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Assessment of Body Image, Appearance Management, and Psychosocial Functioning Among Hispanic Collegiate Females

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Introduction and Rationale for Study

In the past few decades, increasing empirical attention has focused on factors related to women's perception of their own body weight and appearance. Reports of negative body

image in women have been empirically linked with a higher incidence of depression (Denniston, Roth, & Gilroy, 1992), heightened anxiety, lowered self-esteem (Thompson & Altabe, 1991), growing demands for plastic surgery (Pruzinsky, 1996), and increased spending for items claiming to guarantee weight loss (Brownell & Rodin, 1994). In addition, a growing body of literature has supported several social variables as mediating a woman's susceptibility to a negative body image, including internalization of and acculturation to Western media and societal ideals (Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990; Dolan, 1991; Joiner & Kashubeck, 1996; Perez, Voelz, Pettit, & Joiner, 2002). Despite a long history of media and empirical attention to body image and eating behaviors of women, the existing body of professional literature and empirical research devoted to these issues is limited in its ability to generalize beyond adolescent females and young women of Anglo descent and Middle- to Upper-Class social status. Literature examining these issues in other populations has been scarce, with literature related to young women of Hispanic descent being particularly limited.

Increased empirical attention has been directed to examinations of differences in the prevalence and course of negative body image and disordered eating patterns across ethnic and racial groups. However, researchers who have examined body image in Hispanic women have been forced to utilize measures developed with Anglo samples without empirical evidence of the validity of the measures in a Hispanic population. Only two studies (Rutt & Coleman, 2001 and Rutt, Garcia, & Coleman, 2002) have specifically examined the psychometric properties of commonly used measures of body

image within a Hispanic sample. In an effort to further address this gap in literature, we administered the MBSRQ and the ASI-R, instruments that have not been evaluated in a Hispanic sample to date, to 85 Hispanic female college students in order to provide a preliminary evaluation of their psychometric properties in this population.

Sample

The initial sample in the study was comprised of 100 female undergraduate students recruited from the extracurricular activities (i.e., dance team, cheer team, and sororities) in a small Southwestern, private university (<5, 000 enrollment) with a majority of students identified as of Hispanic descent. Participants ranged in ages from 18 to 24 years ($M = 20.32$, $SD = 1.29$). The original sample of 100 females consisted of 85 Hispanic-Americans, 13 Anglo-Americans, and 2 other or unknown ethnicities. However, the current report is exclusively focused on the Hispanic subsample ($n = 85$). The research was conducted after receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ)

The MBSRQ (Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990; Cash, 2000) is a 69-item self-report inventory that evaluates several components of one's overall body image and is commonly used in research related to body image. The current version of the instrument has ten subscales that assess an individual's investment in appearance through grooming

behaviors and satisfaction with their appearance, health, illness, weight, and fitness (See Table 1). Participants rate their level of agreement with the items on a Likert-type scale of one (definitely disagree) to five (definitely agree). A higher overall score mean indicates greater investment or satisfaction within the specific domains of the subscales. Previous research has supported the psychometric properties of this instrument; however, no studies to date have examined the usefulness of this instrument in Hispanic samples. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency reliability of the subscales range from 0.71 to 0.89 in the present study.

Appearance Schemas Inventory-Revised (ASI-R)

The ASI-R (Cash, Melnyk, and Hrabosky, 2004) is a 20-item self-report inventory measuring appearance management (grooming behaviors) and aspects of psychosocial functioning (social self-presentation, self-esteem, and eating disturbances) using two subscales: Self-Evaluative Salience of Appearance (12 items) and Motivational Salience of Appearance (8 items). The instrument, revised from the original 14-item ASI (Cash & Labarge (1996), assesses body image in relation to certain beliefs or assumptions about the importance, meaning, and influence of appearance in one's life and sense of self worth. Higher scores indicate higher degrees of psychological investment in one's appearance. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree for responses. The Self-Evaluative Salience subscale assesses an individual's beliefs about how their looks influence their personal or social worth and sense of self. The self-evaluative aspect of one's appearance may also indicate

an excessive internalization of media “thin ideals”, body-image dysphoria, and a global impact on psychosocial functioning. The second ASI-R factor Motivational Salience assesses the importance placed on maintaining appearance through grooming behaviors. Previous researchers have reported satisfactory reliability estimates for the composite scores and the current study found the subscales Cronbach’s alpha to range from .82 to .90. Therefore, the reliabilities for the ASI-R and its two subscales were quite satisfactory.

Additionally, a demographic questionnaire was included, which also contained questions related to the participant’s current weight, height, and clothing size as well as the preferred weight, height, and clothing size. Another perceptual component includes the subject’s estimation of another’s body as a “standard of beauty” to choose between a picture of eight silhouettes and different characteristics of each (picture adapted from Mciza et al, 2005).

Procedures

After informed consent was obtained, participants completed a battery of standardized measures of body image, incorporating the influence of appearance on one’s life, and self-attitudinal aspects of body image (physical appearance, fitness, and health/illness), as well as a demographic questionnaire including a figure rating scale. Each participant completed these materials anonymously in a private room on campus. The two instruments were distributed to all participants in a large envelope. Each packet also included the demographics form to be completed after finishing the self-report measures.

Each group of participants was asked to allot at least 20 minutes for completion of the two assessment instruments and the demographics form. Upon completion, the participants placed the measurements in the original large envelope, sealed it, and deposited in a box. Each group of women was only in the presence of the female researcher while completing the instruments. The research project had the following goal: to test and validate the testing instruments with Hispanic collegiate women as compared to results from Anglo and African-American collegiate women; specifically with college women who are involved in activities where body image is a greater concern i.e. sororities, dancer, and cheerleaders

Analysis & Results

Internal Consistency Reliability in Current Sample

In order to address the first research question, ‘Are the instruments internally consistent in this sample of Hispanic women?’, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated to estimate the internal consistency reliability of composite scores and subscales of each instrument. The composite scores of both the MBSRQ and ASI-R were found to be adequately internally consistent in the present sample, each with an alpha coefficient of .89. The estimates of internal consistency reliability for the subscales of each instrument were also adequate. The alpha coefficients for the ASI-R Composite and Self-Evaluation Salience subscale were similar to those reported by Cash, et al, (2004); however, the Motivational Salience subscale is remarkably less internally consistent for the Hispanic sample than reported by Cash et al. (alpha of .78 and .90, respectively). The means and

standard deviations were compared with previous published norms (see Table 1 & Table 2).

MBSRQ Cronbach's

The alpha coefficients for the MBSRQ subscales were similar to those reported by Brown, et al, (1990); Although the Fitness Evaluation, Health Orientation, and Illness Orientation were similarly internally consistent for the Hispanic sample as those reported by Brown et al. (alpha of .70 and .77, alpha of .73 and .78, and alpha .71 and .75). The additional subscales: Body Areas Satisfaction, Overweight Preoccupation, and Self-Classified Weight were dramatically more internally consistent for the Hispanic sample than reported by Brown et al. (alpha of .81 and .73, alpha of .80 and .76, alpha of .80 and .89).

Implications for use of the MBSRQ & ASI-R

- Findings suggest need for future research with larger Hispanic populations as samples when looking at the psychometric properties of instruments
- A measure of the level of acculturation is needed
- Future research examining the use in samples of Hispanic men and women outside of the college environment is needed

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Table 1

	Brown et al. (1990)		Present Sample		Comparison
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Appearance Evaluation	3.36	.87	3.12	.82	-2.54*
Appearance Orientation	3.91	.60	3.53	.62	-5.85**
Fitness Evaluation	3.48	.97	3.46	.82	-0.02
Fitness Orientation	3.20	.85	3.64	.70	4.77**
Health Evaluation	3.86	.80	3.42	.72	-5.07**
Illness Orientation	3.21	.84	3.40	.81	2.09*
Body Satisfaction Areas	3.23	.74	3.27	.70	.50
Overweight Preoccupation	3.03	.96	2.62	.99	-3.94**
Self-classified weight	3.57	.73	3.53	.73	-.51

*p< .05, ** p< .01

Table 2

	Anglo-American		African-American		Hispanic-American	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Composite ASI-R	3.53*	.62	3.35*	.57	3.43	.60
SESA	3.39*	.70	3.10**	.74	3.31	.61
MS	3.72*	.66	3.73*	.64	3.61	.63

*p < .05, ** p< .01

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