipes as I am body concise about not becoming over weight. This probably stems from the whole idea of healthy idea on social media which is drummed into our minds"
(Cat, 90-94)

It is theorised that individuals' opinion on what is attractive, may be influenced by environmental factors (Tovée *et al.*, 2006). Numerous participants conversed about how images within the media and influential people have an impact on their daily routine:

"...body image means a lot to me really at my old age. I think this is influenced by today's society. All of these images of young models, looking amazing kind of forces this idea upon us that everyone should look this good. All of the time. I would never think of leaving the house without makeup in this day and age"
(Kate, 7-10)

"Most of the time I feel comfortable about the way that I look whether I decide to dress up or dress down or choose to put makeup on or not but sometimes depending on my surrounding I can feel out of place as if I have made too much effort or not enough effort"
(Cat, 34-38)

Grogan (1999) proposes that as women age, they adjust their attitudes towards their bodies to more age-appropriate concepts, which supports the idea of a stable satisfaction throughout the life span. Some participants developed on this evidence, suggesting that their choice of clothing has been influenced since they have entered the grandmother demographic:

"Since becoming a grandmother I am a little bit more conscious of my image as to being more age appropriate in the clothing that I wear as sometimes have to ask my children if

what I've bought is acceptable for me to wear and that it's not too trendy. My concept of appearance has changed from on-trend to appropriate"
(Kate, 55-58)

"I think you know like sometimes I go into the shop and I hold and I look at something and I consciously say is that suitable for somebody of my age. Now, my age really should not have anything to do with it. It should be how I feel and what have you. (Pause) But unfortunately I do not think that is how it works"
(Joan, 10-14)

Theme 4: Engagement in physical activity

Physical activity was a shared topic, which occurred throughout the interviews. All participants believe that engagement in exercise is important for both body image and life satisfaction. Every woman who was interviewed stated that they took part in some sort of physical activity numerous times per week; ranging from dog walking to a class at the gym. A few of the women enjoyed classes at the gym, those that are appropriate for their ageing bodies. In relation to previous literature, Brudzynski and Ebben (2010) found that an individual's perception of their body image has an impact on the level of physical activity they partake in due to self-evaluations.

"I go to our local gym around two to three times per week, with a friend of mine. It is great to get out of the house for a bit! We love the yoga class they do on a Sunday morning and always go for a wee swim afterwards to cool off – but I guess this too is a workout in itself"
(Val, 38-41)

"I would say that I go to my gym classes and swimming to maintain my body image, as I do love a choccy biscuit every now and again (laughs). I love the sense of achievement I feel after my sessions each week. I love feeling satisfied with myself after completing another yoga class"
(Val, 52-55)

"I have just started doing Pilates recently at the gym. I do find the level difficult but I know it is beneficial for me as it is good for your muscles and stuff. I am glad that I have started, as there are many other women my age who go there. (Pause) Therefore, I have to bond with others my age whilst I am there. It is great (laughs)"
(Marley, 39-44)

The majority of the women saw walking as enough physical activity, due to their age and their bodies not being able to cope as much anymore. When asked if they see physical engagement as an important element in their lives, they all agreed and suggested that this heavily influences their level of life satisfaction as they enjoy getting out of the house and socialising.

*"I like to go on country walks, not only to get some exercise but also to admire the scenery"
(Kate, 66-67)*

*"...now mainly we go on a lot of walks, you know, Jim and I. This is as intense our physical activity gets, our bodies are at that age now that this all that they can cope with. I tend to lose my breath easier now and my legs just cannot seem to keep up. It is quite tiring even to walk to the shop; I never thought I would say that statement!"
(Joan, 58-62)*

*"we are always out of the house. Mostly out walking around the Lake District, we love it up there. We used to be able to go more often a few years ago but we limit ourselves to twice a year now and it is just not as easy anymore"
(Cat, 66-69)*

Dog walking was a common activity for all women, there might be a link here that grandmothers tend to own a dog in which they gain their exercise by walking every day. They perceive this type of activity as physical engagement as it increases their heart rate.

*"Em, well I walk my dog Poppy twice a day, she is ever so cute! However, she does need out once or twice a day to tire her out or she gets very hyper! So I would say this is an activity, yeah"
(Val, 44-46)*

*"...oh and I walk my little dog three times a day which I love because you are out in the fresh air and you are getting to meet different people and have conversations with others about different things"
(Marley, 47-49)*

Health was a key factor when participants were asked about physical engagement. Val believes that it is very important to partake in exercise, especially at her age and there are health considerations which older women are more prone to than youth:

*"I believe that when a women gets older she needs to do things to keep active. You know, help to keep a healthy heart and lower blood pressure, for example. I also try to keep sugar to a minimum for word of diabetes"
(Val, 73-75)*

Critical Evaluation

In today's society, it is essential to develop an understanding of the relationship between body image and life satisfaction, particularly focusing on an older

demographic. There are many influencing factors involved in this phenomenon, which alter throughout an individual's various life stages. This idea of physical appearance being at the forefront of a woman's priorities for life satisfaction, which then changes to physical ability, is of significant interest. Previous research into this area has focused mainly on a younger demographic (Grogan, 1999). Therefore, the present study successfully developed an insight into body image and life satisfaction through the experiences of older women, focusing on grandmothers. Conclusions from this research suggest that body image is an influencing element in older women's life satisfaction. Results indicate that a women's initial perception on beauty alters as she grows older (theme 1). The researcher found that reasoning behind this arises from bodily changes (theme 2) and also sociocultural pressures on ageing (theme 3). Finally, findings show a strong relationship between body image and life satisfaction which stems from engagement in physical activity (theme 4).

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature around life satisfaction and body image. Through exploration of the research question, four key themes were identified which were relevant to the previous literature covered in the introduction. However, there were some limitations that occurred that could be developed on for future research.

Initially, the sample size used for the study was relatively small. Even though qualitative studies do not need as much participants as quantitative, they should still be large enough to gain efficient data from different perspectives (Guest, 2006). This study consisted of five participants; therefore it should be considered that a limitation of the research is generalization as it does not cover a wide range of older women's perspectives. Furthermore, the interviews only lasted around thirty minutes each, which is difficult to develop on an individual's life experience during this time period. Future research in this area could explore a larger sample size to increase validity and increase the duration of the interviews to gain a deeper insight into body image and life satisfaction.

Additionally, this particular study focuses solely on females. Therefore, this only explores the experiences of older women and should not be taken as generalization for elderly. Future research on body image and life satisfaction could benefit from exploring experiences of older men, which is an area which lacks psychological research. In conclusion, the present research was effective in both critically evaluating previous literature and contributing to this through personal experiences of grandmothers.

Reflexive Analysis

I found inspiration and motivation to generate a body image related piece of research due to my level of interest and passion in the area. As a researcher, I wanted to conceptualise older women's personal experiences to gain an insight into a different generation's perspective as I am twenty-two years old. Due to the current research wanting to develop an understanding of lived experiences, a quantitative study would not have been appropriate to gather rich data. Therefore, the nature of the present research adopted a qualitative approach. Reflexivity is a vital element within qualitative research due to the exploration of participant's feelings, thoughts and emotions (Quinlan, 2011). Furthermore, Finlay and Gough (2008:9) state that this method ruminates my 'social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research processes. Within reflexivity, Willig (2014) proposes that there are two different styles consisting of personal and epistemology. In regards to personal reflexivity, Malterud (2001:10) refers to this as 'reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research'. In other words how researchers are affected by their research. Additionally, epistemological reflexivity explores what the research itself aims to find and the stance in which it follows, in this case social constructionism. After conducting several face-to-face interviews, my confidence levels increased alongside developing interpersonal skills that I can use within employability or any future research. To conclude, after actively researching body image and life satisfaction, it is clear that further research is needed into these concepts to develop a deeper understanding of the two.

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