Reviewer's report

Title: Intra-familial and ethnic effects on attitudinal and perceptual body image of South African women

Version: 1 Date: 9 February 2011

Reviewer: Rachel RODGERS

Reviewer's report:

This paper presents an interesting article on the relationship between mother and daughter attitudes towards body shape and size among South African women. Furthermore, it explores ethnic differences in these relationships. As the large majority of body image research in conducted within a small number of affluent countries, it is particularly interesting to see findings from research in other countries such as South-Africa. Furthermore, as the authors clearly state, these issues are very relevant to worldwide concerns about obesity.

I have a few suggestions for improving the manuscript.

Minor essential revisions:

1. The authors state that participants were asked to identify silhouettes showing respect, happiness, and beauty. Were these adjectives selected by the authors? If so, on what basis? Have these adjectives been used in previous research on body image among South African women? Respect, in particular is an unusual word to associate with a body shape, is this culturally relevant?

2. The authors provide a very nice review of the literature regarding previous findings concerning ethnic influences on body image and relations with obesity risk. I wonder whether the section relevant to family influences on body image and eating could be expanded, firstly to include some of the work done on mother-daughter similarities in body image among black American dyads (ex: Brown, Schreiber, McMahon, Crawford, & Ghee, 1995; Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1995) and perhaps include some more recent references on family influences?

3. In the methods section, the authors state that participants responded to questions assessing body dissatisfaction taken from focus groups, evaluating whether participants had “ever” felt thin etc… It is slightly unclear if any results related to these questions are presented. If so, then perhaps the results could be more clearly linked to these questions? If not, then perhaps the questions don’t need to be included in the methods.

4. The daughters included in the present study are preadolescent. Although body dissatisfaction and attitudes towards overweight are visible from an early age, it is possible that these attitudes change somewhat during puberty. It might be interesting to discuss what influence the daughter’s developmental stage might have had on the results.
5. It seems that the author’s results suggest that across several measures black daughters showed a preference for larger silhouettes than their mothers. These findings do not seem to be discussed. Is this evidence of a trend over time towards a larger figure? Is this perhaps due to daughters being pre-adolescents?

6. The author’s findings could perhaps be contrasted with those of other authors having explored the effects of ethnicity on body dissatisfaction in mother and daughter dyads (see point above).

7. The study limitations are not clearly stated. Perhaps the authors could add a brief paragraph discussing these limitations at the end of their discussion?

Minor issues not for publication
The paper is well-written although there are a few minor editing issues
Abstract: in the results section, the second p value given should presumably be .96? And the p should be lower case. Also, I think that it is unusual to report p values to so many decimal places, 2 or 3 will suffice, especially when it is non-significant. These points should be modified throughout the manuscript.
One of the sentences in the abstract results section could perhaps be moved though, to make the paragraph more fluid: the results regarding black families attitudes towards bigger figures should be moved to the end of the results section, since the sentence “More specifically” refers to the first sentence of that paragraph.
Background: second paragraph: the sentence beginning “In this regard” could be rephrased.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.