

A Case Study to Explore Women's Body Image Experiences Practicing Hot Yoga

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Abstract

Yoga has been associated with positive body image; however, hot yoga may have differing impacts on body image and embodiment than traditional yoga. An exploratory case study approach was developed, with the research questions being: 1) In what ways is body image related to women's practice of hot yoga? 2) What are women's experiences practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga studio St. Catharines? Ten women were recruited from the studio and interviewed about their body image and experience practicing yoga at Modo Yoga. Women tended to emphasize the fitness aspects of hot yoga, which impacted their body image and undermined some benefits of yoga. However, there were positive effects on body image and mental health as a result of the practice. Overall, hot yoga had a complex impact on women's body image and experience practicing hot yoga through a larger focus on the fitness elements of the practice.¹

¹ *Keywords:* Hot yoga, fitness, embodiment, positive body image, body functionality.

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CHAPTER 1: Review of Literature

1.1 Body Image

Body image refers to the multifaceted psychological experiences of the body's physical appearance and function (Cash, 2004). Body image encompasses body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes, including thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours (Cash, 2004). Body image is influenced by a variety of factors, including sociocultural factors (e.g., friends and family), individual characteristics (e.g., personality factors), physical characteristics (e.g., body composition) and behaviours (e.g., physical activity; Grogan, 2017). Much research has theorized body image as a negative construct focusing on the connections that body image has with negative health outcomes.

Negative body image is characterized by negative thoughts, feelings or behaviours towards the body (Grogan, 2017) and has traditionally been measured by body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction can include negative evaluations of body size, shape, muscularity and weight and is often conceptualized as a discrepancy between a person's evaluation of his/her body and the perceived societal ideal (Grogan, 2017). The perceived ideal for women in Western society focuses primarily on being thin, as well as being young, tall, long-legged, large-eyed, moderately large-breasted, tanned but not too tanned, clear-skinned, and usually assumes White features (Tiggemann, 2011). However, there is evidence that the ideal female body is shifting from having an excessively thin body to one that is also toned, making the ideal even more challenging to meet (Grogan, 2017). It is common for women to internalize the thin ideal, as they "buy into" socially prescribed appearance ideals, express a desire to attain the appearance ideal, and engage in behaviours aimed at meeting those ideals (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

Research has shown that women who consume higher amounts of media depicting appearance-focused messages experience more negative body image (Tiggemann & Clark, 2016). Specifically, media depicting the thin-ideal body may be linked to body image disturbances in women (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Groesz, Levine & Murnen, 2002). Experiencing feelings of negative body image has serious negative implications for a person's mental and physical health and is linked to a variety of adverse health outcomes and behaviors. Specifically, habitual negative body image thoughts can lead to chronic feelings of body dissatisfaction, eating disturbances and poor self-esteem (Verplanken & Tangelder, 2011). In fact, body dissatisfaction is the most robust risk factor of eating disorder symptomology (Stice, 2002). Further, in females, lower body satisfaction predicts an increased likelihood of unhealthy behaviours including cigarette and drug use (Napolitano, Lloyd-Richardson, Fava, & Marcus, 2011; Wild, Flisher, Bhana, & Lombard, 2004), lower levels of physical activity, and less fruit and vegetable intake (Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines, Story, 2006).

1.2 Positive Body Image

Despite the fact that research has tended to focus on negative body image experiences, interest in positive body image has grown. Positive body image has been defined by Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) as a comprehensive love and respect for the body, appreciation of the functions that it performs, acceptance of the body as it is, and embracing aspects of the body that are inconsistent with idealized images. Those with positive body image typically place an emphasis on the body's assets over its imperfections and interpret information in a body-protective manner in order to internalize the most positive information and reject negative information (Tylka et al., 2015). Positive body image has been associated with body functionality in that focusing on body functionality has shown to improve body image and

decrease self-objectification (Alleva, Martijn, Van Breukelen, Jansen, & Karos, 2015; Alleva Gattario, Martijn, & Lunde, 2019). Body functionality includes everything that the body is able to do such as the functions related to physical abilities (e.g., walking), internal processes (e.g., digestion), bodily senses/sensations (e.g., sight), creative expressions (e.g., singing), communication with others (e.g., body language), and self-care (e.g., sleeping; Alleva, et al., 2015). Past literature has shown that focusing on body functionality could encourage individuals to concentrate on the reasons that they have to be grateful for their body, rather than self-perceived deficits towards the body (Alleva, et al., 2015; Mulgrew, Stalley, & Tiggemann, 2017).

Positive body image has unique associations with well-being, self-care, and eating behavior that are not encompassed by negative body image (Tylka et al., 2015). Thus, positive body image and negative body image are thought to be distinct constructs, not merely opposite ends of the same continuum. Numerous studies have reported the various psychological and health-related outcomes that are associated with a positive body image in young women. For example, studies have shown body appreciation to be associated with engaging in healthy behaviors such as intuitive eating (Avalos & Tylka, 2006), lower appearance-media consumption, greater likelihood of screening for skin cancer and seeking medical attention (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, 2016), fewer unhealthy dieting behaviours, and greater intention to use sunscreen (Gillen, 2015). In addition, more positive body image has been associated with mental health outcomes such as lower rates of depression (Gillen, 2015), higher self-esteem and less self-objectification (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). These results suggest that positive body image (and in particular body appreciation) have significant implications for health and well-being.

1.3 Exercise and Body Image

One factor linked to reduced negative body image and increased positive body image is exercise (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clarke, 2016; Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). Across three meta-analyses, it was found that individuals who exercise reported having a better body image than the non-exercisers (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006; Reel, Greenleaf, Baker, Aragon, Bishop, Cachaper & Hattie, 2007; Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). Campbell and Hausenblas (2009) found no moderating effects for exercise duration, intensity or mode, but found that greater exercise frequency per week resulted in a larger effect (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009). Moreover, exercise interventions that met the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) exercise guidelines did not differ in their effect from exercise interventions that failed to meet the guidelines (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009).

Two significant limitations of this research should be noted. First, body image outcomes examined in the meta-analyses were almost exclusively negative, in part because few measures of positive body image (i.e., body appreciation) had been developed when they were conducted. Second, the exercise interventions included in the meta-analyses almost exclusively investigated traditional forms of exercise: cardiovascular training, resistance training, or the combination of the two. However, today other types and forms of exercise, such as mind-body activities and functional exercises, are gaining popularity (Brown & Leledaki, 2010). With these findings in mind, it is important to examine the effects of exercise beyond traditional aerobic and strength training on body image.

1.4 Yoga and Body Image

Since the publication of the three meta-analyses, research has begun to move beyond investigating only traditional types of exercise to examine the effects of yoga on body image. In

general, yoga appears to be associated with reductions in negative body image and improvements in positive body image (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008; Gammage et al., 2016; Bąk-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017). For example, women practicing yoga have reported greater body-esteem and less discrepancy between their perceived ideal and actual bodies in comparison to women practicing other forms of fitness (Bąk-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017). Moreover, women practicing yoga versus other forms of group exercise differed in levels of body satisfaction in that they have shown a higher sense of sexual attractiveness and perceptions of better physical fitness. It is important to note that sexual attractiveness was measured in regards to parts of the body that exercise cannot alter, such as satisfaction with the appearance of lips or breasts, suggesting that yoga does not lead to body image improvements solely through physical changes to the body (Bąk-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017).

Daubenmier (2005) found that yoga practitioners reported less self-objectification and greater body satisfaction, body responsiveness, and body awareness compared to aerobic exercise participants. Women in this study also had fewer disordered eating attitudes compared to aerobic exercise participants. Similar findings were shown with more diverse types of exercise. Prichard and Tiggemann (2008) investigated relationships between different types of exercise (cardiovascular, resistance, and yoga) within the fitness center environment and body image concerns. It was found that time spent in cardio-based activities was related to higher self-objectification and eating disorder symptoms. Thus, women who engage in more cardio-based activities, within a formal gym setting, may be more prone to self-objectification compared to women who engage in the practice of yoga. Moreover, the amount of time spent in yoga was associated with less self-objectification, while time spent in weight-based classes was unrelated to any of the body image variables (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Further, appearance-related

motives for exercise were related to time spent in cardio-based exercise, suggesting that cardio is being used as a way to meet appearance ideals. By contrast, health and fitness motives were linked with time spent in both yoga and weight-based exercise. Together, this literature suggests that yoga participation is associated with improved trait body image.

Gammage et al. (2016) extended these findings by determining that a single yoga class could improve state body image in university women. State body image refers to an individual's body image in the moment, in a specific context or in response to experimental manipulations (Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman, & Whitehead, 2002). Young adult women reported higher body satisfaction and lower social physique anxiety after completing a single yoga class compared to participating in a resistance exercise class. Together, these findings provide evidence that yoga, to a greater extent than other types of exercise, may be associated with better body image, perhaps because yoga participants are encouraged to focus on internal sensations of the body or the body's function, thereby potentially reducing self-objectification. By contrast, cardiovascular exercise which is most closely linked to weight loss and management, appears to reduce internal focus and satisfaction, and instead increase focus on external appearance.

However, despite the research showing the benefits of yoga on body image, yoga does not necessarily lead to improvements in body image. The exercise environment where yoga occurs may be influential for women's state body image. For instance, one study exploring the effects of mirrors on young women's state body image responses to a yoga session found that participants who did yoga in front of a mirror reported higher state social physique anxiety and appearance-related social comparisons than participants who did yoga without a mirror (Frayeh & Lewis, 2018). These authors also found that women's appearance comparisons mediated the relationship between mirrors and state social physique anxiety. Thus, the environment in which

yoga is taking place is important to consider since mirrors have previously been shown to be influential on body image during physical activity (Ginis, Burke, & Gauvin, 2007; Ginis, Jung, & Gauvin, 2003).

A recent qualitative study by Neumark-Sztainer, Watts, and Rydell (2018) is consistent with yoga being associated with both positive and negative body image. They interviewed young adults who had practiced yoga at least 30 minutes per week for the past year and found that yoga was related to both positive and negative body image outcomes. Yoga was perceived as having a positive impact on body image through observed physical changes to one's body (e.g., muscle tone, weight loss), gratitude for one's body and its functions, a sense of accomplishment within one's yoga practice, self-confidence, and observing different types of bodies practicing yoga (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2018). Conversely, yoga was perceived to have a negative impact on body image through comparative critique, such as upward comparisons with others, and through inner critique such as negative self-talk (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2018). Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2018) also found higher weight participants were more likely than lower weight participants to discuss accomplishment within one's yoga practice as having a positive impact on body image and comparative critique as a negative impact on body image. It should be noted that the participants in this study participated primarily in hatha yoga and less than 25% reported engaging in hot yoga. Furthermore, some participants did not participate in yoga in commercial yoga studios, but rather practiced at home, and the majority of these participants reported not noticing any effects of yoga on body image. Thus, the context of a yoga practice may be important.

1.5 Embodiment Model of Positive Body Image

Currently, conceptualizations of embodiment can differ across disciplines such as

psychology and sociology. The current study acknowledges two prominent definitions of embodiment in the context of body image (Piran, 2017). The first defines embodiment as the lived experiences of one's body and the shaping of these experiences by cultural forces (Piran, 2017). Secondly, embodiment refers to an individual experiencing his/her body as comfortable, trustworthy, and deserving of respect and care (Menzel & Levine, 2007). Menzel and Levine (2011) suggested the main constituents of embodiment are more frequent states of mind-body integration, increased body awareness and body responsiveness, an increased sense of physical empowerment and an overall sense of physical competence. Menzel and Levine (2011) also posited that certain types of physical activity (i.e., embodying activities) might be particularly influential for positive body image. Embodying activities are activities in which individuals can express competence, interpersonal relatedness, power, self-expression, and well-being through physicality (Menzel & Levine, 2007). Menzel and Levine (2011) consider that participating in physical activities that encourage the development of embodiment, such as yoga, may cultivate a more positive body image by helping to reduce self-objectification.

Self-objectification is the internalization of an observer's perspective on one's own body and involves treating oneself as an object to be viewed and evaluated based on appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). According to objectification theory, self-objectification results from sexual objectification (i.e., treating women as sexual objects, equivalent to their bodies, rather than as individuals). Self-objectification is manifested in more appearance monitoring, as women persistently survey their bodies to ensure they meet the societal ideal. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) proposed that there are psychological and experiential consequences of objectification. These consequences take place in the form of shame, appearance anxiety, an inability to achieve peak motivational states (e.g., flow), and a lowered awareness of internal

bodily states (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). There are numerous negative health outcomes of self-objectification that have been identified such as eating disorders, anxiety and depression (Tiggemann & Williams, 2011). Thus, self-objectification may both hinder one's ability to cultivate a mind-body connection and diminish awareness of internal bodily states, both of which are fundamental to embodiment and foundational to the practice of yoga.

1.6 Practice of Yoga

As originally defined, the practice of yoga is a system to unite the mind and body for self-enlightenment with goals related to awareness, self-regulation and reaching a higher consciousness, rather than physical benefits (Brown & Leledaki, 2010; Surrenda, 2012). It should be noted that yoga as is generally understood and practiced in North America is an adapted aesthetic form of yoga that followed the colonization of yoga in the 1700's (Berila, Klein, & Roberts, 2016). Yoga was banned by British colonies during this time, dissolving the hundreds-of-years-old traditions and forcing yoga to be reshaped in a way that aligned with the western ideals of a more aesthetic practice. The modernized form of yoga was brought to the West by Swami Vivekananda in the late 1800's, with a large emphasis on physical fitness through body poses (i.e., āsanās) rather than the other limbs (de Michelis, 2005), and continues to be practiced largely as part of individuals' exercise routines.

With this being said, the Hindu philosophy of yoga as outlined by Sage Patañjali in the second century BC is based on the eight limbs (or steps) of ashtanga yoga, which outline a path for individuals to live a meaningful life (Bonura, 2011; Carrico, 2007). The first step of the 8 limbs as we know them in North America is ethical disciplines, known as Yama's (Carrico, 2007). There are five Yama's: Ahimsā (nonviolence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (continence), and Aparigraha (non-covetousness). The second limb is individual

observances, known as Niyama. Niyama involves self-discipline and spiritual observances, such as developing personal meditation practices or making a habit to self-reflect. Thirdly, āsana's are the poses practiced in yoga; importantly the yogic philosophy is that the body is the temple where spiritual growth can take place. The fourth limb of yoga is breath control (Prānāyāma), which consists of techniques to gain mastery over the respiratory processes, while simultaneously recognizing the connection between one's breath, mind, and the emotions (Carrico, 2007). The first four stages of yoga focus on refining personalities, achieving an understanding of the body, and developing awareness towards oneself. These first steps prepare yoga practitioners for the second half of the yogic journey, which deals with the senses, the mind, and attaining a higher state of consciousness.

The fifth limb is the withdrawal of senses (Pratyahara); during this stage the objective is to make a conscious effort to draw awareness away from the external world and outside stimuli by focussing internally (Carrico, 2007). This gives people the opportunity to step back and observe themselves objectively, and to be aware of cravings and habits that may be detrimental to health and likely interfere with inner growth. The sixth limb is concentration (Dhāranā), as being cleansed of outer distractions allows for dealing with distractions in the mind. Practicing concentration precedes meditation as individuals learn how to slow down the thinking process by concentrating on a single mental object; often the silent repetition of a sound, such as breathing, is chosen to begin (Carrico, 2007). Meditation (Dhyāna), the seventh limb, is the uninterrupted flow of concentration. Although mediation may seem the same as concentration it differs in that concentration practices single-pointed attention, Dhyāna is being able to reach a state of being keenly aware while also being without focus. Meditation includes quieting the mind and being able to produce few or no thoughts at all. The last limb of yoga is self-enlightenment or reaching

a state of ecstasy (Samadhi). At this stage, the meditator merges with his/her point of focus and transcends the self-altogether, achieving peace. These eight limbs of the practice of yoga advocate for cultivating the integration of mind and body and implementing ethical behavior towards oneself and others (Brown & Leledaki, 2010).

The practice of yoga has increased in popularity within Western culture. The 2016 Yoga in America survey reported more than 36 million U.S. adults participated in yoga within the last six months, nearly doubling the 2012 estimate. Accompanying this growth in yoga is an increase in annual practitioner spending on yoga classes, clothing, equipment, and accessories, which rose to \$16 billion, up from \$10 billion over the past four years. Notably, women currently represent 72% of practitioners with growing rates of participation by men and older adults (Yoga in America, 2016). The most commonly practiced type of yoga in America is hatha yoga, which combines core elements of āsana (physical postures and movement), prānāyāma (focused controlled breathing), and sometimes a small focus on dhyāna (meditation) towards improving various aspects of physiological and psychological well-being (Riley, 2004).

While yoga has gained in popularity in North America, the approach has significantly changed from the traditional practice. Firstly, the Westernization of the ancient practice of yoga has led to a highly evolved form of yoga typically encompassing only two or three limbs of the practice, the āsanas (postures), prānāyāma (breath control) and, less frequently, dhyāna (meditation; Collins, 1998). Ignoring the other limbs, however, could potentially impact a variety of body image experiences in that aspects grounded in the traditional practice, such as self-realization/enlightenment, and individual observation, are not promoted as frequently without the other five limbs of yoga. Westernized yoga practices seek to teach a more appealing selection of yogic values and behaviors through repetition in postures and breathing exercises, while

automatically implying continuity with yogic tradition (Hobsbawn, 1983).

Secondly, Brown and Leledaki (2010) outline how yoga in North American settings is often evaluated for its scientific validity and physical utility, consistent with a North American approach to health. In the West there is a preoccupation with finding evidence for the usefulness of yoga for the human body. For instance, yoga has predominantly been studied for its usefulness in terms of cardiorespiratory fitness (Hewett, Pumpa, Smith, Fahey, & Cheema, 2017; Papp, Lindfors, Nygren-Bonnier, Gullstrand, & Wändell, 2016), arterial stiffness (Giri Kumar et al., 2017; Hunter et al., 2013), and a variety of mental health disorders (Birdee, Ayala, & Wallston, 2017; Franklin, Butler, & Bentley, 2018). Yoga and mindfulness meditation have increased in popularity as a form of psychotherapy treatment (Brown & Leledaki, 2010). For instance, mindfulness meditation is considered successful in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, depression, and substance use disorders (Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health, 2015). However, predominantly focussing on the scientific utility of the practice undermines core aspects of yoga such as self-enlightenment, and actively creates a mind-body duality. Brown and Leledaki (2011) propose that the Eastern notion of self-cultivation was not initially designed as a therapy, although it has the potential to be applied in clinical medicine. Therefore, although these practices may be used as therapies and exercise interventions, in the East yoga is distinct from therapy because it typically focuses on self-cultivation and improvement instead of focusing on the correction of illness, disease or disorder (Brown & Leledaki, 2011).

Thirdly, in North America, yoga has become an increasingly sexualized form of physical activity. A content analysis of the covers of “Yoga Journal” over the last 40 years shows the increased objectification of the yoga body represented to readers (Webb, Vinoski, Warren-

Findlow, Burrell, & Putz, 2017a). The researchers coded each cover featuring a single female model for pose activity (i.e., passive or active), amount of body visibility, perceived body size, body shape, breast size, skin exposure, and revealing or form-fitting attire (Webb et al., 2017a). The findings showed that cover models were predominately actively posed with high body visibility, possessing either a “thin/lean” or “skinny/boney” body shape, and were “flat-chested” or “small-breasted” (Webb et al., 2017a). Models on more recent covers had even greater body visibility, pose activity, thinness/leanness, skin exposure, and form-fitting attire featured than those on earlier covers. Moreover, many of the images represented one narrow aesthetic, that of a slim and toned build (Webb et al., 2017a), which may promote an unhealthy drive for leanness among vulnerable individuals and may encourage seeking out yoga as a way to achieve this ideal body (Webb et al., 2017a). Further, highlighting only a limited variety of body types may contribute to excluding women who have larger body sizes less consistent with the Western ideal from engaging in the practice of yoga and experiencing the benefits that yoga can provide (Webb et al., 2017a).

These findings were consistent with those in a second content analysis of three Western yoga magazines. This analysis showed that the cover models’ appearances generally conformed to the idealized aesthetic of the mainstream exercise and fitness culture (Webb et al., 2017b). The dominant marketing strategy tended to feature female cover models posed in a variety of high body visibility active yoga poses while only partially-covered, wearing skin-exposing or form-fitting attire (Webb et al., 2017b). By displaying elements of mainstream fitness culture, these cover photos may contribute to the normalization and desensitization of the sexual objectification of the female body. Moreover, selecting models that align with the Western ideal to portray the practice of yoga reflects the use of Orientalism in Western culture for the purpose of

commodification. Orientalism, as defined by Clarke (1997), is the range of attitudes that the West exhibits towards the traditional, religious, and philosophical ideas and systems of South and East Asia. Orientalist views are embedded in the practice of yoga in Western societies in a variety of ways. Firstly, yoga is commodified and appropriated in ways that reflect and reinforce more dominant beliefs in Western society (Clarke, 1997). For instance, using cover models that lack diversity in ethnicities, body shapes, sizes and abilities uses the Hindu practice of yoga to reinforce cultural beauty ideals through the practice of yoga. Secondly, displaying cover models that align with the ideal female in the West allows for the commodification of the practice in a more favorable way, by aligning yoga with beliefs surrounding fitness, health and appearance.

The franchising and commercialization of yoga has been reflected by the increase in yoga studios and chains established. For instance, Toronto alone has more studios on a per-capita basis than anywhere else in North America (Tapper, 2013). Further, numerous organizations now offer their own instructor certifications. Many of these certification bodies, and even yoga studio chains, create their own 'yoga programs' which often involved a pre-choreographed set of poses offered across studios and instructors in a 'yoga as cookie-cutter' approach. Consequently, yoga may be portrayed as just another form of physical fitness as more exercise facilities and private studios offer yoga (Brown & Leledaki, 2010). This Westernized approach to yoga may be used to appeal to a wider variety of people who may be less receptive to the higher-level benefits of yoga such as enlightenment, compared to more concrete physical benefits.

Along with the growing popularity of traditional yoga in Western society, there has been a rise in "hot yoga" as a form of exercise. Hot yoga is a variation of traditional yoga that takes place in a specifically heated room (Modo Yoga, 2018). Hot yoga is often referred to as Bikram yoga (although not all hot yoga is in the Bikram style), as Bikram Choudhury founded this style

of yoga in 1973 (Hewett, Ransdell, Yong, Petlichkoff, & Lucas, 2011). Bikram yoga includes a series of 26 āsanās (poses), including two breathing exercises for every class (Hewett et al., 2011). The practice of hot yoga has been increasingly promoted as a form of exercise that is specifically beneficial for losing weight as well as for strength and fitness training (Tracy & Cady, 2013). Postures in hot yoga generally require lengthy, forceful, and well-controlled contractions of all major muscle groups. Therefore, the combination of fast transitions between postures and environmental heat stress is promoted as causing a considerable cardiovascular response and muscle fatigue (Tracy & Cady, 2013). Mace and Eggleston (2016) surveyed 157 hot yoga participants about the benefits and adverse outcomes experienced. The most commonly reported benefits included flexibility, improved mood, and increased fitness/stamina and strength. Approximately one-third of participants reported weight loss. However, participants also reported numerous adverse responses, including feeling dizzy and/or light-headed, nausea, dehydration, and injury to joints, back, or other muscles.

These risks and benefits have been found across other studies. Tracy and Cady (2013) examined the effects of hot yoga on young adults' fitness. They examined the effects of an 8-week hot yoga intervention on strength, cardiovascular health, flexibility and body composition in healthy young adults between the ages 21-39 years of age. They found significant improvements in deadlift strength, lower back/hamstring flexibility, and shoulder flexibility in the yoga group but no changes in a control group of healthy young adults (Tracy & Cady, 2013). Findings from Tracy and Cady (2013) suggest that hot yoga leads to modest improvements in muscle strength and flexibility in healthy, young and sedentary adults.

However, there are also negative outcomes of hot yoga as individuals have reported passing out, dehydration, overstretching, and suffering complications from other pre-existing

health issues such as low blood pressure, heart issues, and pulmonary disease (Mace & Eggleston, 2016). Engaging in some specific yoga poses (e.g., shoulder poses) may also lead to an increased risk of injury (e.g., neck injuries) while practicing (Fishman, Saltonstall, & Genis, 2009). There are numerous cases of injury caused from hot yoga, such as heat exhaustion, even causing cardiac arrest in extreme cases (Boddu, Patel, & Shahrrava, 2016; Mace & Eggleston, 2016).

Further, hot yoga may be an especially sexualized and appearance-focused form of yoga in Western societies. For example, portrayals and descriptions of hot yoga being promoted through celebrity endorsements in the media credit their superior physical appearance to their yoga routine. The implication is that hot yoga is effective for meeting the societal thin and toned ideal. One magazine article titled “Hot Yoga, Hot Bod” features famous actress Kaley Cuoco who shared her insider tips on hot yoga (Majewski, 2016). In the article, she suggests women lose their shirts, drink water like a camel and don’t skimp on towels when going to a hot yoga class. Accompanying her “hot tips” was a sequence of poses and movements, some of which were using weights to allow people to “get toned” (Majewski, 2016) while practicing yoga. The overall depiction of “hot yoga” in this article is one that portrays the practice of yoga as an activity in which women wear minimal clothing and as a means to achieving a toned body, thus bringing one’s physical appearance in line with the ideal (Majewski, 2016). Portrayals of yoga, especially hot yoga, in the media are increasingly conforming to idealized, sexualized and objectified images of women within the image-focused exercise and fitness culture. The sexualization of yoga, in combination with the belief that yoga can be used to change physical appearance towards the ideal, may lead to more of the traditional values of the practice being lost.

There is some evidence to suggest that hot yoga may have unique effects on body image compared to non-hot yoga. Mahlo and Tiggemann (2016) found that Bikram yoga (hot yoga) participants endorsed appearance and weight-loss reasons significantly more than Iyengar (non-heated yoga) participants. However, there were no significant differences found in measures of positive body image, embodiment, self-objectification, or desire for thinness between the groups. Although both Iyengar and Bikram yoga are founded on the traditional yogic philosophy, the Bikram yoga studio environment has unique features that could potentially alter body image experiences. For instance, in Bikram yoga, there is a full wall of mirrors and participants wear less clothing in order to allow sweating to occur. Further, Bikram yoga is particularly marketed as promoting weight loss and management.

Exploring women's experiences while practicing yoga in a Westernized yoga studio could lead to greater insight into body image experiences and how they may be related to an activity promoted as embodying. With the practice of hot yoga growing in popularity it is important to understand the body image experiences of those who practice. Yoga has generally been characterized as an embodying activity, which provides a counterpoint to the experiences of objectification and negative body image (Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016). However, there has been little research on the impact that the Westernization of traditional yoga may have and even more specifically how hot yoga may have an impact on body image experiences. Yoga has many benefits such as improved muscle strength, flexibility, and lower body fat (Tracy & Cady, 2013). There is also significant evidence on the positive effects of yoga on body image, with women who practice yoga reporting greater body esteem, less inconsistency between the real and the ideal silhouette and perceive their current shape as better in comparison to women practicing other forms of fitness (Bak-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017) as well as less objectification and higher

embodiment, body awareness, and body responsiveness (Daubenmier, 2005; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Given that traditional yoga is much more comprehensive than that practiced in most North American contexts, it is possible that some of these core elements may be undermined.

CHAPTER 2: Rationale

Body image is a multifaceted psychological experience related to the body's physical appearance as well as the body's function (Cash, 2004). Body image encompasses body-related self-perceptions and self-attitudes, including individual's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours towards the body (Cash, 2004). Furthermore, body image can be both positive and negative, which are distinct constructs. While numerous factors can impact body image, exercise has been consistently shown to reduce negative body image and has also been linked to positive body image (Campbell & Hausenblas, 2009; Reel et al., 2007; Tylka & Homan, 2015)

There are two significant limitations to the body image and exercise research that should be noted. First, body image outcomes examined previously by scholars were almost exclusively negative, in part because measures of positive body image (e.g., body appreciation) have only recently begun to be widely used. Secondly, the exercise interventions included in this research almost exclusively examined traditional forms of exercise: cardiovascular training, resistance training, or the combination of the two. Yet, today other forms of exercise, such as mind-body activities, are gaining popularity (Brown & Leledaki, 2010). These changes to both our understanding of body image, and within the exercise industry, emphasize the need to examine the role of non-traditional exercise on body image.

Limited research has shown yoga may lead to improved body image outcomes, particularly compared to more traditional types of exercise (Bąk-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017; Daubenmier, 2005; Gammage et al., 2016; Prichard, & Tiggemann, 2008). However, yoga does not necessarily lead to improvements in body image as the exercise environment can affect body image. For example, mirrors can have a negative impact on body image during yoga (Frayeh &

Lewis, 1990). Further, Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2018) found in interviews with yoga participants that both positive and negative body image experiences were described. However, these participants primarily participated in hatha yoga, with less than 25% reporting engaging in hot yoga specifically. Further, some participants did not participate in yoga in commercial yoga studios, but rather practiced at home, and the majority of these participants reported not noticing any effects of yoga on body image. Thus, the context of a yoga practice may be important.

The practice of yoga has increased in popularity within North America in recent years as a system for improved physical fitness, flexibility, weight loss, and mental health. The Hindu philosophy of yoga as outlined by Sage Patanjali in second century BC is based on the eight limbs of Ashtang yoga, comprised of ethical disciplines, individual observances, posture, breath control, withdrawal of senses, concentration, meditation, and self-realization (Bonura, 2011). In North America many of these traditions have been adapted or lost to allow yoga to fit into the North American fitness industry. For example, studios may include full wall-length mirrors, participants often wear revealing/objectifying clothing and there is an emphasis on commercialization with many products for sale in studios and a suggestion that the yoga lifestyle can be purchased. Further, while postures and breathing are often the focus of yoga in North American practice, the other limbs are often ignored. In hot yoga, these characteristics may be even more evident than in other forms of yoga. For instance, the fitness (e.g., weight loss) and health (e.g., detoxification) benefits of hot yoga are strongly advertised and promoted. Predominantly focusing on the scientific utility of yoga as a fitness activity and commercializing the practice undermines core aspects of yoga, such as self-enlightenment, mind-body connections and awareness of internal cues, creating a mind-body duality that may alter one's body image.

2.1 Research Questions

Given the concerns listed, the research questions pertaining to this case comprise 1) In what ways is body image related to women's practice of hot yoga? 2) What are women's experiences practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga studio St. Catharines?

Understanding women's body image experiences practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga will contribute to establishing which aspects of hot yoga may be beneficial or detrimental to women's body image. Identifying how body image may be experienced in hot yoga could help to identify ways that women implement body image coping strategies as well as inform studios and teachers about which aspects of hot yoga, the studio, and the instruction impact body image and how. Understanding how hot yoga impacts body image will allow for insight into how yoga studios and instructors can develop techniques to create a positive environment and enhance women's experiences with hot yoga. Moreover, exploring how individuals describe their embodiment during hot yoga would further our current understanding of embodying experiences, and embodying activities, within the existing body image literature.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.0 Research Design

A case study is an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon using multiple perspectives to reveal the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system (Simons, 2009). Case studies allow the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, events, simple and complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs (Yin, 2002). Yin (2002) suggests that case studies are relevant for asking how and why questions, when there is no control over behavioural events, when you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study, and when there is a focus on contemporary events.

Taking a case study approach was considered most suitable for the current study for exploring how the Westernization of yoga has implications for body image experiences in the context of hot yoga at Modo Yoga studios. This study answered the question *what* are the body image experiences of women aged 18 years or older in relation to their hot yoga practice at Modo Yoga studio. I was not intending to manipulate the participants' behavior in the study; rather I wanted to allow them to reveal their own naturally occurring experiences when practicing yoga at Modo Yoga. The case study allowed an in-depth analysis of the individuals who attend Modo (formerly Moksha) hot yoga classes, at a particular Modo yoga studio (St. Catharines location). I was able to better understand the impact of practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga studio on women's body image, as well as in what ways their body image may have impacted their practice of hot yoga at Modo Yoga. This allowed me to explore the specific context in which their yoga experiences occurred.

Modo Yoga is specific to this case since it represents one example of a Westernized yoga studio (e.g., heated rooms, approach to teaching which involves instructors focusing on physical

and mental benefits of yoga for well-being, commercialization of yoga and selling of merchandise at the studio, and objectifying elements such as a wall of mirrors in the studio) that has the potential to alter the traditional aspects of the practice.

Using a case study approach is valuable because of its flexibility and rigor (Baxter & Jack, 2008). There are a variety of case study approaches such as intrinsic, multiple site, descriptive, and exploratory case study designs. An exploratory case study was chosen for this study to explore situations in which an intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). I would argue that the reality and experiences of women who practice yoga in North America, especially in a Westernized hot yoga studio, may be much different than the yoga experiences of those who align with more traditional, spiritual yoga practices. Therefore, using an exploratory model allowed us to discern the various outcomes and experiences possible when practicing in a particular commercial hot yoga studio.

Specifically, this was a single exploratory case study as it pertained to only one specific Modo Yoga studio (St. Catharines Modo Yoga), rather than several different studios or types of yoga. Using a case study method facilitated the exploration of women's experiences practicing hot yoga in a Westernized yoga studio using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The data I collected was from participant interviews, memos during the interviews, and personal observations of the physical space of the Modo Yoga Studio.

3.1 Location

Modo Yoga St. Catharines is located near the local university in a small strip mall plaza that hosts several small businesses such as a nail salon, gas bar, restaurant and other retail stores. The studio is located in a post-industrial city surrounded by suburbs of student housing and apartment buildings. From the street on which the plaza is located, you can see the large

trademarked block print Modo Yoga logo with the flame symbol that is specific to Modo Studios across Canada. As you walk up to the doors there are large windows facing the parking lot, through which people can see inside the studio.

Once through the front doors of the studio, you face the open concept area with cubbies and a seating area to the left to leave your shoes and personal belongings. As you enter the main foyer there is comfy furniture arranged around a wood coffee table on the outside walls to encourage people to lounge and “hang out” before or after class with coffee and tea that is also offered to guests. Directly across from the entrance and the furniture is the front desk where there is always an employee to greet you as you enter into the studio. If you have signed up for a class online ahead of time you will be asked to “sign in” by stating your name to confirm that you have purchased classes or a membership at Modo, or alternatively purchase a single-class pass. Behind the front desk is a variety of high-end yoga merchandise for sale including mats, towels, and water bottles. Throughout the entire main entrance of the studio are fresh plants as well as a hanging seated hammock to the right of the front desk. To the left of the front desk there is a long hallway leading to the heated classrooms and change rooms. The bright white walls leading to the studio rooms are, on occasion, decorated with posters of studio promotions, competitions, or retreats that are being offered at Modo as well as a decorative chalkboard with affirmations or studio updates. Once you reach the end of the hallway there are change rooms for men and women only. In the women’s change room, there are coat hooks and benches that run along two large walls to the right of the room separating the bathroom stalls and showers on the left of the change room.

Before you enter the heated studio, there is a sign on the door asking that everyone be silent once they enter. Entering into the hot yoga room the lighting is much dimmer than in the

hallway, main foyer or change rooms. At the very front of the room the wall is covered floor to ceiling by mirrors with hard wood covering the floor in the main studio room. Along two of the surrounding walls are cork blocks that are stacked for practitioners to borrow during class if needed. Typically upon entering the studio, participants select where they want to put their mat down, grab a block and bring it back to their mat, and then lay down with their head facing the mirrors. There are no assigned areas so people can place their mat wherever space is available in the studio. Depending on the class type, there may also be soft music playing upon the start of class. Class begins once the instructor comes in the room and begins the practice.

3.2 Unit of Analysis

The case is defined by the unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008), which for the current study is the body image experiences of women practicing hot yoga in a Westernized yoga studio (i.e., Modo Yoga). It is critical that the specific unit of analysis is identified in case study research since the context of the case cannot be understood without it. Yin (2003) states that in order to understand and state the unit of analysis in full, the researcher must identify those people within the group and distinguish them from those outside of it.

Determining the individuals who were within the group enabled me as the researcher to identify the immediate topic of the case study and characterize the context in which the study exists. The people within the “group” in this case were woman 18 years or older who had practiced within the past 3 months at the St. Catharines Modo Yoga on Glendale Avenue. I did not exclude participants based on age, ethnicity, ability or level of engagement in the practice to allow a variety of experiences to be explored.

Both Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) have suggested that placing boundaries on a case can prevent attempting to answer questions that are too broad. To bind a study as a specific unit and

avoid having too large a scope, scholars have suggested recognizing the time frame, location, and activity in which the case takes place (Creswell, 2003). The time frame for this study was from the start of data collection, was approximately December 2018, until completion of data analysis, approximately December 2019. The case study location was the Modo Yoga studio in south St. Catharines as it represents a unique location where Modo classes occur. The activity binding the case was any form of hot yoga class that takes place in this Modo Yoga studio St. Catharines.

Modo Yoga is a variation of Bikram yoga that was created in 2004 by two Canadian yoga instructors, Jessica Robertson and Ted Grand (Dixon, 2017). Modo started out as six Bikram studios, before the founders separated and created Modo Yoga (Dixon, 2017), which currently has 74 affiliated studios in Canada alone (Pizer, 2017), although they believe they could have many more if they were not as selective about who they want to open a Modo franchise (Dixon, 2017). Majority owners in the studios must be Modo certified instructors, which entails one month of intensive training and a year of mentored project work teaching, studying or researching yoga and sharing the beliefs for environmental sustainability (Dixon, 2017).

Modo hot yoga classes differ from Bikram hot yoga classes in that they are an adaptation of traditional yoga and Bikram yoga. Thus, Modo yoga is a *combination* of the dynamic system of postures and breathing exercises specifically meant to be practiced in the heat (Modo Yoga, 2018). Hot yoga is promoted as being a better workout than yoga performed at room temperature as it provides a better cardiovascular workout and is related to greater weight loss. Modo offers 40-posture series, rather than a series of 26 poses (as in Bikram yoga), in 90-minute classes as well as their adapted shortened classes at 75 and 60-minute versions (Modo Yoga, 2018). The shortened classes further exemplify the Westernization of the practice by attempting to cater to a

variety of schedules and achieve the benefits of yoga in a shorter amount of time, contradicting the yoga elements of cultivating concentration and meditation over time.

3.3 Researcher

I was the primary researcher, a 24-year old female Master of Science in Kinesiology student. I am 5'6 tall and weigh 56 kg (body mass index = 19.60), with a slim build. I am a novice researcher in the area of body image, physical activity, self-objectification and embodiment. I have undergone previous qualitative training by completing undergraduate and graduate qualitative methodology courses, as well as informally through the mentorship of my thesis committee. I have practiced yoga and mindfulness for roughly 8 years and I have experience with a variety of yoga types including vinyasa yoga, hatha yoga, hot yoga and yin yoga.

I have a large interest in meditation and mindfulness activities, such as yoga, as I have struggled with anxiety over the past 6 years and I have learned during this time the benefits of meditation for my mental state. I began doing yoga informally with my grandfather who taught me about meditation, and how to be present, from one of his favorite authors John Kabat Zin. I enjoyed what I learned about meditation and traditional yoga and turned to hot yoga. Coincidentally, it had also been suggested by my coach in high school that I try hot yoga as the Modo Yoga studio (Moksha) in Peterborough had just opened. I practiced at the Modo Yoga studio there for a few years before I came to university at Brock in 2013. Once I learned that St. Catharines had a Modo Yoga I practiced yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines on Glendale Avenue on and off throughout the four years of my undergraduate, usually when they had student promotions on. However as a student I couldn't afford regular classes or a membership, thus my involvement with that particular site has varied over the years. I enjoyed the times I went to

Modo, however there was something very unique about the yoga at Modo Studio's that peaked my interest about different forms of yoga and that led me want to study hot yoga further. Thus, I was mindful of how my own involvement in the practice of yoga could impact my understanding of yoga at Modo and I was reflexive of my assumptions based on my own experiences with Modo Yoga St. Catharines and my knowledge of traditional yoga. I developed the research idea, conducted all the interviews, and transcribed and analyzed the entirety of the data.

As a researcher I am in a position of privilege and power over participants in a research study. It was important to recognize the power I possessed so that I did not assume trust was a precondition with participants, especially when establishing rapport. Being that I am Caucasian, middle class, and identify as cisgender, I am privileged over other marginalized groups. The power I hold could have influenced the way the participants viewed me and ultimately reacted in a study. I recognized how my social identities may position myself in a place of power through reinforced societal structures. For example, I have an insider social identity at Modo Yoga from being involved in the practice of yoga for several years at that location. This could have been potentially problematic as participants may not have been able to dissociate my research role from my role as yoga practitioner. As stated by Glesne (2016), the inability to see the researcher as a researcher leads to participants not being as thoughtful or careful in their answers to questions but instead they may generalize their experiences by saying things such as, "Well you know what it's like". I anticipated this might occur as the sample of individuals I was interested in examining included women who I may have been familiar with, who practice yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines. I tried to counter this potential issue by asking participants questions that asked them to reflect on their own memories and asked them to give specific examples and

descriptions of feelings, thoughts or experiences they had had during hot yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines.

I feel it is important to note that my physical appearance aligns with the societal ideal for females, that being of a slim but toned build, average height, and average breast size with shoulder length brown hair. My appearance may have caused participants to react to me in different ways depending on their own body image and physical appearance, especially given that the nature of some questions during the interview were personal and about the participant's own appearance and body image. Although I personally believe all bodies are "yoga bodies" I have what would be considered as a stereotypical "yoga bod" since it closely aligns with the societal ideal as well. As I fit the mould for what Western society has framed as an ideal body, this might have in turn influenced how open participants were when disclosing personal experiences. I was conscientious of my appearance and wore loose fitting clothing to interviews, rather than hot yoga clothing such as tight leggings, form-fitting tops/ a sports bra with the upper body exposed.

Included in some of the strategies used to try and counteract the privileges I hold was entering into the research with a mind-set of openness and a desire to interact in collaborative ways rather than of acting entitled or controlling (Glesne, 2015). I also kept in mind my interpretations in any "textual positioning" and tried to be aware of presentations of participants that could be oppressive or one-dimensional. For instance, I attempted to avoid speaking in first person on behalf of the participants, rather using their own words and thoughts expressed in the findings. I used participants' own words in quotations when disseminating the findings as a method for dependability and confirmability, which are essential to producing a trustworthy report (Glesne, 2015).

It is important to recognize my philosophical underpinnings as a novice constructivist researcher. I align with this paradigm, which is beneficial since both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) base their approach to case study research on a constructivist paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Constructivists believe that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. The importance of a subjective human experience is recognized within this paradigm; however objectivity is not ignored either. Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality; thus I used the participants' descriptions of their reality to understand their experiences (Searle, 1995). Using the participants' conceptualization of their own experiences at Modo St. Catharines allowed a greater understanding of the socially constructed norms of yoga within a Westernized yoga context. This was beneficial in studying Modo Yoga St. Catharines since both the subjective experiences of the participants and the subjective experiences of the researchers, in combination, provided richer data and understanding of how hot yoga is experienced at one Westernized yoga studio.

3.4 Participants

Purposeful sampling was used as suggested by Glesne (2015) to recruit individuals who had experience with the phenomenon. A total of 10 women were recruited following Patton's (2002) recommendations of a sample size of approximately 10 participants in qualitative studies to allow for a design that provides a large enough sample to examine patterns between participants but avoids having sample sizes too large with an overwhelming quantity of discursive data. Case study methodology relies on setting specific boundaries (Stake, 2005; Yin 2003), thus it is setting these boundaries for the case that largely influenced who the participants were and pragmatically how many fit within the boundaries of the case. For the current study inclusion criteria were women 18 years or older, with no current eating disorder, who practice or

had practiced yoga in the St. Catharines Modo Yoga studio in the past 3 months. Those with a current eating disorder were not included due to the fact they may have a more negative body image and interview questions could be potentially triggering (Thompson & Stice, 2001).

Participants were initially recruited at Modo Yoga Studio in St. Catharines by means of posters at the studio, as well as at Brock University and via announcements in lectures, posters around the university campus and emails from the research team. In addition, in order to increase sample size, additional recruitment strategies were implemented partway through the data collection, including attending a vendor fair at the Modo studio and sitting next to the front desk at Modo with the research poster before and after classes throughout one week. In addition, snowball sampling was used; if participants knew others who may have been interested and eligible to participate, they were encouraged to pass study information on to them. In the various recruitment methods, it was disclosed that participation in the study would include one or more interviews to describe experiences of body image and hot yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines. The participants contacted a member of the research team to express their interest in participating in the study. If the participant met the inclusion/exclusion criteria then a time and date was arranged for an interview.

3.4.1. Demographics. Demographic characteristics of the participants who participated in this study are shown in Table 1. Women that participated in this study varied in age, weight, occupation and membership status (i.e. 6 months+).

Table 1 *Demographic Characteristics of Women Recruited*

Pseudonym	Age	Height (cm)	Weight (kg)	Occupation/ Year in School	Classes @ Modo/ Week	Membership @ Modo
1.Meghan*	28	176	70	Social Media Marketer	4	3 years
2.Tessa	20	164	60	2 nd year Psych.	2-3	4 months
3.Amy*	25	158	72	Stage Manager	1	1 year
4.Susan*	22	173	63	4 th year Child Health	1-2	2 years
5.Alyssa	23	179	60	Facilities Supervisor	4-5	3 months
6.Barbara	32	152	175	Marine Navigation	2	3 months
7. Joanna*	35	161	71	Marketing	5	5 months
8.Janet	56	173	65	Manager of Modo Yoga	5	7 years
9.Emily	22	170	61	4 th year Psych.	6	3 months
10. Michelle	59	152	55	Associate Secretary	3-4	1 year

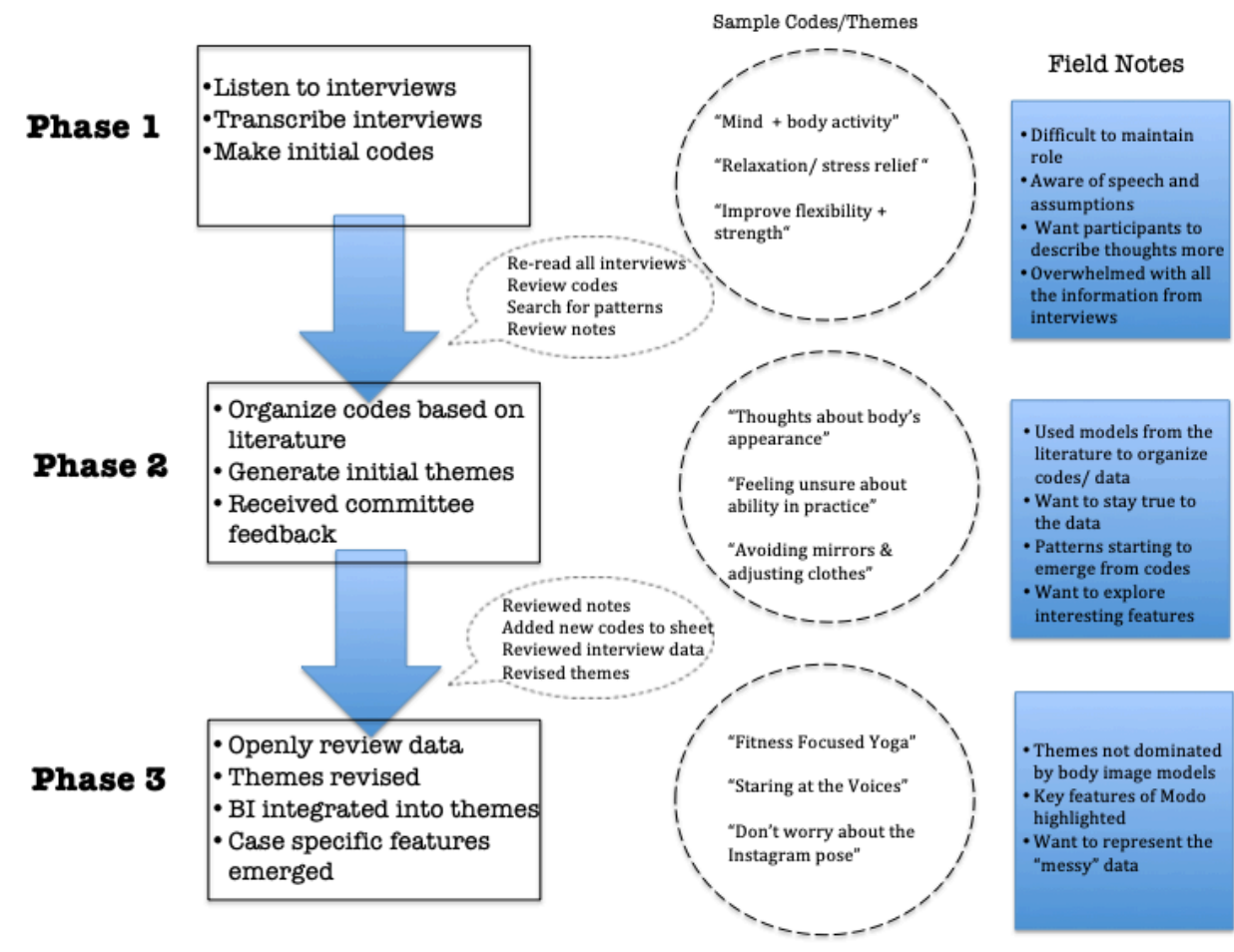
Note: Pseudonyms were chosen for the participants and the participants with an asterisk beside their names are the ones that were selected for an additional follow up interview.

3.5 Summary of Data Collection

Figure 1 illustrates and summarizes how data collection and the early stages of data analysis occurred in this study. The figure has several dynamic elements outlining that the data analysis process was on-going and organizing the data was essential with the amount discursive data collected. It is organized based on the phases of data collection and analysis with

accompanying examples of codes, quotes and notes from each phase. The quotes and codes were chosen purposefully in that codes were chosen if they were repeated numerous times by participants and quotes were chosen that illustrated these codes. The codes and quotes were also selected based on how strongly they related to the research questions pertaining to this study and based on how strongly they were conveyed by participants' voice, body language and displays of emotion that were impactful during interviews. On the far right side of the figure are examples of field notes detailing my own pertinent thoughts that were reoccurring during data collection. Included between phases are additional details on what took place during that stage of analysis and reflect the ongoing work occurring throughout the study. More details pertaining to the data collection and data analysis will be outlined below in the subsequent sections.

Figure 1. Phases of Data Collection and Analysis



3.6 Data Collection

Prior to data collection this study was cleared with the university Research Ethics Board (See Appendix A). Participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Participants met with me individually and interviews took place on the university campus in a private office. The following data sources were used: one-on-one interviews, memos and field notes from interviews.

3.6.1. Interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences at Modo Yoga St. Catharines. Interviews were semi-structured to allow

the flow to be determined by the participant and the researcher (myself) and to allow for exploration of unexpected material that arose (Patton, 2002). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Appendix B depicts the general flow of questions that were asked in the interviews; however the interview guide was flexible to allow probing on new insights as the study progressed. Following completion of their interview, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) to assess their background characteristics such as age, height, weight, ethnicity and occupational status.

Interviews were conducted outside of the yoga studio to allow participants the opportunity to openly discuss their experiences practicing yoga at the Modo Yoga St. Catharines studio. The environment in which interviews take place has the ability to influence participant responses. Allowing participants to freely discuss their yoga practice outside of the studio gave them the opportunity to openly speak about their practice at Modo St. Catharines and various factors that may influence their practice. At the beginning of the interview I sought to build rapport and to understand the participant's conceptualization of hot yoga. Then, they were asked questions on how yoga may influence how they think, feel, and perceive their body as well as how yoga may influence their behaviours. Next, I focused on the participants' experiences practicing yoga, diving into descriptive questions where the participant could recount how they experienced yoga and body image at Modo Yoga St. Catharines.

Roulston (2007) conceptualized various interviewing techniques such as asking good questions, minimizing biases and generating quality data to produce valid findings that were implemented in the current study. Participants were asked background questions, experience and behaviour questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions and sensory questions. Experience and behaviour questions focused on the activities and behaviours

of the participants such as their experience with yoga generally, their experience with Modo Yoga St. Catharines, and how they behaved in the studio. Opinion and value questions consisted of asking participants to reflect on their beliefs on concepts such as the effects of yoga on body image or how their body image may impact their practice of yoga. Feeling questions were asked to understand how the participants related to yoga, such as “how do you feel when doing hot yoga?” or “what do you feel when entering the studio?” I asked knowledge questions to elicit participants’ factual knowledge surrounding factors affecting body image and the term body image itself. Lastly, I incorporated sensory questions to elicit specific data about what they had seen, touched, and heard at the studio. These questions allowed a richer understanding of women’s experiences in the studio by stimulating a variety of responses from participants.

All interviews took place within approximately a month from the start of data collection, with second interviews ongoing throughout the data collection. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a select few participants as relevant and interesting information surfaced through the interviewing process that needed further probing and discussion. Four participants were chosen for follow-up interviews based on contrasting opinions or experiences that were disclosed in the first interviews. In total there were 14 interviews, 10 initial interviews and four follow-up interviews. These second interviews helped to further triangulate the data and clarify meaning by identifying and discussing different ways Modo Yoga is seen by the participants (Liamputtong, 2009). New questions were generated for the second interviews based on participants’ responses during the first interviews and preliminary themes. These questions were generated to probe for information about women’s experiences that were not explored yet, to clarify if my interpretations of the women’s experiences at Modo were correct, and to confirm themes. (See Appendix C for the interview guide for the second interviews).

To ensure authenticity and trustworthiness of the data I used member checking as recommended by Glesne (2015). Within two weeks of the interviews, I followed up with the participants through email and provided a summary of the main themes from their interview. Participants were asked to take about 20 minutes to review the interview summary and then send comments, clarifications or corrections to me via email. If a participant was brought back for a second interview, they were provided with a summary of the second interview and the opportunity for feedback.

3.6.2. Memos and Field Notes. Memos and field notes were ongoing throughout the individual interviews. The memos and notes served to record my own initial reflections, notes, and patterns that seems to be emerging (Glesne, 2015). I made descriptive notes during interviews such as direct quotes or comments from participants related to the research question, unique perspectives expressed, and sensory information such as what I could see, smell or hear during interviews that was relevant to interactions with the participants. I made reflective notes following interviews by recording thoughts, ideas, questions, and any thoughts or criticisms about what I observed. I also noted any thoughts I had about future interviews and observations and clarified ideas (See Appendix D).

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1. Interviews. In Phase 1 of data analysis (See figure 1 above), I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews within 24-48 hours of each interview verbatim and assigned pseudonyms. Once a pseudonym was assigned I added it to the master list for my own reference. Next, I printed out the transcript with a column along the right side of the document to write codes down as they were identified and to make notes when needed. I immersed myself in the transcripts, reading them carefully multiple times in an active way, searching for meaning and

patterns in what participants were saying about their experience at Modo Yoga (Glesne, 2015).

I followed a slightly adapted version of Braun and Clarke's (2008) six-stage process of thematic analysis by familiarizing myself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes with committee members and defining and naming themes. After reading the first few interviews I created codes by reading transcripts line by line looking for patterns in participants' answers and then aggregating the frequencies of these answers into codes (Stake, 1995). Thus, codes referred to a word or short phrase that captured an evocative attribute of the data (Glesne, 2015). Codes often covered topics that reoccurred in the interviews and were spoken about differently and similarly by participants (Glesne, 2015). I used taxonomic coding in which I attempted to get to the heart of how participants categorized and talked about an aspect of their culture, that being body image and hot yoga (Glesne, 2015). Taxonomic coding helps to find pattern in human speech and behaviour by accounting for varied examples of action and speech. I also used in vivo codes, also known as indigenous codes, as a coding approach where codes were generated based on especially colourful or metaphoric words participants used. Lastly I used "emotions coding" where codes were labelled based on emotional recollections from participants, or inferred by the researcher about the participant (Glesne, 2015). A code sheet was generated with a list of the initial codes from the individual interviews (See Appendix E).

Phase 2 delineates how the codes were organized from general codes to those based on the body image literature (i.e., deductive theory-based coding; Braun & Clarke, 2008). Deductive thematic analysis was applied to the transcripts coded by applying the definition of body image as described by Cash (2012) as the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to one's body image. This was done in order to organize how participants were describing yoga in relation to

body image within the body image literature. I sought to analyze and understand women's behaviour, issues, and context with regard to Modo Yoga (Stake, 1995). New codes were added to the codes sheet and interviews were re-read and coded accordingly. Initial themes were generated from the new codes using a technique called "code weaving" in which I displayed all my codes in one word document and wrote several sentences to express the patterns and categories I saw (Glesne, 2015). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendations, generating themes and subthemes involved collapsing or clustering codes that seemed to share a unifying feature together and that reflected and described a meaningful pattern in the data. While Braun and Clarke (2006) used both thematic mapping and a thematic list during this phase, I adapted their process by using only a thematic list to outline my candidate themes (see Appendix G). This choice was made to assist my supervisor and myself in understanding my interpretations of the data in a linear format. Once the initial theme list was discussed I collated all the data extracts relevant to each theme, and began the process of reviewing my themes again. I revised the themes and key quotes were selected to support themes based on how strongly they related to each of the themes, and also based on how impactful I felt they were to the research questions (Glesne, 2015).

In Phase 3, after meeting with the research committee to collectively review the revised themes, the data was reviewed more openly and less rigidly tied to the body image literature (inductive coding). Themes were discussed and I explored different ways of categorizing the codes by attempting to view the data differently than from my initial interpretation (Glesne, 2015). Patton (2002) states that an inductive approach means that themes identified will be strongly linked to the data itself. It was important during this phase that my theoretical interest and knowledge in body image was not the only factor behind the themes produced. Further,

using an inductive thematic analysis was cohesive with an exploratory case study in that themes were structured more closely to the participant's own experiences and words. Reviewing the interview data more inductively was completed to explore key features of hot yoga, body image, and Modo Yoga that were reoccurring in interview data but that were not fully addressed in the more rigid code categories made primarily based on body image theory and research. Revising the themes allowed for the unique features of the case study site, Modo Yoga, to be explored more in depth, and allowed the connection to body image to emerge more naturally within the themes. Once themes were revised, added to, and deleted, relevant quotes were pulled out to highlight the key points of each theme.

Final themes were produced to capture something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represented a patterned response within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Following the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2008) I generated themes, which had a singular focus and were related. I wanted to avoid repetition in themes or subthemes while also acknowledging that some themes/subthemes may build on previous themes. I reviewed the themes and names to ensure I clearly defined each theme and stated what was unique about each one and its relevance to my research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Subthemes were generated based on pertinent information that was encompassed by the larger over-reaching theme. I reviewed all transcripts, as each new theme was revealed, moving back and forth between themes and transcripts and recoding older transcripts when necessary. I compared themes and subthemes, checking if themes could be condensed or combined when similar, or adding new themes and subthemes to highlight unique features of the data. I highlighted features of the data that were pertinent to my research questions by selecting compelling extracts from participant interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The extracts were chosen to provide a clear basis

for my themes and interpretations of patterns across all data. Themes were used to show patterns across the data and give a complete picture about how women experience body image and hot yoga within the context of Modo Yoga St. Catharines.

3.8 Trustworthy Strategies

The bounded system was explored through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews, audio recorded material from interviews, memos made during interviews and negative case analyses from interview data. This triangulation of data further enriched emerging concepts (Glesne, 2015). For instance, negative case analyses was used during the follow up interviews in that I interviewed women with differing experiences at Modo Yoga who varied in age, weight and ability. Interviewing women with contrasting opinions and experiences allowed me to clarify the various ways that the case, hot yoga at Modo and body image in women, was being experienced.

I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process in order to acknowledge my preconceptions and influences. Being reflexive allowed for greater insight and depth of knowledge when exploring the phenomenon in that I could reflect on my preconceptions or initial judgements, especially when interviewing participants. I included a general statement when introducing myself to participants about my personal connections and relations to the research I am doing, often referred to as *autobiographical rendering* to give some context to my interest in the topic (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). I continued to be reflexive throughout the entire research process, to the best of my ability, by writing memos on inconsistencies I found with participant data or when my assumptions influenced my perception of participants. Understanding how my assumptions of participants may have influenced researcher-participant relationships through self-analysis I believe helped to add insight into my research in that I was

more critically aware of the impact of my statements and preconceptions (Glesne, 2015). In order to understand how hot yoga may alter women's body image experiences practicing yoga, it was essential for me to have an interpretive view of participants' interview data to understand the meaning behind various women's body image experiences.

As previously stated, I ensured authenticity and trustworthiness of the data collected by following Glesne's (2015) recommendations of member checking. I conducted a follow-up with the participants through email by providing a summary of their described experiences within two weeks of their interview. This allowed for participant feedback and accuracy of interpretation in that it enabled the participant to clarify her point of view and safeguard against misinterpreting what they shared. Furthermore, participants who were selected for a second interview had the opportunity to verbally confirm or contest themes that emerged and clarify any misconceptions.

When presenting the findings I included thick and rich descriptions to allow for reader transferability and to better understand the context of the current study. Transferability is the extent to which readers find value in the findings and can apply them across a variety of contexts and settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was enhanced through presenting findings in a manner so that readers are able to understand the context of my interpretations and gain a richer understanding of phenomenon (Glesne, 2015). For instance, I provided in-depth descriptions of the Modo Yoga studio in order to provide context of the physical location as well as detailed descriptions of what hot yoga classes were like for women in this study. These descriptions of Modo Yoga and hot yoga allow readers to interpret the extent to which the findings of this study might apply to other Modo Yoga studios or other hot yoga experiences.

Triangulation of the data sources was utilized to compare women's experiences by exploring how women's experiences were aligned or differed, and factors that impacted the

women's experiences with hot yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines. Theory triangulation was utilised and benefited in constructing the overall understanding and findings of the study, since there were multiple researchers on this project with differing theoretical viewpoints (Stake, 1995). As a constructivist I highly value other viewpoints, as I believe it adds to the construction of our reality and understanding of how society functions as a whole. Thus, the extent to which the research committee agreed on describing the phenomenon was a form of triangulation that provided further richness and understanding of the case study.

CHAPTER 4: Results

When asked to discuss their experiences, women's responses showed a complex relationship between body image and the practice of hot yoga at Modo Yoga studio. Women in this study expressed a greater focus on the fitness outcomes from the practice of hot yoga (i.e., increased flexibility, strength, improved cardio, weight loss) than the meditative or embodying outcomes (i.e., self-enlightenment, awareness of internal cues, mind-body connectivity). The comments made by participants mainly centered on physical aspects of the poses, and the poses themselves, as well as the challenge that the heat presented to the practice of yoga. Moreover, women commented on the social environment at the hot yoga studio (i.e., other members and the yoga instructors) and how it both positively and negatively impacted their body image and practice of hot yoga. Lastly, there were case-specific elements of the Modo Yoga studio that provided a unique hot yoga practice for women in this study. The large mirrors, dim lighting, and silence prior to class proved to be highly influential to women's body image and experience practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga. With these features in mind, three main themes were identified: *Exercise versus Enlightenment*, *Social Factors: Influence of Instructors & Members*, and *Environmental Factors: Mirrors, Lighting, & Silence*.

4.1 Exercise Versus Enlightenment

When participants were directly asked why they practiced hot yoga, the majority of women initially gave reasons indicative of a holistic practice, such as practicing to improve their mental state (i.e., reduce anxiety, be more mindful, be less reactive) as well as for their body, for a better overall life. However, when further asked what it was about hot yoga that contributed to their positive mental state, participants tended to describe the physical aspects of the practice and perceived physical changes they had experienced since practicing that made them feel better.

Four subthemes were identified: *Fitting in with fitness culture*, *Pose perfectionism*, *Appearance evaluations*, and *Mental & spiritual growth*.

4.1.2. Fitting in with fitness culture. The overall description by women indicated that hot yoga was primarily a physical exercise. Although most participants expressed a greater appreciation for the physical outcomes of the practice than the mental outcomes, women in this study expressed the reason they chose hot yoga was because of its dual purposes of enhancing them physically and mentally; thus hot yoga had benefits over other forms of yoga and traditional exercise. Although there are physical benefits of yoga that result from the poses, they are not intended to be the focus or most important outcome of traditional yoga practices – rather they are a tool to attain higher-level benefits. Thus, emphasising the physical benefits of the practice during hot yoga may lead to a less holistic yoga practice.

Further, women's statements indicated that it was important for hot yoga to result in fitness benefits in order for them to reach any of the mental benefits. Participants stated that they did not want to do "regular" yoga because it was not enough of a physical workout; by contrast hot yoga was a better workout and therefore worthy of practicing. Women stated that hot yoga was better than traditional yoga because they would sweat more, release toxins, experience muscle soreness after class, perceive increased muscle tone, as well as potentially lose weight from the combination of the heat and poses.

Most participants when directly asked about the benefits of hot yoga would list the physical benefits from practicing in the heated studio that made it "better" than "regular yoga". For example, Janet stated how "the heat helps you to get into deeper into your practice, to get into deeper postures, to increase your flexibility" demonstrating how the heat was seen as a vehicle for physical bodily transformations. Many participants highlighted that gaining strength

and balance from their practice of hot yoga was important as reflected by the comments made by Michelle who stated she noticed increased strength, balance, and mobility since practicing at Modo. Sweating was a significant feature mentioned by participants as they felt getting a good sweat, sweating out toxins, and improving cardio, were all important benefits of yoga. For instance, Emily stated,

I think hot yoga is little bit like I enjoy it more just because I can feel my muscles being looser just because of the heat um and then I also feel like I've done more of a workout so if I do just normal yoga in a normal room I feel like yah that was a good stretch um and I worked some of my muscles but after a whole hour of hot yoga I feel like I worked hard, um I got a good sweat out so I feel like I got all my toxins out I just feel like that's an actual workout for me.

For these women, a good workout – and a real one - was evidenced by the amount that they sweat. Additionally, one of the unique physical benefits to hot yoga mentioned by participants was weight loss, which was not considered a benefit of traditional yoga.

It is important to note that when asked directly why they practiced yoga, the majority of women stated that it was for both physical and mental benefits. However, it was the physical benefits that participants would focus on when asked to describe what positive mental benefits they received from hot yoga, thus contradicting their initial statements. For example Michelle stated early in her interview, “It's not just the exercise portion of it but it's really connecting with yourself and having that time and peace of mind and I think I'm a better person”. However, later in Michelle's interview she said she felt more positive from going to hot yoga due to the physical changes experienced as she stated,

It makes me feel, I feel far better about my body since the year that I've been in yoga because it has strengthened my arms and lengths which were just totally useless before I had no strength and um so the image of my body um is probably 80% better than what it was before I went to yoga

Furthermore, Michelle credited her comfort in her body since going to hot yoga as a result of aligning more closely with the societal physical ideal as she stated,

Um just it's the comfort that I have in my own self, I just don't from being overweight almost my whole life to not being overweight now um it's a huge its personally it's a huge difference in how you feel. I used to feel so uncomfortable all the time I didn't think anything looked good on me, I hated clothes shopping I hated putting things on I didn't like anything that was tight and now it's like I can put on anything and it's okay it's just comfort and some people the weight doesn't bother them the weight always bothered me and got in the way of me doing things because I was self-conscious

Michelle was not unique in making opposing statements as many participants did so in their interview. For example, Alyssa stated,

Um very calming so like that's one of the reasons that I like going to class because after I leave I just feel like so good about myself, like my mental health that's one of the main reasons that I started doing yoga because I stopped exercising and I kind of noticed that I just needed something extra

However, later she attributed her physical performance during hot yoga classes as what has made her feel better, stating,

I think I've been feeling better about my body since I started doing yoga and not just because I've seen changes but because I do feel stronger which is one of the big reason I did want to go and I do feel more flexible so it that ways I feel like I'm happy with the performance of my body I guess

Overall the participants' focus on the fitness aspects and outcomes of hot yoga may have created a mind-body duality and undermined the mental aspects typically cultivated in traditional yoga. Moreover, the explicit statements that yoga is not of merit without heat (and therefore sweating, the evidence that they worked hard) illustrates the ideology that improved fitness is more highly valued than the mental and spiritual benefits cultivated from the practice of yoga, directly contrasting traditional yogic philosophy of mind-body integration.

4.1.3. Pose perfectionism. Being concerned with performance, in terms of wanting to do poses “right”, was a significant feature mentioned by participants. When they focused their

thoughts externally on their practice they were more critical of themselves. Many women exhibited perfectionist thoughts during their practice in that they had critical opinions of their bodies' abilities and its performance during a hot yoga class. For younger members, pose perfectionism centered around alignment and wanting to get the pose "right", whereas long-term members and older members tended to be concerned with holding balance poses, a fear of falling in class, and continually improving. For instance, Joanna stated her fears over not being able to hold a balancing pose as long as the instructor may require as she stated how she had a "fear of balancing exercises" and that she was more focused on "not doing anything foolish". Concern with performance was also expressed through participants wanting to perfect their practice by doing poses correctly. Emily especially expressed this as she stated,

Um I'm very focused on doing things the right way, um so even in warrior two when my hand is back and I can't see it I'm always checking if it's straight and in the same line so in that sense I'm a perfectionist in my own pose so I also started telling [instructor] before class like please fix anything that you see cause I want to do the pose like the right way

Some members also displayed pose perfectionism through a need to continually improve physically in their practice. Failure to continue "improving" in their practice often led to feelings of frustration and body dissatisfaction. Meghan stated her frustration with not improving as she said, "Like sometimes it can feel frustrating um like kay I do this four times a week and I'm still not really flexible enough or I'm not improving as much as I'd like to".

Many participants also expressed the belief that there was a 'right' way to do a yoga pose, which typically led to negative body image feelings (i.e., body dissatisfaction) when they felt they were unable to achieve that correct pose. Pose perfectionism was expressed through the belief of a "right versus wrong way" of doing yoga in that women were critical of their bodies' abilities, performance and appearance during their practice. They expressed many ways they

should be better at yoga (i.e., they should be more flexible, more balanced, more aligned) rather than more accepting of what their body can do without judgement. Many of the participants' critical thoughts about their bodies were expressed as the need for perfecting the poses and their practice through constant improvement, which led to negative feelings about their body.

4.1.4. Appearance evaluations. This subtheme emphasizes the impact that appearance evaluations have for women practicing hot yoga in a heated studio. Women expressed that having thoughts on the outward physical aspects of their body during their practice made focusing internally challenging and contributed to negative body image thoughts for some participants. Commonly, new members expressed concern that their bodies were being watched and evaluated by others when beginning at Modo and they made negative upward social comparisons with other members at Modo Yoga who they felt looked better. For example, Amy expressed how she pointed out specific areas of her body she was dissatisfied with stating, "...it's like oh there's some people that are skinny and are flat as a board up there doing something, some positions I'm like oh there's a hump there and a bump there and thigh there and uh (laughs) do you know what I mean?" Another participant, Tessa, also commented that she evaluated her appearance during her practice of hot yoga as she said, "I tend to see like I adjust my clothing a lot um like especially like the waist line of my pants like I don't like having my stomach out like its an area of insecurity". Women in this study expressed that they compared their appearance to others, often prompting them to focus on specific body parts that they felt were inadequate (i.e., did not meet the ideal).

These appearance-based evaluations during the practice of hot yoga often led to increased feelings of body dissatisfaction and negative body image. Although it was more common in newer members and younger members, all participants experienced aspects of negative body

image (e.g., body dissatisfaction, anxiety, self-objectification, avoidance behaviours) during their practice of hot yoga at Modo Yoga. However, long-term members at Modo Yoga also displayed a greater level of body image flexibility. Body image flexibility includes the ability to accept and experience negative perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about one's body in an intentional way without attempting to change their frequency or form and then purposefully evoking self-kindness and engaging in valued behaviours (Webb et al., 2014; Webb et al., 2015). Furthermore, the more frequent and long-term members seemed to value the positive outcomes of hot yoga more than focusing on negative outcomes experienced (i.e., frustration during practice, self-consciousness/social physique anxiety, self-criticism, self-objectification). Body image flexibility was displayed by long-term member Janet, who stated,

When I leave I always feel elated and positive and it doesn't matter if I did my toppling tree or I didn't do my toppling tree I don't feel down on myself I didn't do as much and sometimes things just come naturally like wow I did great today in my practice! And some days its like well that wasn't as good as another day but I still did it I still laid on my mat and I did what I could for that day and I was successful at that

Moreover, Joanna commented on how she has learned there is no "end goal" with yoga after practicing hot yoga for over a year. When she first started her practice at Modo she commented on how hard she was on herself for not being able to do the advanced poses since she was not as flexible as she wanted to be. She explained how after discussing her frustration with the yoga instructor over her inability to do certain poses to their fullest she came to understand that everyone's body is different and there is no set end goal in a pose or in yoga. Learning to accept her body and its abilities, regardless of how it appeared in a pose, as well as accepting that development in yoga is not just about the poses, allowed Joanna to enjoy her practice of hot yoga more than other forms of exercise. She stated,

...like there's no goal so I'm not having to run it's okay to like pace yourself with progress so I think I like appreciate what I have done as opposed to what I have left to do which is part of the problem with more traditional sports, working towards this goal you're like I have to get better I have to get better but with yoga there's not really a getting better, better is being more aware of what your body needs

Participants in this study expressed how making appearance evaluations during their practice of hot yoga impacted their body image and practice of hot yoga at Modo Yoga. Evaluating one's appearance during the practice of yoga was negative for women's body image in that it led to feelings of inadequacy and may have distracted them from being aware of their internal body cues during a class. Appearance evaluations tended to be more frequently mentioned by younger members and newer members, with long-term members expressing fewer appearance evaluations, greater body image flexibility and less pose perfectionism.

4.1.5. Mental and spiritual growth. The last subtheme delineates how many participants expressed that they had grown spiritually and mentally since beginning their practice of hot yoga. Many women commented on feeling more calm, relaxed, less anxious, less reactive and more in tune with their body and their body's needs since practicing hot yoga. Practicing hot yoga allowed participants to have a release from daily stress (e.g., work stress, conflict with family/friends, financial concerns), which were a prominent concern for many women. Yoga provided an opportunity for self-reflection and time for oneself. Women who had been practicing for over a year at Modo tended to comment more frequently on the mental benefits experienced from practicing hot yoga and how they have developed as an individual since practicing. For example, Meghan, when asked how yoga has impacted her mental well-being, stated,

I personally find that yoga helps like not just physically but mentally so I um, I have struggled for a long time with anxiety and for me its kind of a way to deal with that and like other things in my life that aren't just staying fit basically

Women in this study discussed using techniques learned from their practice of yoga to their daily lives to improve their happiness. For example, Alyssa explained the impact of learning to be less reactive and calmer when faced with conflict as she stated,

He [instructor] was talking about being like non-reactive so I guess someone came and yelled at him and he was kind of talking about like you can either fight back or you can be non-reactive and like kind of applying that to yoga so if you're in a pose and your legs hurt not reacting to it and staying in the pose but basically that whole lesson that was a week when ah something happened at work there was an angry customer or something and its just funny because its something relatable to something happening in the week so whenever they give those lessons like at the beginning and being non reactive and just staying grounded in like practice and in life and I find those kinds of things I never thought about before and I didn't get from other [exercise] activities

The idea of being calmer and less reactive to stressful situations was common amongst women in this study as Janet stated similar beliefs,

I think it makes me calmer it makes me um maybe stop and think a little bit before I would react previously uh sort of I used to have a little bit of a short temper at times and jump to emotional maybe a little too quick and I think maybe it's made me sort of take a step back and again maybe that's the breathing you know often when I'm in a situation now where I'm stressed or whatever it's okay I'm going to do my yoga breathing, doing my yoga breathing, just breatheee!

Almost every participant discussed, to some degree, the positive effect that hot yoga has had for her mental well-being and quality of life. The long-term members, regardless of age, commented most frequently on the range of mental benefits they had received from practicing hot yoga (e.g., happier, improved body appreciation, greater intent to maintain health, less stress/anxiety). Further, all participants commented specifically on reductions in stress and anxiety being a large benefit of their practice. Younger members tended to practice to help relieve stress about schoolwork, job insecurity, and conflict with peers. Women 40 years and older tended to

comment more on stress regarding their work/ work load, romantic relationships, family/ friends, finances, and concern for their health.

4.2 Social Environmental Factors Influencing Yoga at Modo

The social environment (i.e., interactions with the instructors and other Modo members) was found to be influential on women's body image and experience practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga. Firstly, the yoga instructor's cues during class were a key factor in the enjoyment of participants practice and may contribute to cultivating positive body image thoughts. Secondly, the presence of other yoga practitioners in the studio influenced women's practice of hot yoga and body image both positively and negatively. Thus, two subthemes that emerged are *Don't worry about the Instagram pose: The influence of instructor cues*, and *Modo members*.

4.2.1. Don't worry about the Instagram pose: The influence of instructor cues. The first subtheme delineates how instructor's cues were influential to women's thoughts during the practice of hot yoga, as many women stated their internal dialogue was critical about their appearance or their body's ability during their practice. For instance Joanna stated, "Um, if you're like me, and somebody that is really tough on yourself there's someone else [the instructor] to moderate you like to remind you like to realistic expectations".

Teacher's cues were highly important for new practitioners and young practitioners, as many had the assumption that there was a 'right' or 'wrong' way to do yoga in that poses should look a certain way. This belief led participants to view yoga as having an objective standard to reach in each pose – a single right way to do a specific pose - which when not met became a negative point to critique (i.e., pose perfectionism) about themselves. One participant, Alyssa, stated how highly important the teacher's cues were to her focusing internally during her practice rather than worrying about how she looked in a pose,

Well they [instructors] kind of tell you to pay attention to how you're feeling more than how it looks and I think that's kind of an important message that they say a lot there too they always say like don't worry about the Instagram pose like the one guy always says that and it's kind of funny because I feel it's true like social media has kind of made yoga look like something like super desirable?

Alyssa also commented on how critical she can be about her poses and how the instructors help her to enjoy her practice more,

...[Instructors] always tell you like while you're going to class not to like get mad at yourself if you're going as far in a pose as you have previously which I think is really important because like with me for sports I used to be a really big perfectionist and I feel like yoga has been really good for that because I'm not so much I'm not so hard on myself I'm just letting myself do it so it's been more enjoyable for me than other things

The instructors' cues were highly valued by all participants due to the negative internal dialogue they often experienced during a hot yoga class. Having instructors give specific reminders and instructions to focus on internal cues, and developing a greater mind-body connection, helped women in this study to cultivate positive thoughts, especially if they were new or younger women practicing.

4.2.2. Modo members. The second subtheme includes how Modo members both positively and negatively influenced the participants' practice of hot yoga. Participants stated that the other members at Modo positively impacted them in that they felt welcomed and part of a positive community. Many women stated that other members were non-judgemental, which made them feel comfortable and further motivated them to continue practicing at Modo. For example, Meghan stated,

Um, I would say like it it's not even an intentional thing but I feel like everyone that's in the room, for the most part, everyone is accepting of others they're not really there to look at your body so much um they're there more for themselves and their well-being and their bodies so I guess I just feel like it's a good environment to be in like I don't know you just don't feel judged I don't feel like other members there are there to make you feel bad about your body there's more this kind of lifting each other up kind of mentality that I kind of get when I'm there.

Many participants, mostly the younger women in this study, stated that the variety in members that attend classes at Modo was positive for their body image experience (i.e., seeing people who vary in age, weight, and ability) as it allowed them to feel accepted. They perceived other members to be non-judgemental and thus non-threatening to their body image. For example, when asked about other members Alyssa stated,

To be honest I don't really think about my appearance because there's so many different people there you have like older men older women there, people who maybe weigh more than you and less than you and it's also like a dark room, you do it in the dark, and that's one thing that made me feel more comfortable at the beginning because like no ones really watching you right?

However, participants differed in their perception of the diversity of members as participants over 40 years commented on the members being mainly young and fit. For example, when asked about if she noticed other Modo Members when practicing, Michelle commented that other members are "tiny and little" and can "do the moves and here I am I'm bigger and I'm older and I'm stiff". Another participant, Janet, also over 40 years of age, commented on how she compared herself to other younger members,

I mean I think I definitely compare I definitely you know and for the most part if I see another woman that's say similar to my age I mean the young girls we can't compete with that their bodies are tighter and slimmer and whatever and I admire them for it you know good for them

Moreover, women stated that with increased practice at Modo they became less aware of other members during classes. For instance Emily stated,

...someone else said they were watching me and really liked the way I did yoga and I was like surprised that I didn't notice that I didn't see them watch me and my friend was in the class the other day and I didn't notice she was in the class and I saw her afterwards and she's like oh yah you didn't see me? And I'm like no I was focused on my mat and the things that I'm doing that there could be no one around me and I wouldn't notice.

Participants' perceptions of members often contradicted one another, displaying how participants struggled to objectively perceive who attends classes (e.g., older women, younger women, fit women, larger women, able-bodied women). Generally, younger women felt there was a variety of members, while women over the age of 40 felt there was less diversity in characteristics of people who attended classes. The younger and newer members tended to comment that there was diversity in members as felt not all members were young and fit or wore revealing clothing. Women who participated frequently stated they became less aware of other members with continued involvement in their practice at Modo; some also stated they were less aware of others from improving at the poses and thus they felt less self-conscious. Overall, participants stated that they were less aware of other members after going more frequently to Modo Yoga allowing a greater focus on their own yoga practice.

4.3 Environmental Factors Influencing Body Image

Three prominent factors within the physical environment of the heated studio at Modo Yoga were found to influence women's body image and their practice of hot yoga. The three subthemes included are *Staring at the voices: How mirrors can influence body image and yoga*, *Out of sight out of mind: The effect of lighting in the studio* and lastly, *The hamster wheel of thoughts: Importance of silence prior to practice*.

4.3.1. Staring at the voices: How mirrors can influence body image and yoga. The first subtheme explores how mirrors were both beneficial and detrimental to the practice of yoga and body image. Mirrors negatively influenced the majority of participants' body image from increased appearance evaluations and by increased thoughts on areas of the body with which they felt dissatisfied. Thus, the presence of mirrors created a duality between participants' mind and bodies (i.e., focus on appearance during a pose rather than how the body feels in a pose). For

instance, Barbara expressed how looking at herself in the mirror led to thoughts about her appearance, rather than her practice,

Yeah I think it's hard when you're staring in the mirror so you're staring at the voices kind of at that moment right and then as soon as you're lying down or like half way through the class like I said you're not even looking at the front of the class you're just feeling how you are it just brings it home

For Barbara and many of the participants, facing away from the mirror was the point in the class that allowed them to shift their focus from external appearance-related thoughts to internal feelings about the pose. Many women in the study expressed how looking at the mirror during poses would cause them to focus on aspects of their appearance they did not like, distracting them from the internal aspects of the practice. However, once they were able to either physically face away from the mirror, or if they closed their eyes so they could not see themselves, they were able to focus on their internal body sensations and connect with how their body felt in the pose.

Some participants even reported altering their behaviour because of the mirrors in the room to try and manage their own appearance concerns, such as practicing at the back of room so they couldn't see themselves in the mirror and wearing clothing that covered parts of the body they were dissatisfied with (e.g., wearing a tank top to cover their abdomen or wearing loose baggy t-shirts instead of wearing a sports bra). For example, Meghan expressed how she would choose specific clothing to make her feel more comfortable during classes as she stated, "Um I tend to wear yoga clothes that cover my stomach um depending on the day like I feel like every woman and every man even feels like a load of crap". She continued to explain how even though she may not avoid the mirrors, as some women did intentionally, she still felt the impact of them

being there as she would focus on the aspects of her body she was dissatisfied with. Meghan stated,

I don't usually tend to avoid them but I guess it's just a bit more distracting because when you're right in front of the mirror you're noticing like every single flaw in yourself um so yeah if you're in the second or third row you kind of you like you blend in more so you're not like the center of attention I guess.

Tessa also revealed how looking at the mirror caused her to focus on specific areas of her body she felt insecure about, distracting from her practice in that she would adjust her clothing to cover her stomach, "I adjust my clothing a lot um like especially like the waist line of my pants like I don't like having my stomach out like its an area of insecurity so if I'm not looking in the mirror I'm not going to do that because probably nobody else around me cares".

Some participants used the mirrors to focus solely on their own practice, such as for physical alignment in a pose or functional purposes, and these women expressed a more positive body image than those who used the mirrors to focus on appearance. For example, Susan was one participant that had a generally very positive body image and when asked why she used the mirrors she responded,

Um, because I find like I just focus on myself, and when I'm at the back of the class also it's hard to see yourself in the mirror, and I like to see what I'm doing. Um, and then also I don't focus on other people

Generally, participants stated that viewing themselves in the mirror during their practice of hot yoga led to increased thoughts about their body, specifically areas they were dissatisfied with. Moreover, experiencing appearance-related thoughts was distracting to the women's practice of hot yoga. Women who were able to focus solely on their own practice and use the mirrors for form and function (similar to aligning form in weight training) were not as critical of their bodies' appearance. However, using the mirror for alignment may still lead to negative

performance evaluations (i.e., pose perfectionism) during the practice of hot yoga despite being less concerned with appearance.

4.3.2. Out of sight out of mind: The effect of lighting in the studio. This subtheme outlines how participants felt more comfortable practicing in the dimly lit room because no one could clearly see their appearance during their practice. Alyssa explained how when first starting her practice of yoga at Modo the dimly lit room eased her fears over others watching her as she said, “It’s also like a dark room, you do it in the dark, and that’s one thing that made me feel more comfortable at the beginning because like no ones really watching you right?”. Moreover, the dim lighting aided in reducing participant comparisons with other members on either appearance or performance during their practice of hot yoga. For example, Michelle had such bad appearance anxiety in her past that she would not go to a gym; thus she liked “that there wasn’t bright lights” in that she felt more comfortable knowing others could not see her. Overwhelmingly, the lighting was an important feature that participants discussed as easing their anxieties when first practicing at Modo Yoga.

4.3.3. The hamster wheel of thoughts: Importance of silence prior to practice. The third subtheme highlights the importance of silence in the studio prior to the practice of hot yoga. Participants expressed the importance of silence in the heated studio at the beginning of class to help get into a mindful state. Meghan was one participant that expressed the importance of the silence to prepare for a more meditative state during her practice,

Um so when I'm laying like at the beginning of class if I'm in śavāsana like it's supposed to be quiet and when people come in if they are loud and like slam their mat down on the ground or even if like, I mean I've been guilty of it too, like if you go in with a friend and chit chat a little bit its kind of like etiquette wise it does really like you get out of your headspace like you're supposed to be kind of meditating or whatever so sometimes that can kind of be a negative effect I guess I would say on my practice.

The silence prior to classes allowed for participants to connect with their breathing and let go of outside distracting thoughts, thus becoming more present and ready for practice. Women found it challenging to quiet their minds and dismiss outside thoughts in order to focus on their practice of yoga. Janet stated that she had things [thoughts] “going through her head” like a “hamster wheel” where she was trying to focus in yoga but was unable to fully because of outside thoughts.

This subtheme addresses that, although it was difficult for participants to cultivate mindfulness and meditation during their practice, the silence was highly important to participants as they actively set out the intention to be at that hot yoga class, and attempt to be present and mindful. Having a constant internal dialogue was a common concern for many participants as they expressed attending yoga classes at Modo as a way to manage daily thoughts and anxieties.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The present study explored how women experience hot yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines and how their body image may be impacted while practicing. Emphasising hot yoga as a fitness activity as well as the commercialization of the practice, common in North American settings, may undermine core aspects of yoga, such as self-enlightenment, mind-body connections and awareness of internal cues, which in turn may alter one's body image and practice of yoga. In general, participants described both positive and negative aspects of their body image experience in connection with their hot yoga practice at Modo Yoga St. Catharines, suggesting a complex relationship. Three key themes regarding women's body image and their practice of hot yoga were identified with case-specific elements contributing uniquely to women's experiences. Firstly, hot yoga was mainly practiced for fitness reasons among all participants. The focus on fitness elements of hot yoga impacted women's experience of body image and the cultivation of embodiment as well as positive body image. Secondly, aspects of physical (e.g., the mirrors) and the social (e.g., other members) environment within the studio influenced women's body image both positively and negatively in complex and often intertwining ways. Lastly, several features of hot yoga as a practice at Modo Yoga were highly influential to women's body image and experience practicing hot yoga. In particular, the instructors' cues helped to counteract negative thoughts experienced by women and promoted an internalization of the traditional yogic values that generally led to more positive mental outcomes. Interestingly, the heated studio was fundamental as a vehicle for women to reach the mental benefits over time.

5.1 Hot Yoga and The Model of Embodiment

Yoga has been primarily considered an embodying activity (Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016).

Menzel and Levine (2007) suggested the main constituents of embodiment are more frequent states of mind–body integration, increased body awareness and body responsiveness, an increased sense of physical empowerment and an overall sense of physical competence. They also postulated that embodying activities, such as yoga, might be particularly influential for promoting positive body image. For women in this study, several aspects specific to hot yoga influenced women’s experience of embodiment, both positively and negatively.

Firstly, focusing on the fitness aspects of hot yoga may have lessened the first constituent of embodiment, a state of mind-body integration (Menzel & Levine, 2007). Women in this study frequently criticized the “correctness” of their poses worried about how “right” they believed they were doing them during their practice of hot yoga. Being concerned with performing well and doing the poses “right” led to external appearance-related thoughts, such as self-objectification. Self-objectification has been linked with lower embodiment, thus an over emphasis or preoccupation with how “right” poses appear during yoga, when the philosophy of yoga indicates there is no “right” or perfect way to perform them, could possibly lead to lower embodiment through self-objectifying thoughts.

Women also emphasized the achievement of the fitness and external physical benefits they gained from their practice (e.g., weight-loss, toned muscles, strength, and flexibility). For many women, the focus was not on the experience of yoga but on the fitness outcomes associated with practicing hot yoga. Focusing on the physical fitness outcomes of hot yoga led some women to self-objectify during their practice by evaluating their body’s appearance and how closely it aligned to the societal ideal; this appearance focused was reinforced by the presence of mirrors in the room, an element of most traditional exercise facilities. Typically in yoga, mind-body integration is encouraged through an internal orientation of one’s thoughts –

focusing on sensations and feelings in the body, which can enhance awareness of the body. Focusing more frequently on one's outwards performance during hot yoga may negatively impact the cultivation of the mind-body connections and lead to more frequent critical external thoughts. Thus, women focusing on the fitness outcomes and "correctness" of poses are two distinct ways that the mind-body link may be disrupted during hot yoga. Moreover, focusing on weight and appearance outcomes is not typical of the traditional yoga practice. This tendency is concerning since focusing on weight and appearance outcomes that result from exercise have been found to lead to negative body image outcomes such as increased body dissatisfaction and decreased self-esteem (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005; Vartanian, Wharton, & Green, 2012).

The mirrors in the studio may also impact the cultivation of mind-body connections for women during their hot yoga practice. Mirrors in fitness settings are commonly seen, and in fact recommended (American College of Sports Medicine, 1997), in order to promote proper form and technique during exercise. The mirrors in the hot yoga studio were a significant case-specific factor of this study that may have undermined the mind-body integration aspect of embodiment for some women by increasing self-objectifying and critical thoughts. Although Menzel and Levine (2011) suggest yoga may reduce self-objectification leading to more positive body image, this may not always be true in some hot yoga settings. Findings from this study are consistent with Frayeh and Lewis (2018) who found the large floor-to-ceiling mirrors at the front of the yoga studio increased how anxious women felt around other women in the class, causing some to alter their behaviors (i.e., moving to the back of the room, and closing their eyes). The mirrors caused some women in this study to self-objectify during their practice, which may have further consequences for their practice of yoga and general mental health. For example, self-objectification has been found to have negative consequences on women's eating habits (Stice,

2002; Verplanken & Tangelder, 2011) and performance in terms of concentration or “flow” (Fredrickson & Robert, 1997). Flow occurs when one experiences a positive state of mind–body integration and is engaged in deep concentration on a certain activity or task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Fredrickson and Robert (1997) suggested consequences of self-objectification include an inability to achieve peak motivational states (i.e., flow) and lowered awareness of internal bodily states, and the current study is consistent with this conceptualization. Women in the present study stated that mirrors increased self-objectifying thoughts and participants who had self-objectifying thoughts generally expressed less frequently an awareness of their internal states during yoga (e.g., feeling muscles, awareness of breath, pain). Thus, mirrors may have increased self-objectifying thoughts and impaired the experience of embodiment for some women in this study and prevented them from being deeply engaged in yoga itself.

The social environment within the hot yoga studio may also impact mind-body connections as practicing around others led some women to experience physique anxiety and make negative social comparisons. Previous studies with more traditional types of exercise classes (Frederick & Shaw, 1995; Martin Ginis, Burke, & Gauvin, 2007; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008), and one study specifically examining the effects of yoga on body image (Neumark-Sztainer, Watts, & Rydell, 2018) found the social environment in which exercise takes place has the ability to negatively influence how women experience body image. For instance, body image concerns can constrain the enjoyment of activities in that concern about appearance, concern over the type of clothing worn in classes, and competition among participants over appearance, reduces enjoyment for women (Frederick & Shaw, 1995; Martin Ginis, Burke, & Gauvin, 2007; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008).

The effects of the social environment in the hot yoga studio at Modo Yoga were more complex than these findings as women reported both negative and positive feelings from practicing around others at Modo. For instance, women expressed some negative body image thoughts and feelings through comparisons with other Modo members (e.g., notice flat stomach on other women). However, women mainly reported feeling positive from the supportive environment at Modo and the instructors' cues that helped to direct women's thoughts inward rather than making negative comparisons to others. Younger women tended to comment on variety in membership (people who vary in age, weight, and ability), which was positive for their body image experience as it allowed them to feel accepted and perceive other members to be non-judgemental and thus non-threatening to their body image. Women 40 years and older tended to make negative comparisons with younger (and as they perceived) more able-bodied women in classes. Some older women expressed they experienced heightened anxiety about their bodies practicing yoga in the studio (versus at home) which in turn impaired their balance through lack of concentration. However, age was also somewhat confounded with experience practicing, as those who practice more frequently or for a longer time reported more positive body image experiences and fewer comparisons with others.

Negative social comparisons made by women in this study were not only regarding other women's physical appearance but also regarding their own ability during class (i.e., notice others' form/ flexibility, how "right" they were doing the pose compared to others), reflecting the belief that there was a right way to do the poses. The fixation on "pose perfectionism" for many of the women demonstrates how some women were critical of their body's functionality, which led to negative social comparisons and negative body image thoughts (e.g. body dissatisfaction, and self-objectification). Generally, social comparisons are detrimental to women's body image

as well as women's long-term health (Pila, Barlow, Wrosch, & Sabiston, 2016). Moreover, social comparisons have been found to have an important role in maladaptive exercise behaviors (e.g., exercise avoidance; Pila, et al., 2016). In the present case study, women avoided busy classes with many participants, oriented themselves towards the back of the room to be less noticed, and also wore clothing that hid areas of their body they were dissatisfied with. Younger women in this study made negative social comparisons more frequently than the older members, possibly due to the fact that the majority of other women in the class were more similar in age to them making social comparisons more feasible. Although older women commented less frequently on the appearance of other members, negative appearance concerns were expressed by both younger and older women supporting that body dissatisfaction remains stable across the lifespan (Tiggemann, 2004).

However, older women placed less importance on physical appearance and more importance on competence/function, as well as other life variables than younger women, consistent with previous research. For example, Hofmeier et al., (2016) highlighted the value that older women place on having a healthy and functional physical body, especially as they age, while Roy and Payette (2012) found in a systematic review that as women age, the importance of appearance declines relative to the importance placed on health and function of the body. Despite some women being less concerned with appearance, focusing on body functionality was not always positive. In general, emphasizing body functionality is considered to be an effective way to increase embodiment and a focus on body functionality has been linked to positive outcomes such as gratitude for one's body and less self-objectification (Alleva, Holmqvist Gattario, Martijn, & Lunde, 2019). However, the findings in the present study confirmed suggestions that focusing on body functionality does not inevitably lead to only more positive body image

outcomes (Alleva & Martijn, 2019). Mulgrew and Hennes (2015) investigated the impact of exposure to images of models that emphasized aesthetic-based or functional-based aspects of body image. The presence of an attractive and slender model (i.e., the Western ideal) was enough to produce negative outcomes regardless of whether the images were focused on form or function. Consistent with Mulgrew and Hennes (2015) when women in this study compared their own functionality to that of someone they considered fitting the societal ideal (e.g., other members, younger women, the instructor) it resulted in negative body image thoughts (e.g. body dissatisfaction, and self-objectification). There is a need for a greater focus holistically on the functions of the body, rather than an aesthetic-based focus on body functionality, as some research has begun to highlight the detrimental aspects of focusing on a normative functional ideal on body image (Alleva et al, 2019; Mulgrew & Tiggemann, 2018). Mulgrew and Tiggemann (2018) examined whether focusing on function when viewing idealized images of models would be protective against body dissatisfaction. They found that functionality-based depictions, reflections, and comparisons of the body might actually produce worse outcomes than those based on appearance (Mulgrew & Tiggemann, 2018). Thus, exposure and internalization of idealized and normative depictions of functionality may be more harmful to body image than previously thought.

Based on this work, some researchers have started to recommend that the focus on body functionality must be more holistic (i.e. body as a whole) rather than segmented on body parts, or rather than focusing on aesthetic-based depictions of the body and its functions (Alleva & Martijn, 2019). Further, these authors also noted that function and appearance can be confounded; for example, they noted that the ideal for women has shifted to be thin but also toned. However, toned could be interpreted as both an appearance-oriented aspect of the body as

well as a functional one. The conceptualization of body functionality by some women in the present study allowed for greater appearance evaluations, internalization of societal beauty standards, upward social comparisons, (albeit based on performance of the poses in some cases), and focusing on specific parts of the body, which may ultimately narrow what individuals conceptualize as body functionality (Alleva & Martijn, 2019). Describing body functionality with a narrow focus on aesthetic body functionality (e.g., toned abs, flexible limbs, toned arms/legs) could have negative consequences for individuals not meeting the functional ideal or those who have functional limitations (Alleva & Martijn, 2019). Focusing on one's own body functionality and a broader conceptualization of body functionality should continue to be encouraged to reduce any negative body image outcomes.

The second constituent of embodiment, increased body awareness and responsiveness (Menzel & Levine, 2007), was not fully experienced by all participants. Most women commented on responding physically, usually due to the added intensity of the heat during their practice (e.g., when they felt muscle stiffness/soreness, when out of breath, when they needed water) rather than responding to their body from a desire to care for it. Women stated that regular yoga was not enough of a challenge or intense enough, whereas hot yoga addresses this need for intensity through the challenge of practicing in a heated room. Thus, during hot yoga women may have achieved less meditative awareness and were more physically-oriented, similar to embodiment experiences in athletes. The intensity created from the heated studio may generate a different experience of embodiment than that of traditional yoga by requiring more focus on the physical task at hand, due to the intensity of the heat. Women in this study generally focused on the functions of their body, rather than their appearance, yet they still had the assumption that yoga had to be hard to lead to tangible benefits that are useful in order to engage in yoga.

However, women who had practiced longer than 6 months tended to express a greater awareness of their body and the benefits they felt through self-care and responding to their body's needs more frequently (i.e., resting when needed, going to the doctor, and intuitive eating).

The third component of embodiment is an increased sense of physical competence (Menzel & Levine, 2007), which was experienced by participants from improvement in their practice of hot yoga. Women expressed feeling a sense of empowerment from practicing hot yoga due to perceived improvement in their practice from increased strength, flexibility, and balance. Women predominantly expressed feeling more confident in their body's abilities (e.g., feeling more balanced, confidence doing yoga postures/series, feeling stronger) since practicing at Modo Yoga.

Although the second and third elements of embodiment did in fact contribute to experiencing embodiment during hot yoga, the first constituent was most influential on embodiment in hot yoga for women in this study. Overall, focusing more on the physical elements (i.e., appearance and weight outcomes, "correctness" of poses and performance during practice) may disrupt the experience of embodiment for some women which in turn may disrupt the positive body image outcomes of yoga, as it is the embodying aspects of yoga that have been found to lead to positive body image outcomes through decreased self-objectification (Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016; Menzel & Levine, 2011). Mahlo and Tiggemann (2016) specifically tested yoga using the model of embodiment and found that the relationship between yoga participation and positive body image was mediated by higher embodiment and lower self-objectification.

It is notable that in this study women frequently reported self-objectifying thoughts, which may mean they did not experience all the potential benefits of reduced self-objectification thought to result from yoga (Mahlo & Tiggemann, 2016). Moreover, past body image literature

promotes focusing on body functionality to improve body image and reduced self-objectification (Alleva, et al., 2015; Alleva et al., 2019). However, in the present study, focusing on body functionality led to negative body image thoughts for some women. First, comparing one's own body functionality to others in a yoga class led to body dissatisfaction and self-objectification for some women. Second, women displayed pose-perfectionistic thoughts (i.e., being critical of the body's ability and functions during a pose), also leading to negative body image thoughts. Therefore, focusing on one's body functionality was shown to be negative for some women, especially when comparing themselves to normative and societal ideals. Future yoga programs should concentrate on teaching women to focus on, and appreciate, internal or invisible body functions rather than visible functions to enhance body image outcomes (Vinoski Thomas et al., 2019). Moreover, focusing on one's *own* practice may be critical in reducing negative comparisons with other's or with the societal ideal (Alleva, et al., 2019; Alleva & Martijn, 2019).

Thus, hot yoga, at least in the context of Modo Yoga, may have different outcomes for body image than previously found in traditional yoga classes since self-objectification may occur more frequently through a disruption of embodiment.

5.2 Positive Outcomes of Modo Yoga on Body Image

Despite participants having an overall focus on fitness there are several aspects that helped to counteract the elements of hot yoga that could lead to negative thoughts or feelings about one's body. Notably, the instructor's cues during class helped to foster positive body image thoughts. Some positive body image thoughts women in this study reported were appreciating the unique beauty and functions that the body performs, accepting aspects that were inconsistent with idealized images, and interpreting information in a body-protective manner so that the most positive information is internalized and most negative information is rejected or

reframed (Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010). Engeln, Shavlik, and Daly (2018) found that the positive psychological effects of acute exercise are increased when an instructor used motivational comments based on health and strength rather than appearance or weight. Women in this study similarly commented on the importance of focusing on functionality during classes over their appearance and how instructors' comments during their practice helped to facilitate those thoughts.

Hot yoga instructors also encouraged members in Modo Yoga classes to not compare themselves to others, which helped women in this study reduce upward comparisons with others. Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2018) found when teachers used speech during yoga classes to help individuals focus inward it helped reduce self-comparisons to others during class. Similarly, women in this study stated that when given instructions directing attention to their body's movements they reported focusing more internally rather than evaluating their appearance during class. Cues to accept what their body can do in their practice encouraged body appreciation and acceptance for the women in this study. These cues were important to participants as many stated when they first started practicing hot yoga they thought there was a "right way" or a "wrong way" to do yoga and they wanted to do the poses "right", even if it wasn't physically possible for their body structure or current ability within their practice. The belief that there was a correct way to practice is contrary to traditional meditative and yogic beliefs in which there is no scale or judgement of oneself; rather, practitioners accept and acknowledge themselves without judgement in order to learn from their thoughts (Bonura, 2011; Carrico, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Past literature has supported the positive benefits of utilizing self-compassion for women's body image (Magnus, Kowalski, Kent, & Mchugh, 2010; Wasylikiw, MacKinnon, & MacLellan, 2012). Self-compassion entails less harsh judgments of the self, promoting self-love

and self-kindness consistent with yoga practice. Thus, regardless of body size, shape or discrepancy from societal ideals, those who are self-compassionate will be more accepting of their physical selves (Wasylikiw, MacKinnon, & MacLellan, 2012). As a result, the instructor's cues were highly influential for women's body image in this study as they helped participants be less critical and more self-compassionate during their practice, promoting positive body image overall, and making it more enjoyable to continue practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga.

Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, and Augustus-Horvath (2010) defined positive body image as appreciating the unique beauty and functionality of one's body, and highlighted several processes of positive body image including filtering information (e.g., appearance commentary, and media ideals) in a body-protective manner, defining beauty broadly, and highlighting the body's assets while minimizing perceived imperfections. Thus, instructor's cues may have helped to foster body image filtering in women by encouraging practitioners to process mostly positive information and reject negative information. Ultimately, this focus can decrease the importance placed on appearance (rather than internal sensations of the body) and enhance body evaluations as suggested by Wood-Barcalow et al. (2010), thus possibly leading to greater positive body image for women in this study.

Other Modo members and the Modo community also impacted women's experiences practicing yoga. Some women expressed that the Modo members were diverse and valued as contributing positively to the experience practicing, as they felt accepted by others no matter their shape or size. Many women in this study may have had a broad conceptualization of beauty (i.e., perceive many looks, appearances, body sizes/shapes, and inner characteristics as beautiful), which positively influenced their practice of hot yoga and body image (Tylka & Iannantuono, 2016). Participants struggled to objectively view who attended classes, with many

women having conflicting views on this matter. For example, some women stated there were mainly young fit women attending classes, some stated there were older and younger women, and some women also stated there were larger women who attended classes. However, women practicing frequently most commonly expressed not noticing other members during classes after practicing for months. Women may have become more internally-focused over time from practicing at Modo since elements of embodiment (e.g., mind-body connection) may take a while to develop through their practice of yoga. Therefore, with more practice women were able to focus more internally and were less aware of other members. Overall, perceiving diverse body types in hot yoga classes, increasing enjoyment of practicing hot yoga, and developing greater mind-body connections through frequent practice may lead to more positive body image in women.

Women who practiced yoga for a longer period of time (6 months - 1 year) at Modo Yoga were generally able to internalize more of the traditional yogic values. For instance, women who had been practicing hot yoga for a longer period of time expressed more frequently a withdrawal of senses to focus internally and experiencing “flow” during their practice. Women expressed experiencing flow in hot yoga through feeling fully engaged in the activity and not thinking about what they looked like or outside thoughts during the practice. Women also expressed using the tools they’ve learned through yoga (e.g., reducing comparisons with others, being less reactive) to achieve happiness outside of class. Thus, the psychological benefits women received from practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga often translated beyond the classroom. For example, women who had practiced 6 months or longer described experiencing body acceptance, increased mindfulness and mind-body connectivity (i.e., more self-aware, greater intention for intuitive eating, and greater self-care habits), feeling less anxious, and being less

reactive when presented with conflict. For example, some women expressed body acceptance outside of class in that they felt confident in their body regardless of its shape or size. Women in this study felt more self-aware in that they could sense when they were tired and needed rest. They were also more responsive to their bodies; for example, when they were frustrated, they would take deep breaths rather than lose their temper or be in an anxious or distressed state. Women also expressed greater self-care habits such as eating healthier, regularly exercising, taking time to themselves and seeking medical help when needed. Many women reported not being able to fully experience these benefits at the beginning of their practice, yet it was a pivotal moment for them when they started noticing the mental benefits outside of classes. The positive psychological outcomes reported by women in this study were important as every woman in this study expressed going to yoga to help improve or cope with some aspect of their life outside of their practice of yoga (i.e., maintain life balance, relieve stress from work, decrease anxiety, and improve physicality).

The need for a psychological release in combination with the physical stress relief of yoga was largely impactful in this study; it indicated the constant pressure and stress women experience in society. The stress and pressure experienced by all participants was one of the reasons why yoga generally appeals to people as a form of exercise in North America. All participants noted that they needed the enhanced physical aspects of hot yoga to reach the mental benefits. Thus, although the heat created an added intensity, which was viewed as a benefit of hot yoga over non-hot yoga by all participants, it was not the only benefit that positively impacted women's experiences practicing hot yoga. The psychological benefits (e.g., less self-critical, less anxiety, less reactive) were expressed as highly influential to participants' lives in a way not experienced or gained through other forms of exercise, adding further value to

practicing hot yoga specifically.

5.3 Summary

In the case of Modo Yoga, hot yoga impacted body image in women and the experience of embodiment in ways that undermined some of the traditions in yoga, but there were also elements that facilitated these traditions. First, a greater focus on the fitness elements of hot yoga often hindered the cultivation of mind-body integrations typically developed through the practice of yoga. Altering the development and experience of embodiment could potentially mean that self-objectification was experienced more frequently than in traditional yoga thus impacting the positive outcomes. Second, despite the overall emphasis of hot yoga being for fitness, there were positive psychological benefits associated with the practice of hot yoga. New members struggled to achieve the same range of benefits as long-term members as they often were too focused on the physical aspects of hot yoga. More long-term members expressed the psychological benefits (e.g., stress relief, decreased anxiety, mindfulness) achieved through the enhanced physical practice of hot yoga and these benefits translated outside the yoga practice. In general, the instructors and other members contributed to these positive effects. Overall, women in this study expressed feeling more positive about themselves since practicing yoga at Modo Yoga and the experience of practicing at Modo Yoga positively impacted their lives on a daily basis through believing and living life through traditional yogic philosophies.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

6.1 Overview of Study

This study used a single-site case study investigation to gain a deeper understanding of how women experience hot yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines and how their body image may be impacted while practicing. Yoga has previously been shown to improve women's body image (Bak-Sosnowska & Urban, 2017; Gammage et al., 2016; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008), yet there is little research on the effects of hot yoga on body image and how it may differ from traditional yoga. Thus, I was interested in investigating the impact of hot yoga on body image and how practice at a particular hot yoga studio may impact the experience of the practice and body image in women. I chose Modo Yoga St. Catharines due to my own personal interest and enjoyment practicing there over the years. I interviewed 10 women who ranged in their experience at Modo Yoga and varied in age, body shape, size and height. I recruited participants with differing characteristics to understand the complex and varying ways that women may experience hot yoga and body image at Modo Yoga.

6.2 Reflexivity

There were many challenges I faced while conducting this qualitative case study methodology that shaped my inquiry process. First, the amount of interview data obtained was challenging to manage at times and required me to be very organized and methodical in my analysis. I had planned ahead of time how I wanted to organize the interview data in order to be able to analyze each interview transcript carefully. I also was thoughtful in how I stored the interview data electronically and printed transcripts in order to be able to easily reflect on interview data as the study progressed, while maintaining participant confidentiality. Having a method for transcription helped with thematically analyzing the data since I was able to start to

recognize patterns within the data and review and compare transcripts to confirm (or not confirm) preconceptions I had about how women were experiencing the case.

Although I was organized, it was still challenging to move between analyzing the interview data, making memos about my preconceptions of participant data, concurrently conducting follow-up interviews, and reviewing notes on participant reactions during interviews that all contributed to the analysis. Managing the data I gathered required me to take a step back from the data several times to look at the purpose of my study and also meet with members of my committee to question my analytic approach and receive feedback on my interpretation of the findings. Having multiple researchers on this project with differing theoretical viewpoints and methodological epistemologies led to several challenges when writing the final results and discussion. Initially, I found difficult to allow the intricacies and messiness of qualitative interview data to be highlighted in the results. I can also be rigid in my writing style in that I like set criteria to follow, which is also true for my supervisor who operates more under a quantitative post-positivist perspective. The two committee members on this study were both qualitative researchers, which made addressing the data challenging for me in that I was unsure how to write about the data in way that included the different perspectives of my committee members and my supervisor's perspectives, yet stayed true to what I found emerging from the data. With this being said, I often needed to be challenged by my committee and supervisor to look further in depth at the data in ways that I had not initially, which was extremely helpful as it ultimately led me to have a greater understanding of the data and emerging concepts from different perspectives. For example, reflecting on conversations I had with my supervisor and committee about the results of the study made me realize that I definitely went into the study thinking that there were some distinct negative outcomes that could result from hot yoga (e.g.,

appearance anxiety, self-objectification, and perfectionism), and while this assumption was correct to some extent, it was not as impactful on women's body image and their practice as I thought it would be.

My knowledge of the body image literature may have impacted what I believed would affect women since I had previously read about aspects of the exercise environment, specifically yoga classes, that may negatively impact women. Furthermore, my own personal experience with yoga may have contributed to how I assumed women would self-objectify due to the mirrors in the studio. While I tend to have a positive body image, I found it difficult not to evaluate my appearance (or performance) when practicing in front of a mirror. I may have underestimated the degree to which women practicing yoga at Modo Yoga regularly tend to have a positive body image, especially given my sample of women who were generally very active, and thus were not greatly affected by any negative features of hot yoga. Moreover, I underestimated the impact of the instructor's comments during class and the effect of feeling supported and non-judged by other members at Modo. I believed the social environment would be overwhelmingly negative as there are opportunities for negative comparisons in a hot yoga class. Yet, while comparisons to others did occur, women in this study did not seem overly affected by other members during classes; rather they knew they had a common interest in yoga and felt supported. I was not expecting such a positive response from women in that sense, but being incorrect in my assumptions actually excited me because it allowed me to understand how other women experienced hot yoga at Modo. It also made me feel glad that I was wrong, that women were able to face negative thoughts, feelings and criticisms about themselves but through hot yoga were learning to reshape these thoughts and ultimately leave feeling positive about themselves. I had always had a positive experience at Modo and I too had felt that the

overwhelming support and community feeling, from the teachers and members, outweighed any negative feelings or thoughts. Being able to reflect on how hot yoga is experienced by other women has further strengthened my passion for yoga and learning how to be kind to yourself and your body, as well as teaching others to do the same.

6.4 Limitations of this Study and General Case Study Research

This particular case study had several limitations, some resulting specifically from case study methodology. First, conducting a single-site case study meant sampling from a select group of people that had experience with hot yoga at that particular studio. Using purposeful sampling in this case limited discovering the impact of hot yoga at other studios and how Modo Yoga may be similar or different in their approach to yoga and influence on women's body image. Women voluntarily signed up to participate in this study which may have attracted more outgoing or body positive individuals to sign up rather than introverted individuals or those with very negative experiences who may be been reluctant to discuss this topic. It is also possible those who had very negative experiences may have not have continued at the studio; since recruitment occurred primarily at the studio, only those who currently attend Modo participated (i.e., young, white, and middle-upper classed women). Opinions from women who have a less positive body image may have been under reported, as they may have been less willing to discuss body-related topics surrounding their practice of hot yoga or they may not even participate in hot yoga in the first place. The women in this study were all generally very physically active and able-bodied individuals, thus their experiences practicing hot yoga might be very different to those of an inactive person. Lastly, all 10 women in this study were Caucasian and middle-to-upper socio-economic status, likely due to the location of the studio the demographics of the surrounding community, and the costs associated with yoga as a leisure

activity. Having participants all from one region and of similar financial and cultural backgrounds may have limited our understanding of how hot yoga may impact individuals from lower income households or of more diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, the findings from this study are useful as there may be transferability to other hot yoga studios in how women's body image can be impacted from the hot yoga studio, the impact of instructors, and the impact of a fitness focused yoga were identified.

6.5 Contributions to Knowledge

Understanding women's experiences practicing hot yoga at Modo Yoga helped to establish which aspects of hot yoga might be beneficial or detrimental to women's body image. Identifying how women experience body image during hot yoga revealed ways that women implemented their own body image coping strategies. Women in this study used techniques to help cope with body image anxiety in the hot yoga studio by wearing clothing that covered areas they were unsatisfied with, closing their eyes during practice to avoid criticizing their appearance or performance, as well as positioning themselves away from the large mirrors in the room. Moreover, the constituents of embodiment that are affected by hot yoga were identified. The first constituent of embodiment, increased mind-body integration (Menzel & Levine, 2007), appeared to be the most impacted by hot yoga due to the over-emphasis most women had on the fitness aspects of hot yoga leading to self-objectification and the focus on doing poses correctly. If embodiment is not experienced as strongly in hot yoga as it is in regular yoga, the body image benefits typically associated with yoga (i.e., reduced self-objectification) may also not be experienced to the same degree. Lastly, focusing on body functionality was found to have some negative outcomes for some women in this study. Therefore, focusing on body functionality may not be as effective for improving body image as previously thought (Alleva et al., 2015; Alleva

et al., 2019) without providing guidance in how to effectively focus on functionality of the whole body (rather than body parts) and to avoid comparisons to either other people or to the idea. This could have potential impact on exercise interventions since yoga has previously been used to cultivate greater positive body image through focusing on body functionality.

Lastly, the qualitative case study methodology was useful in the context of studying body image. Using a case study was a helpful design in that the uniqueness of this Modo Yoga studio, hot yoga, and how women experienced their body image in this context could be explored. A case study allowed for women to express openly what naturally occurs for them during their practice of hot yoga and how the physical environment of Modo Yoga studio impacted their experience. It was important to capture the impact of the physical space of Modo Yoga studio since I utilized a single site case study and thus the distinctiveness of yoga at the St. Catharines Modo Yoga studio was highlighted. Moreover, a qualitative case study approach allowed for the complex body image experiences of women to be teased out in great detail and allowed for the comparison of contradictory statements made by participants that may have been missed otherwise.

6.6 Future Directions & Implications

Studios, teachers and women can be educated on which aspects of hot yoga, the studio, and the instruction impact body image in order to make a more positive experience for members and for themselves. For instance, yoga studios and instructors can make changes to the layout of the studio (i.e., fewer mirrors) and their teaching style (i.e., positive body image cues and a greater focus on traditional yoga values than fitness) to help cultivate and enhance the positive psychological outcomes found in this study associated with hot yoga. For women, constantly reminding themselves and being reminded by the yoga instructors not to make comparisons to

others helped to lower the impact of the social environment; thus, instructors should continue to emphasize the importance of an individual yoga practice. Women should be educated on the aspects of hot yoga that are positive for their long-term health and body image. Moreover, women should strive to enter their practice of yoga with an open mindset where yoga is a fluid practice that is not meant to be perfect. Women should also be encouraged to participate in yoga for reasons other than improving physical fitness.

The yoga and fitness industry itself should reframe the marketing of hot yoga so that it is not just seen as a fitness activity, and by not emphasizing outcomes like weight loss or sweating out toxins, but rather encouraging more of the traditional outcomes of yoga. The yoga industry should try to encourage diversity in participants, advertising and promoting yoga for all body shapes, sizes, and ability. Further studies should explore the motives for hot yoga and continue to explore the impact of hot yoga on body image in women with more neutral or negative body image, less physically active individuals, and in men, in order to understand how hot yoga may influence body image in a variety of people.

6.7 Conclusion

Overall, this case study has shown the elements of hot yoga at Modo Yoga that could affect body image in varying ways. While there were some negative aspects associated with hot yoga at Modo, such as increased anxiety from the social environment of the studio, as well as self-objectification and perfectionism linked to the use of mirrors and the focus on yoga as a tool for improving physical fitness, the impact of yoga at Modo was overwhelmingly positive for women in this study. Hot yoga at Modo Yoga largely contributed to a positive emotional state for women and encouraged positive body image through the practice of yoga.

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Appendix A: Ethics Clearance



Brock University
 Research Ethics Office
 Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
 Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 3/8/2019
 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: GAMMAGE, Kimberley - Kinesiology
 FILE: 18-133 - GAMMAGE
 TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Hannah Rose
 SUPERVISOR: Kimberley Gammage
 TITLE: The West Does It Best: A Case Study to Explore Women's Body Image Experiences Practicing Yoga in North America

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 3/1/2020

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 3/8/2019 to 3/1/2020.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 3/1/2020. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Lynn Dempsey, Chair
 Social Science Research Ethics Board

Robert Steinbauer, Chair
 Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Hi, thank you for participating in my research study today. Before we begin I would like to say a bit about myself, and how I came to be involved with this study. This study is part of my Master's thesis project, and since I have a personal interest in yoga, I wanted to see how yoga in North America might influence women's body image experiences. I have practiced yoga for almost 10 years and have tried both traditional yoga and hot yoga at Modo, so today I would like to talk to you about your own experiences at Modo Yoga St. Catharines.

1. Background/Intro

- Why did you sign up for this study?
- What experience do you have practicing yoga?

2. What do you think body image is?

- How would you describe your own body image?
- Thoughts/ feelings/behaviours?
- Would you say that you have a positive, negative or neutral BI?

3. How would you describe yoga in your own words?

- What is the first thing you think of when you think of yoga?
- What benefits do you feel from going to yoga?

4. Can you describe for me what a typical experience at Modo is like for you?

- Describe a time you went to Modo Yoga, what did you see?
- What were you thinking/feeling?
- Can you tell me what goes through your mind when you walk into class?
- What are you thinking during class? When you leave class?
- What have you noticed about the studio/classroom/other students/teachers?
 - Can you describe what your environment looks like?
 - What class type do you prefer to go to? Why?
 - Describe what the teacher says during class.

5. How does your experience at *Modo* impact your body image?

- In what ways do you think your *body image* may impact how you experience yoga at Modo?
- What are your thoughts about your body when you are there? Feelings?
- How does it influence your behaviours? (e.g., clothing, interactions with others, class choices)
- How often do you compare yourself to others? Why/why not?

6. You mentioned earlier that you _____. Can you give me an example? How did this make you feel? What was that like for you?

8. Do you follow Modo on their website or social media?

- How do you interact/browse? Do you comment or like any posts? What do you look at?
- How do the images/quotes on Modo's social media make you feel?
- What do you think about when you look at the images/ text?

9. How did you find having to discuss your body image in relation to yoga at Modo?

- Would it have been different if you went somewhere else to practice?
- What was comfortable or uncomfortable about discussing this?
- What did you find difficult to discuss? Why?

Appendix C: Second Interview Guide

Thank you for coming back for a follow up interview. I am going to be asking questions to clarify some of what we discussed about your body image experiences at Modo Yoga.

Feeling questions

- 1.) How does going to hot yoga classes make you feel? (i.e., relaxed, nervous, tense, excited)
- 2.) How does doing hot yoga make you feel about your body?
 - a. How do other members make you feel about your body? In what ways do you they influence your practice?
 - b. How do instructors influence how you feel about your body? In what ways do they influence your practice?
- 3.) How does going to more intense classes, such as Modo fit classes, make you feel about your body? Is how you feel different than in a regular Modo class?
 - a. More perfectionism in intense classes? Feel like pose must be perfect?
 - b. Why do you choose these classes over a traditional yoga class?

Thoughts

- 1.) Why does going to Modo make you think about yourself/body in a more positive manner?
- 2.) How do you keep yourself from thinking about your body's appearance during your practice?
- 3.) How do you think that the frequency of your practice influences the impact on your body image?
- 4.) How have your thoughts about hot yoga changed from when you first went to yoga at Modo?
 - a. (I.e., Changed what clothing you wear? Try more class types; feel more confident in ability during practice?)

Behaviours

- 1.) Who do you like to go to yoga with? Why/ why not?
- 2.) Where do you choose to put your mat down in the studio? Why there?
 - a. Would this change if there were no mirrors?
- 3.) How do you think about what food before or during classes? Why/ why not?
- 4.) In what ways do you think hot yoga has benefited your life and well-being outside of the studio?
 - a. i.e., More calm? More positive? More thoughtful throughout the day
- 5.) In what ways do you think hot yoga has influenced your other physical activity habits?
 - a. i.e. less intense exercises? Feel more flexible and balanced? Activities for happiness> appearance?

General about Modo

- 1.) Why do you choose to go to Modo versus other studios or gyms that offer hot yoga?
- 2.) In what ways does the Modo studio specifically contribute to your practice of hot yoga?

Appendix D: Demographic Information

Please complete the following information:

Age: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Sexual Orientation: _____

Are you a student? Yes/No

If yes:

Year: _____

Major: _____

If no:

Occupation: _____

Previous yoga experience:

How often do you practice yoga per week? _____

How many hours (approximately) per week? _____

What types of yoga have you tried? _____

What type(s) of yoga do you typically practice? _____

Do you practice yoga at home? Yes/ No

If yes, how often do you practice at home per week? _____

If yes, how many hours do you practice at home per week? _____

Do you practice yoga at a studio OTHER THAN Modo (formerly Moksha) Yoga?

If yes, how often do you practice yoga at a studio other than Modo Yoga?

If yes, how many hours do you practice yoga at a studio other than Modo Yoga?

If yes, which studio?

Modo (formerly Moksha) Yoga:

Do you currently have a membership at Modo Yoga St. Catharines? Yes/No

If no, have you had a membership or class package at Modo Yoga St. Catharines in the past 3 months? Yes/No

How long have you been practicing at Modo Yoga in St. Catharines? _____

How often in the past 3 months have you practiced yoga at Modo Yoga St. Catharines? _____

Approximately how many times per week do you practice at Modo Yoga St.Catharines? _____

Approximately how many hours per week do you practice at Modo Yoga St.Catharines? _____

What types of classes do you go to at Modo? (E.g. Modo Fit, Modo Flow, Hatha, Yin)

Other Physical Activity:

What other physical activities do you do that are NOT yoga? (Please list all that apply)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How often *per week* do you engage in physical activity that is NOT yoga?

_____ (# of days/week)

_____ (# of hours/week)

Appendix E: Sample Field Notes and Memos

Descriptive notes:

- Direct quotes or comments from participants related to the research question
 - (i.e., “I want to be better at poses”, “I wished I had a flatter stomach”, “I feel better after going to yoga”)
- Unique perspectives expressed
 - (i.e. positive body image experience at Modo vs. negative, use of mirrors for different purpose than most etc.)
- Sensory information such as what I could see, smell or hear during interviews that were relevant to interactions with the participants
 - (i.e., visible facial/ body reactions when excited, sad, nervous etc.)

Reflective notes:

- Thoughts, ideas, questions, thoughts or criticisms
 - (i.e., Generally what are participants saying about yoga? How can I ask better questions? What questions are getting really rich answers?)
- Noted thoughts I had about future interviews and clarified ideas
 - (i.e., how to approach topics with larger women, older women, or more self conscious women etc.)
- Notes on repetitive statements by participants or contradictions
 - (i.e., note when participants were contradicting themselves, were these similar contradictions among participants?)

Appendix F: Code Sheet

Codes

Hot yoga

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added challenge to yoga • Increased flexibility • Release of toxins • Feels more like PA because of sweat • Perceived increased fitness/ health • Friend recommended hot yoga • Get outside one's head/ thoughts • Cope with body discomfort • Cope with stress of school/work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty over career • High stress job • You can always improve in your practice, no set goal to reach • Mentally benefit from yoga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced stress • Less reactive • Feeling more + since going frequently • Calming + relaxing affect • Grounding activity • Brings oneself back to the present • Physical benefits from yoga: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased strength • Flexibility • Cardio fitness • Balance • Pain relief • Reduced stiffness • Yoga as meditation • Less afraid of injury with heat • Take advantage of time for activities when not working • Yoga more comfortable than going to gym • Fast paced classes more enjoyable • Classes with music easier to get into practice • Regular yoga not intense enough • Yoga as time for oneself • Comfort with yoga from practice over time (poses, breathing, taking breaks, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break from thoughts about BI • Self care (mental/physical) • Normal to wear little clothing • Sweating is unattractive/gross • Self improvement through yoga • Variety of ages of members • Want to do yoga throughout life • Want to take care of body • More in-tune with body since going to yoga • Less critical of self since going to Modo • Critical of specific body parts outside of class • More confident with right equipment • Nurture positive thoughts outside class • Different interests change importance of BI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in school • Not partying or going out • Older age time for self again • Work more important • Health more important • Aware of social media and choose + accounts • Yoga stereotype: everyone who goes to yoga is young, fit, and skinny • Assumption everyone in the class would be wearing sports bras • Negative body image makes it difficult to focus on practice > appearance • Normative discontent • Consume positive media • Social media about yoga inaccurate • Increased confidence in abilities from yoga • Sees improvement in practice • New classes at Modo are challenging • Concern about past injury • External distractions in studio challenging to practice (i.e. chatter, too busy) |
|---|---|

Thoughts during yoga

- Want to be better at poses
- “Am I doing this pose right?”
- Look at others to see pose
- Want to have a flatter stomach
- Accept differences from others/ ideal
- Accept what body can do
- Accept body’s appearance
- Think about how muscles feel (tension, weakness, strength)
- Compares how body feels from last class
 - More balanced, more shaky
- Thoughts about what is going to happen/happened that day
- Thoughts about life (stress from work, school, family, relationships etc.)
- Thoughts on appearance
 - Stomach
 - Arms
- Pose perfectionism (critical of self in poses)
- Thinking about own body in mirrors
 - Self alignment
 - Appearance
 - Balance
- Hard to balance when looking in mirror
- Teachers can influence yoga experience and BI during practice:
 - Soothing voice
 - Focus on self not others
 - Don’t look at self in mirrors as frequently
 - Appreciate the little things in life
 - Do what feels best for your body
 - The teacher’s adjustments mean I’m doing the pose wrong
 - The teacher wants me to get the most out of my practice by making adjustments
- Teachers explanation of poses is useful/informative
- Thoughts about body functions + ability

Feelings

- Happy
- Calm

- Notice the heat
 - Enjoys the heat
 - Irritated by the heat and sweating
 - Compares body to other members
 - If other people take breaks I can take breaks
 - Other people are wobbling too/ not as flexible
 - Its okay to go at own pace
 - Listens to instructions
 - Body positioning
 - Thoughts
 - Breathing
 - Affirmations
 - BI flexibility (accept negative thoughts + move on)
 - Where to put mat down?
 - If can’t get usual spot impacts practice
 - Aware of bodies restrictions in a pose
 - Make adjustments / modifications
 - Notice others watching
 - Body during class
 - Body throughout day
 - How you think about yourself what matters most (i.e. not what others think of you)
 - Need to keep moving or starts to think about appearance
 - Silence is distracting
 - Afraid to fall or lose balance in pose
 - Notice how busy class is
 - Notice younger women in class
 - Can’t get into poses in busy classes (limited space)
- Behaviours**
- Going with a friend
 - Can make it more competitive
 - Want to show off ability
 - Can’t show off or friend will feel bad
 - Distracting
 - Chooses back of room to put mat down
 - Use mirrors for balance to challenge self

- Excited
- Empowered
- Confident
 - In practice
 - Progress
- Comfort from routine
- Worry about where to put mat
- Frustrated when unable to hold pose
- Feel shameful
 - About food consumed prior to class
 - Appearance
 - Current ability within practice
- Peaceful
- Appreciate what body can do
- Appreciate bodies appearance
- Grateful to be able to practice at Modo
- Inadequate/ unsatisfied - i.e. “ not enough”
 - Not flexible enough
 - Not fit enough
 - Not balanced enough etc.
- Feeling heavy or bloated
- Better regardless of physical changes
- Feeling irritated by heat
- Feeling calmed by heat
- Comfort with routine/ poses
- Less afraid of injuring self
- Self conscious about practice
- Self conscious about appearance
- Nervous to start at Modo
 - Unsure what equipment needed
 - Unsure what classes mean
- More unhappy when not going regularly

Modo Studio

- Positive feelings from sense of community at Modo
- Accepting/ non-judgemental members
- Everyone is welcome at Modo
- Members have similar intentions for class (i.e. focus on self/ own practice)
- Décor is calming with earth tones, plants, & cozy furniture
- Dim lighting preferred over bright lights or large windows in studio

- Chooses front of room by mirrors
 - Focus on self
 - Avoids being near mirrors
 - Fear of appearance evaluation
 - Distracting to practice
 - Adjust waist band more
 - Look at appearance more
 - Push further in poses
 - Wears clothes to cover mid section
 - Plans when to eat/ eats lighter meals before class
 - Don't want to not look bloated
 - Feel sick in class
 - Drinks more water before and during class
 - Uses breathing techniques outside of class
 - More challenging pose use breathing more
 - Slow down instead of rushing through things
 - Be mindful in daily tasks (eating, drinking breathing etc.)
 - Eat healthier when going frequently
 - Drink less alcohol
 - Don't want to waste work
 - Stopped doing activities that don't bring joy
 - Do more activities for long term
-

-
- Staff genuine and welcoming
 - Excited to see you/ greet you by name
 - Invested in practice of yoga
 - Motivational tactics
 - Grow your yoga
 - Community fundraisers
 - Paying for membership
 - Additional services an added bonus
 - Osteopathy
 - Physiotherapy
 - Massage therapy
 - Not a competitive environment
 - Sole focus on the practice of yoga
 - Don't have to be a serious yogi to practice yoga
 - No pressure to look a certain way
 - Need to get there early to get a spot
 - Description of classes online helpful for new members
 - Need to purchase yoga specific clothing (i.e. sweat wicking material+ towel and water bottle)
 - Solitary practice with a community
 - Clean studio
 - Other studios feel cliquy
 - Heat enjoyable in the winter
 - Supported by members/ staff
 - Easy to sign up online convenient
 - Large variety of classes and class times fits schedule
 - Energy exchange option for more affordable yoga

Appendix G: Initial Themes List

1. Physical and mental benefits to hot yoga

- It was expressed that the physical benefits of yoga were shown through increased cardiorespiratory fitness, improved flexibility, strength and balance.
- The mental benefits stated from practicing hot yoga were reduced stress and anxiety, improved overall feelings of happiness & well-being as well as improved body image.

2. Hot yoga is associated with both positive body image and negative body image

- Hot yoga is associated with positive body image through body acceptance & appreciation, accomplishment within one's practice and greater perceived health & fitness.
 - Body acceptance was expressed by accepting one's body for how it is, regardless of its shape, size or function. Body acceptance related to the body's ability during the practice of hot yoga and valuing what feels best for one's body in each pose.
 - Body appreciation was expressed through valuing one's body for its abilities, rather than its appearance, during the practice of yoga.
- Hot yoga is associated with negative body image through negative self talk, upward comparisons, and perfectionism
 - Negative self-talk was displayed by the internal comments made about the body, often relating to one's physical limitations within a yoga class or aspects of the body's appearance that women did not like.
 - Mirrors in the studio can have a negative affect from paying more attention to appearance and areas of the body that you feel dissatisfied with.

3. Environmental factors influencing practice

- The teacher's instructions have the ability to influence one's yoga practice both positively and negatively. The teachers positively related to experiences in hot yoga through cues during practice (i.e., focus internally on oneself, focus less on the mirrors/others, do what feels best for your body). Teachers negatively related to the practice of hot yoga when making adjustments to practitioners (i.e., feel like they are "doing it wrong", self conscious of ability) and when they lacked a soothing voice.
- The staff's outlook and the energy in studio positively influenced practitioners in that they felt welcomed and part of a positive community (i.e., members are non-judgemental, teachers are happy to see you), which further motivated them to continue practicing at Modo.
 - The décor in the studio further contributes to the calming affect experienced by practitioners at Modo. The earth tone colours, plants, natural lighting and cozy furniture are all create a soothing aesthetic which creates a more positive experience from the moment you enter the studio.