The Structure of the Perceived Sociocultural Influences on Body Image and Body Change Questionnaire

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This article is concerned with the development and evaluation of the Perceived Sociocultural Influences on Body Image and Body Change Questionnaire. The scale was designed to assess the perceived nature of feedback received from mother, father, best male friend, and best female friend to gain weight, lose weight, and increase muscle tone. The perceived feedback from the media on each of these areas also was assessed. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with 240 adolescent boys (mean age = 13.83 years) and 204 adolescent girls (mean age = 13.70 years). A 3-factor structure was found for the 4 scales that related to perceived feedback from mother, father, best male friend, and best female friend. Feedback on muscle tone loaded with both weight loss and weight gain. The three factors related to (a) general feedback; (b) encourage, tease, and modeling to gain weight and increase muscle tone, and (c) encourage, tease, and modeling to lose weight and increase muscle tone. The factor structure and the items that made up these factors were the same for both boys and girls for each of the 4 scales. The Perceived Media Influences Scale formed 3 factors for girls. These factors related to gaining weight, losing weight, and increasing muscle tone. For boys, the same 9 items formed a single factor. The same items were retained for boys and girls. A confirmatory factor analysis with 822 adolescents (382 boys, mean age = 14.02 years; 440 girls, mean age = 13.82 years) confirmed the previously described factor structure. These results demonstrate that the Perceived Sociocultural Influences on Body Image and Body Change Questionnaire is able to assess body image and body change strategies that are relevant for both boys and girls.
Over the last 10 years we have gained a better understanding of the sociocultural factors that influence body image disturbance and disordered eating among girls. Areas that have been investigated include the influence of the family (Benedikt, Wertheim, & Love, 1998; Kent & Clopton, 1992; Pike & Rodin, 1991), peers (Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Levine & Smolak, 1992; Paxton, Schutz, Wertheim, & Muir, 1999), and the media (Cusimano, & Thompson, 1997; Posavac, Posavac & Posavac, 1998). Despite increasing attention being given to these sociocultural influences, no instruments have yet been devised to comprehensively evaluate these constructs. Furthermore, the measures have been restricted to considering pressures for weight loss and largely have ignored weight gain or increased muscle. Although scales that only evaluate sociocultural pressures to lose weight may be fairly comprehensive in terms of pressures for body change among girls, the empirical evidence to support this proposal has not been evaluated. With a greater number of magazines focusing on a more muscular female body form, there may also be changes in the sociocultural pressures on women to alter their bodies. Furthermore, current scales do not evaluate the whole range of sociocultural pressures that would operate on men to achieve the ideal body form. It would be possible to develop different scales for each of the different sociocultural influences. However, differences in response format and item content for the different scales would make comparisons between the nature of these influences problematic. It would be difficult to determine if differences (or similarities) in the reported level of each of the sociocultural influences on each of the body change strategies were due to the wording and number of the items or to actual similarities (or differences) in the nature of these influences.

Also, because these scales are self-report measures, they assess the perceived sociocultural influences on weight change rather than the actual pressures. The difference between actual and perceived influences requires further study; however, this article is concerned with perceived sociocultural influences (e.g., Benedikt et al., 1998; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997).

In this article we describe the development and structure of a new scale that was devised to assess sociocultural influences on a broad range of body image and body change techniques that are relevant to both adolescent boys and girls. A number of the existing measures of sociocultural influences on body image and related behavior have been developed and used on a one-off basis (e.g., Benedikt et al., 1998; Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Stice, Ziemba, Margolis, & Flick, 1996.) No attempt has been made to validate the structure of the scale or determine the usefulness of the scale for males and females, and so the extent to which the items are applicable to both males and females is unclear. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, most of these scales have been de-