ABSTRACT

THESIS: Body Image and Weight Concerns: Assessing the Relationship between Mothers and their Daughters

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Weight and body image are issues many females face that can lead to unhealthy exercising and extreme dieting. This paper examines the relationship between perceptions of mothers’ attitudes and behaviors regarding weight and body image and their 18-25 year old daughters’ attitudes and behaviors. This research utilizes a survey of 876 females at a Midwestern university. Respondents report being at least somewhat uncomfortable with their weight and report a lack of confidence with their weight. Regression results indicate that females’ attitudes and behaviors are somewhat explained by perceptions of their mothers’ attitudes and behaviors. Mothers making negative comments about their own weight, mothers telling their daughters to lose weight and mothers’ weight loss behaviors significantly influence respondents’ weight satisfaction, self-esteem, weight loss and weight control behaviors. This research identifies factors contributing to unhealthy eating behaviors and poor body image, and suggests how mothers can help improve their daughters’ body image.