MEDIA EXPOSURE AND BODY IMAGE IN 6-9 YEAR OLD GIRLS: THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED REALISM AND INTERNALIZATION OF MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

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Previous research has established that adult-focused media contributes to poor body image attitudes in adult and teenage women. The body image attitudes of children are also negatively affected by adult-focused media. Although child-focused media contains similar thin-female idealized messages and themes, the impact of this type of media on the body image attitudes of young girls has not been well studied. This study examined the relationship between 6-9 year old girls’ exposure to child-focused media and their body image attitudes. Internalization of the thin ideal and perceived realism of media were also examined as individual difference variables and their relationship to body image attitudes is reported. No media exposure or preference variables directly impacted participants’ body image attitudes, possibly because reports of media were unreliable. Thin ideal internalization and perceived realism of child-focused media were significantly correlated. Internalization was also related to a preference for a thinner body. Results from this study highlight the need for improved measures of media exposure and the importance of understanding how young girls internalize the thin ideal portrayed in the media.
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INTRODUCTION

Media exposure has consistently been found to contribute to poor female body image and eating disturbances. In recent years, knowledge of the impact of the media portrayed thin ideal on adult women and teenagers has accumulated (Monro & Huon, 2005), however, very few studies have examined the influence of media on preadolescents (Herbozo, Tantleff-Dunn, Gokee-Larose & Thompson, 2004). The small amount of research suggests that girls as young as 6 years old prefer a thinner than average body figure for themselves, with media influences being a significant predictor (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006). This desire for thinness often correlates with body dissatisfaction and may be negatively related to psychological well being (Faust, 1987). In addition to preferring thinner bodies for themselves, girls of this age have been shown to prefer thin bodies for other people, associating negative attributes with overweight targets (Musher-Eizenman, Holub, Miller, Goldstein, & Edwards-Leeper, 2004; Pine, 2001). These anti-fat attitudes have also been linked to media exposure (Lin & Reid, 2009).

From an evolutionary standpoint, extreme thinness is not necessarily a desirable characteristic in women. Rather, according to evolutionary theory, the most widely accepted traits of desire in a female are youth and health (Buss, 2009) which are indicators of fecundity and fertility. One evolutionary cue to detect youth, and corresponding health including the ability to pass on proper nutrients to a child, is a certain waist to hip ratio. However, the evolutionary portrayal of health has been shifted by current media trends. Fashion models and female celebrities have grown thinner over the years until many of them now battle major eating disorders in order to maintain this ultra-thin shape (Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, Kelly, 1986). The current popular model for the female form is often so thin that her BMI (body mass index) may not allow enough nutrients for menstruation (Swenne, 2004). This suggests that the media,
among other social influences, has a strong influence on people’s attitudes, even to the point of altering evolutionary adaptations.

The overwhelming exposure to media-portrayed and other forms of thin-idealization may explain this deviation from the evolutionary adaptation of desiring health over thinness. Social learning theory argues that ideas of beauty are formed through the child’s exposure to their society’s expressions of what is beautiful. Through exposure, girls learn that a certain body type is the preferred or beautiful standard. *Cultivation theory* suggests that social learning is further strengthened by certain individual differences in girls such as internalization (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). When applied to the subject of media’s influence on body image, this theory would suggest that the more a child sees thin-idealized media (e.g., television, fashion magazines, etc.), the more they internalize very thin figures as the preferred female representative in their everyday lives. This could be further strengthened by how much the child perceives the media content to be a realistic representation of life (i.e., perceived realism; Busselle, 2001). For example, in one study (Botta, 1999) the belief that the body figures of female media characters are attainable and realistic goals was the highest predictor of body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls. Using social learning theory as a foundation, the current study examined the role of media exposure in preadolescent girls’ developing body image and anti-fat attitudes. Furthermore, the role of two individual difference variables (i.e., internalization of the thin ideal and perceived realism) in this relationship was also examined.

**Media’s Influence on Children**

Children are exposed to multiple forms of media (e.g., television, magazines, billboards, video games, books, music, etc.) on an almost daily basis. The Kaiser Family Foundation found that 99% of American families with children owned at least one television with the average being 3.5 per household (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003, 2005). A recent study found that the
average American child spends over 1,630 hours a year watching television (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). That is equivalent to 2 months per year, about a month longer than the cumulative time children spend in school. The media’s influence on children has been studied extensively and the clear consensus is that this impact is profound (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmainn, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, & Wartella, 2003; Botta, 1999; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004).

Research has primarily associated media exposure with negative outcomes for children (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmainn, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, & Wartella, 2003; Chandra, Martino, Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, & Miu, 2008). For example, television with high sexual content has been found to correlate with teen pregnancy (Chandra, Martino, Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, & Miu, 2008). Similarly, exposure to highly sex-stereotyped cartoon content can strengthen the gender-role beliefs of girls as young as 5 years old (Davidson, Yasuna, & Tower, 1979), and amount of television viewing was positively correlated with the degree to which boys associated negative stereotypes with fat girls (Harrison, 2000). Finally, a large body of research has linked exposure to violent television to increased aggressive behavior among children and adolescents of all ages (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmainn, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, & Wartella, 2003).

While most research on the connections between media and behavior has focused on the negative outcomes, a smaller body of research suggests that some television content may be beneficial to youth (e.g., racial acceptance). In his landmark 1976 study, Gorn found that exposure to racially diverse television casts increased children’s desire to have children of other races as playmates. In this study, children watched Sesame Street with either a racially heterogeneous cast of children, a racially homogeneous cast (all minorities), or no television show (control). The children in both the television show conditions were more likely to choose
ethnically diverse playmates than those in the control group. This finding is suggestive of the positive influence television could have on children.

**Media’s Influence on Body Image**

While media influences viewers in many domains, one of the more extensively researched and well understood dimensions of influence is the media’s effect on body image. Numerous studies have found a connection between exposure to fashion magazines (displaying models with the idealized thin female body) and state conditions such as negative mood, high body dissatisfaction, lowered self esteem and higher self objectification in adults (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008; Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004). Women have higher appearance anxiety, more negative mood, greater body dissatisfaction, and self objectify more after viewing clips with fashion models than after viewing product ads (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008).

Although less attention has been paid to these effects in preadolescent children, research generally supports similar findings in this age group. Dohnt and Tiggemann (2006) found that the body image of grade school girls is negatively influenced by the media (i.e., magazines and music videos). Cusumano found similar correlations among 8-11 year old girls; wherein media exposure heightened body dissatisfaction (Cusumano & Thompson, 2000).

Although most research has focused on experimental manipulations using thin idealized media, Vaughan’s 2003 correlational study found that girls (mean age = 12 years) whose exposure to idealized media decreased significantly over a 16 month period showed less disordered eating symptomology than those whose exposure had risen or stayed constant. This suggests that prolonged exposure to this idealized media may increase negative feelings from temporary (state) to more enduring cognitions and behaviors. The degree to which exposure elicits these feelings may depend on multiple individual difference variables, such as how much viewers internalize the information (how much they accept the information and perform
behaviors which attempt to model after or replicate the image), as well as perceived realism (or how much they believe the information, or body shape, to be true and common to real life) (Ahern, Bennett, & Hetherington, 2008).

Furthermore, the effects of media consumption are not confined to Western nations. A study of native Fijian adolescent girls, naïve to television at the time of intake, made astonishing discoveries about natural media exposure (Becker, Burwell, Gilman, Herzog, & Hamburg, 2002). Before the introduction of television this culture was virtually free of disordered eating. After three years of exposure to western television there was a significant increase in disordered eating symptomology within the population. A high frequency of girls reported purposeful weight loss in order to emulate the women on television, with 77% of girls claiming television had influenced their body image. Girls in television owning households were three times more likely to have high disordered eating scores (> 20 on the EAT-26 scale). The results showed that 83% of girls reported television had influenced their friends to change their bodies, as well as their own bodies. Interviews with the girls revealed widespread themes about their perceived influence from television. Many girls mentioned their desire to lose weight because the women on television were not “chubby” like Fijian women, but very thin and attractive. A few specific television characters including Xena the Warrior Princess and the cast of Beverly Hills 90210 were commonly named as physical goals for the girls to emulate. Many of the girls’ reports expressed the desire to emulate Xena because of her attractiveness and, to a lesser extent, her physical abilities. The researchers concluded that the girls’ desire to emulate the figures of western television women coupled with the natural robust Fijian figure contributed to body dissatisfaction and eating disorder symptomology.

Antifat Bias
When individuals attribute negative characteristics to a person due solely to their weight, these prejudices are referred to as antifat bias (AFB). Children hold AFB from ages as young as 4. For example, children associate negative characteristics (e.g., lazy, dumb, mean, etc.) with overweight individuals and positive characteristics (e.g., smart, nice, hardworking, etc.) with normal weight and underweight individuals (Cramer & Steinwert, 1998). This bias in children not only continues into adulthood (Puhl & Brownell, 2006), but negatively affects the lives of overweight children (Janssen, Craig, Boyce, & Pickett, 2004). The teasing that often results from AFB is harmful to the emotional and psychological well being of overweight children (Latner & Stunkard, 2003). Surprisingly, there has not been a decrease, but an increase in antifat behaviors as childhood obesity has universally risen over the past 30 years (Deckelbaum & Williams, 2001).

Antifat Bias and the Media

Just as negative body image may derive in part from media exposure, one possible source of AFB may also be the media. Amount of television viewing was positively correlated with the amount that boys associated negative stereotypes with fat girls in Harrison’s (2000) study. A recent study investigating the prevalence of overweight characters in American television (Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, & Brownell, 2003), found that television drastically under-represents the frequency of overweight individuals and, in most cases, places them in roles which affirm many antifat stigmatizations (e.g. unattractive, food focused, unromantic, etc). Of 1,018 characters from major television shows, only 14% of female characters were overweight. This is considerably lower than the general population. Similarly, only 24% of male characters were overweight, significantly less than the actual American frequency. Antifat stigmas were exaggerated in the female characters. Overweight television characters were depicted as less likely to be in romantic roles or to be thought of as attractive than their thin counterparts.
This AFB in media is not exclusive to adult television. In a content analysis of children’s media, Herbozo found a strong and explicit antifat focus in popular child-focused media (Herbozo, Tantleff-Duff, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004). Obesity was associated with negative characteristics and traits (e.g., evil, unattractive, unfriendly, cruel, etc.) in 64% of popular children’s movies. Thinness, however, was associated with desirable characteristics and traits (e.g., sociable, kind, successful, etc.) in 84% of the reviewed videos. Body size did not only correlate with characters’ personal traits, but also the extent to which they are loved by other characters, with 60% of couples’ love being dependent on the beauty of the female character (e.g., the prince in Cinderella inviting all of the beautiful women to a ball). The media’s attribution of negative characteristics to overweight individuals could be a contributing factor to children’s developing antifat biases.

While nearly all American children are exposed to the media, there are individual differences in how each child processes the information. These individual difference variables may account for variability in children’s body esteem and AFB. Similar to media exposure’s influence on body image, variability in body satisfaction and AFB among media exposed children may be partially explained by the degree to which they internalize the thin ideal and how much they perceive the bodies in the media to be realistic societal norms (Ahern, Bennett, & Hetherington, 2008; Bussell, 2001).

Other lines of research suggest that the level to which a participant believed the subject matter to be realistic at first viewing would determine how that individual chose to decipher and process the information. Information that is presented as truthful or accurate is thought to be differently compartmentalized in the brain than false information (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991). It has been found that information perceived as truthful is more easily accessible and more quickly responded to than if the same information was presented as fictional (Potts, St. Johns, & Kirson,
1989). In this case, perceived realism would moderate the relationship between media exposure and AFB, such that there would be a link between media exposure and AFB only for those individuals who are high on perceived realism.

Although high perceived realism of fictional media has been found for adults (Busselle, 2001), children are arguably even more susceptible to this belief (Van Evra, 1990). It is argued that children utilize their television experience along with their real world knowledge to make judgments about their lives and reality (Austin, Roberts, & Nass 1990; Davies, 1997). Among other themes, children perceive the weight related appearance of television characters to be realistic and achievable (Botta, 1999). Adolescent girls believe the figures of female television characters are realistic goals, and as mentioned earlier, this was found to be the strongest predictor of body dissatisfaction. Beyond the belief that the models on television and in magazines are a normative female sample, it has been found that girls aged 10-14 use fashion magazines as their information source for what an “attractive body shape” looks like (Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994). Information on how to lose weight by dieting is also commonly obtained for this young group via fashion magazines because they believe that the models representing the diet plan have obtained their appearance through these means.

Perceived Realism

Perceived realism or how realistic a person believes a media portrayed subject to be, is one factor that might account for individual differences in the impact of media exposure on body image and AFB. There are differing views on what role perceived realism plays and whether it is independent of or dependent on media exposure. Some researchers argue that perceived realism levels are dependent upon levels of exposure to media (Bussell, 2001), such that increased media exposure leads one to perceive media images to be more realistic. Other research suggests that a participant’s beliefs about a subject matter’s realism determines how much they act on this
knowledge, independent of levels of media consumption (Potts, St. Johns, & Kirson, 1989). The role perceived realism plays, as either a mediator or moderator, between media exposure and body image attitudes is an empirical question that this study explored.

In one study of perceived realism, heavy television viewers overestimated the frequency of crime compared to lighter television viewers due to the amount of crime on television making participants believe crime rates were higher in real life and making examples of certain crimes more easily accessible in their memories (Busselle, 2001). This suggests that heavy television viewers would underestimate the prevalence of overweight individuals and overestimate the prevalence of their underweight counterparts. It is also possible that heavy viewers would have easier access to examples of overweight individuals with negative characteristics (e.g., lazy, unfriendly, etc.) due to this being a common theme portrayed on television (Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, & Brownell, 2003). In this case, perceived realism would mediate the relationship between media exposure and antifat bias, such that higher levels of media exposure would be associated with higher levels of perceived realism, which in turn would be associated with higher levels of AFB.

Internalization

Another individual difference variable that may account for variability in media-exposed children’s body dissatisfaction and AFB is internalization of the thin ideal. Internalization refers to how much viewers accept the information and perform behaviors which attempt to model or replicate the image (Ahern, Bennett, & Hetherington, 2008). Once internalized, the feminine ideal becomes the goal for how one should look (Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004). Due to this process, internalization has been found to contribute to the media’s effect on body image. Internalization acts as a mediator in the relationship between awareness of appearance standards and body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls (Sands & Wardle, 2003).
Eating disorder symptomology has also been identified as an outcome of the internalization of idealized media. Internalization has been found, for boys as well as girls, to be related to peer appearance criticism (e.g. talking with peers negatively and positively about appearance related issues) and overall negative body image. Besides overestimating the commonality of the thin ideal figure in real life, media internalization has contributed to children’s antifat attitudes (Herbozo, Tantleff-Duff, Gokee-Larose, & Thompson, 2004).

The Current Study

This study explored the relationships between child-focused thin-idealized media exposure and negative body image and AFB in 6-9 year old girls. This age group was chosen as it is close to the age of onset found for the negative effects of idealized media (about 6 years old) (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006) and old enough for reliable measurement of the variables of interest. This age was also chosen because 6-9 year old, prepubertal girls have not yet experienced the fat increases or hormonal shifts that accompany puberty. In addition, the role of two individual difference variables, perceived realism and internalization, were examined. Girls reported their level of media internalization, perceived realism of media, level of AFB, body dissatisfaction, media preferences, and media consumption.

Hypotheses

H1: Perceived realism scores will be positively correlated with internalization scores.

H2: Because the literature on perceived realism is inconsistent, two competing hypotheses will be tested.

H2a: Perceived realism will moderate the relationship between television exposure and body dissatisfaction such that girls with higher perceived realism and who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher body dissatisfaction than girls who
watch/prefer less idealized television or than girls who watch/prefer more idealized television, but have lower perceived realism.

H2b: Perceived realism will mediate the relationship between television exposure and body dissatisfaction such that girls who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher perceived realism scores, which in turn will predict greater body dissatisfaction.

H3: Internalization will moderate the relationship between television exposure and body dissatisfaction such that girls with higher internalization and who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher body dissatisfaction than girls who watch/prefer less idealized television or than girls who watch/prefer more idealized television, but have lower internalization.

H4: Because the literature on perceived realism is inconsistent, two competing hypotheses will again be tested.

H4a: Perceived realism will moderate the relationship between television exposure and AFB such that girls with higher perceived realism and who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher AFB scores than girls who watch/prefer less idealized television or than girls who watch/prefer more idealized television, but have lower perceived realism.

H4b: Perceived realism will mediate the relationship between television exposure and ABF scores such that girls who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher perceived realism scores, which in turn will predict greater AFB.

H5: Internalization will moderate the relationship between television exposure and AFB scores such that girls with higher internalization and who watch/prefer more idealized television will have higher AFB scores than girls who watch/prefer less idealized television or than girls who watch/prefer more idealized television, but have lower internalization.
METHOD

Participants

Participants were 30 girls aged 6-9 years old (M= 8.01, SD= 0.7) recruited from Midwestern childcare settings (e.g., after-school programs) in both urban and rural areas. The sample was 73.7% Caucasian (n=22) and 26.7% African American (n=8). Participants’ BMI was calculated and recorded as 3.3% (n=1) underweight, 73.3 (n=22) normal weight, and 23.3% (n=7) overweight. The sample was socioeconomically diverse. At least 3 participants reported annual family income averages in each of 6 categories ranging from <$15k to > $95k (median = $55k - $75k). Parents gave written consent for their child to participate. One participant with parental consent to participate was not included in the final sample due to consistent absence from an after-school program. All children with parental consent who were asked to participate gave verbal assent and completed the entire study.

Materials

Internalization

Media internalization was assessed using the internalization subscale of the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS; Cusumano & Thompson, 2000). This subscale was modified slightly by making reference only to television and not magazine exposure (see Appendix A). This scale was 5 items for the current study which children answered on a 7 point scale from 1 = really agree to 7 = really disagree (α = .80). A sixth item (an item about magazine exposure which was otherwise identical to an item about television exposure) was removed.

Antifat Bias

AFB was assessed using an adapted version of the Adjective Attribution Task (Cramer & Steinwert, 1998). In this task children glued a picture of a child (either thin or chubby) on a continuous scale between opposing good and bad adjectives (See Appendix B). The two pictures
were line drawings with the only difference being the chubbiness of the child (figures D and G from the body dissatisfaction scale, see Appendix D for the line drawing array). The eight opposing adjective were: smart/stupid, healthy/sick, neat/sloppy, many friends/few friends, works hard/is lazy, nice/mean, doesn’t get teased/gets teased, and good looking/ugly. Total AFB was calculated by taking the difference between total chubby figure bias and total thin figure bias, such that a negative score indicates more positive evaluation of the chubby figure and a positive score indicates a more positive evaluation of the thin figure.

**Perceived Realism**

Perceived realism was assessed using a questionnaire from previous perceived realism research which was modified for this age group (Busselle, 2001). This scale has three subscales and 14 items in total which children answered on a 7 point scale from 1 = really agree to 7 = really disagree. The three subscales in the original scale were modified from perceived realism of crime/emergencies in the Busselle study ($\alpha = .68$) to perceived realism of schools in the current study ($\alpha = .30$) with a total of 5 items (e.g., Most schools you see on television shows are very similar to schools in real life.), perceived realism of news in the original study ($\alpha = .67$) was changed to perceived realism of life for the current study ($\alpha = .69$) with a total of 4 items (e.g., Television tells me what my world is really like.), and perceived realism of relationships in the original study ($\alpha = .78$) to perceived realism of people in the current study ($\alpha = .67$) with a total of 5 items (e.g., Characters in programs like Drake and Josh or The suite life of Zach and Cody are very similar to people in the real world.). A fourth subscale was added for the current study which measured perceived realism of the bodies seen on children’s television ($\alpha = .41$). This subscale included 5 items (e.g., By watching TV I learn how my body is supposed to look.) increasing the total number of items to 19. These modifications allowed the scale to be understood by children and applicable to children’s television. The sentence structure was not
altered, only the types of shows included and difficult words were changed (See Appendix C).

Subscales correlations were: world and school ($r = .40, p < .05$), world and people ($r = .52, p < .01$), school and people ($r = .34, p = .07$), body and school ($r = -.32, p = .08$), body and world ($r = -.41, p < .05$), and body and people ($r = -.54, p < .01$). Because of the relatively low alpha’s on the perceive realism subscales, all items on the perceived realism were averaged for analyses (overall $\alpha = .77$).

*Body Dissatisfaction*

Body dissatisfaction was assessed using questions about girl figure drawings (Collins, 1991) which included nine line drawn girl figures ranging in body type from extremely underweight to obese. Other than their body type, the figures were identical. For this task participants were asked to mark which figure they believe is the “way that they look,” “best way for a girl to look,” and “way that they would like to look.” Previous research has shown test-retest reliability coefficients of .71 (self), .38 (ideal other girl), and .59 (ideal self) (See Appendix D). Body dissatisfaction was calculated as the difference between how girls believe they currently look and how they would like to look, such that negative scores indicate a desire to be heavier and positive scores indicate a desire to be thinner.

*Media Exposure*

Media exposure was measured in several ways, including amount of media exposure as well as type of exposure. Amount of media exposure was assessed by questions regarding how many hours the child spends watching television in each of three weekday time blocks (morning before school, after school, but before dinner, and after dinner before bed), as well as each of three weekend time blocks (morning before lunch, after lunch before dinner, after dinner before bed). Type of media exposure was assessed by asking what shows are viewed in each of these
time slots. Both the mother and child answered these questions about the child’s media consumption (See Appendix E and F).

**Media Preference**

Media preference was determined by asking participants to list their three favorite shows. Preference and exposure were assessed independently due to possible television restrictions and/or competition for television control which would impede exposure, but not necessarily alter preferences. Both mother and child answered these questions about the child’s media preferences (See Appendix E and F). Finally, mothers provided information about family demographics (See Appendix F).

**Procedures**

After consent was given by the parent (See Appendix G), participants were gathered, at their community or child care center, either alone or in groups up to five children. Participants were briefed on what the study entailed in a manner that was clearly understandable to them. Questions were answered, children were told that they could leave at any time, and their assent for participation was solicited. Although children completed their own questionnaire, a trained experimenter guided them through the process and answered questions as they completed the questionnaires.

Participants first completed the adjective attribution task with either the chubby or thin child picture (this was counterbalanced). Next, participants completed the MMIS subscale followed by the perceived realism questionnaire. After these scales were complete, the participants were given a small prize (e.g., pencil, sticker) to retain their interest and encourage further cooperation. Participants next completed the second adjective attribution task then the body dissatisfaction scale. The second adjective attribution task was done in the same way as the first except with the opposite picture (thin or chubby). The last portion of the study was the
television preferences and exposure scales. The attribution task was split up to reduce the chance that participants would attempt to replicate previous answers. Once the children had completed the study they were weighed and measured in private, then were given a second small prize and thanked for their help. Any questions were answered and they were excused.
RESULTS

To better understand the reliability of the media measures, total daily and weekly media exposure was calculated for each participant using two scales, the mother’s exposure report and the daughter’s exposure report. Mothers and daughters did not significantly differ in their reported amounts of television that the child watched weekly, but they did significantly differ with their daily reported amounts (See Table 1, reports of daily viewing $t(29) = -3.6, p < .01$; reports of weekly viewing $t(29) = -.12, p = .91$). These means were comparable to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) which reported the average daily television consumption of 8-10 year olds as 2.39 hours. However, although the means were similar, mothers’ and children’s reports did not correlate with one another (weekly: $r = -.04, p = .85$; daily: $r = -.19, p = .31$).

Furthermore, the range of mothers’ reports of weekday hours was 0-4, which was more restricted than the child’s weekday range of 0-10.5. Due to the low correlations and the more extreme range reported by the children, mother’s report of the child’s media exposure was used in the analyses. Total mother reported hours were not significantly correlated with any key study variables (perceived realism: $r = -.12, p = .54$; body dissatisfaction: $r = -.01, p = .97$; internalization: $r = -.02, p = .90$; AFB: $r = -.20, p = .30$).

Media preferences for thin idealized and non-thin idealized programming were also examined and preliminary analysis suggested low variability in this construct due to the rarity of reports of non-idealized shows. Although it was not a focus of this study, an interesting finding was the large number of parents who did not report specific television shows being viewed by their children. Parents were asked to name specific television shows watched during certain time-blocks. In lieu of television show titles, parents reported television networks or media types (e.g., cartoons, movie) being viewed. With 60% (n=18) of parents reporting a network or media type instead of a show at least once and 22% (n=4) of these parents reporting only this response type
it appears that parents may know which networks their children watch, but are unable to identify what shows.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Key Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Realism</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.6-4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalization</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antifat Bias</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>-.75-4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom-Reported Child Hours (per week)</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>0-20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-Reported Child Hours (per week)</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>2.5-20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom Hours (weekday)</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Hours (weekday)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0-10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Way to Look</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To examine H1, that internalization of media and perceived realism of media would be correlated, a Pearson Correlation was performed. Internalization and perceived realism were significantly correlated ($r = .64, p < .01$) such that children with higher perceived realism of media reported higher internalization of the thin ideal.

To examine part one of H2, testing perceived realism as moderator in the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction, a regression was performed in accordance to procedures outlined by Cohen and Cohen (1975). Perceived realism, media exposure, and the interaction between the two were tested as independent variables in the regression, with body dissatisfaction as the dependent variable. The overall regression was not significant ($F(3,26) = .53, p = .67, R^2 = .06$).
To examine the second part of H2, that perceived realism would mediate the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction, correlational preconditions of mediation were tested. Perceived realism was not significantly correlated with body dissatisfaction \((r = .18, p = .32)\) or media exposure \((r = -.12, p = -.12)\). As these correlations were non-significant, further tests of the mediation of perceived realism in the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction could not be examined.

To examine H3, testing internalization as a moderator in the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction, a regression was performed. Internalization, media exposure, and the interaction between the two were tested as independent variables in the regression, with body dissatisfaction as the dependent variable. The overall regression was not significant \((F(3,26) = .89, p = .46, R^2 = .09)\). Thus, internalization was not found to moderate the relationship between media exposure and body dissatisfaction.

To examine part one of H4, testing perceived realism as a moderator in the relationship between media exposure and AFB, a regression was performed. Table 2 displays means of thin and chubby ratings and the resulting bias of each adjective pair (lower scores represent a more positive rating). Total mean bias was calculated for each participant and used as total AFB in analyses. Perceived realism, media exposure, and the interaction between the two were tested as independent variables in the regression, with body dissatisfaction as the dependent variable. The overall regression was not significant \((F(3,26) = 1.74, p = .18, R^2 = .17)\). Thus, perceived realism was not found to be a moderator in the relationship between media exposure and AFB.
To examine the second part of H4, that perceived realism would mediate the relationship between media exposure and AFB, correlational preconditions were tested. Perceived realism was not significantly correlated with AFB ($r = .06, p = .97$) or media exposure ($r = -.12, p = -.12$). As these correlations were non-significant, further tests of the mediation of perceived realism in the relationship between media exposure AFB could not be examined.

To examine H5, testing internalization as a moderator in the relationship between media exposure and AFB, a regression was performed. Internalization, media exposure, and the interaction between the two were tested as independent variables in the regression, with AFB as the dependent variable. The overall regression was significant ($F (3,26) = 3.03, p < .05, R^2 = .26$). There was a significant main effect for media exposure ($\beta = -2.66, p = .01$) but interpretation of this was impacted by a significant interaction between media exposure and internalization ($\beta = 2.5, p = .01$) suggesting that internalization acts as a moderator in the relationship between media exposure and antifat bias. The nature of this interaction can be seen in Figure 1. Specifically, and

**Table 2**

*Mean ratings of Antifat Bias Adjectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective Pair</th>
<th>Thin Score</th>
<th>Chubby Score</th>
<th>Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart/Stupid</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy/Sick</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neat/Sloppy</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Friends/Few Friends</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Hard/Is Lazy</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice/Mean</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Teased/Teased</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Looking/Ugly</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contrary to expectations, children with both low exposure and low internalization of the thin ideal reported the highest antifat biases.

Figure 1

*Interaction Between Internalization and Media Exposure with AFB as the Dependent Variable*

Finally, although no specific hypothesis was made regarding the relationship between ideal body preference and internalization, exploratory analyses were conducted to examine this relationship. *Ideal body* is the response given on the body dissatisfaction scale to the question “Which figure do you think is the best way for a girl to look?” Ideal body was significantly correlated with internalization ($r = -.43, p < .05$), such that the higher a girl’s internalization of media portrayed female body forms and her desire to emulate them, the thinner form she chose as the “best way for a girl to look.” Also, a specific hypothesis was not made regarding the relationship between BMI and the key study variables, however, body dissatisfaction was correlated with BMI $F(2, 27) = 4.53, p = .02$, such that girls with higher BMI reported that they were less satisfied with their bodies and desired a thinner body for themselves.
DISCUSSION

One of the main goals of this study was to examine important individual difference variables associated with the body image issues elicited from the media. Perceived realism of media is a relatively under-researched concept which measures the level to which a person perceives a media portrayed subject to be a realistic representation of everyday life. The results indicated that how much young girls perceive TV shows to be realistic was related to the degree to which they internalize the body sizes of the characters and begin to view the ultra-thin bodies of the females as the ideal feminine form. The perception that these child-focused shows are realistic may influence children to believe that the body figures of the female characters are also a highly realistic and expected societal norm. Due to the fact that 33% of women on television are underweight (compared with 5% in reality; Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, & Brownell, 2003), children not only see a distorted view of what is normal, but they believe this depiction to be realistic. A possible way to combat this trend is to teach children how to be media literate (i.e., understand the difference between reality and “movie magic”). Van Evra (1990) posits that children who are exposed to information that contradicts media portrayals of certain subjects (i.e., body image) will be less likely to experience cultivation effects such as those accounting for perceived realism of the thin ideal. This suggests that parents’ explaining to children about the lifestyles of actors (e.g., daily gym trainers) as well as airbrushing and body modification techniques will help them to detect the difference between media portrayed bodies and real life bodies. Helping children realize these differences may reduce their perceived realism and, in turn, their internalization.

Internalization was also highly correlated with thin body preference. Thin body preference was the body from the figure array that children chose as the “best way to look” (i.e., the child’s idea of what body size is preferred for girls their age). The more the child internalized
thin ideal messages from the media, the thinner they preferred girls’ bodies to be. However, contrary to the hypotheses, internalization was not significantly related to girls’ dissatisfaction with their own bodies (i.e., the discrepancy between the size a girl perceives herself to be and what size she wants to be). It is possible that the lack of a significant relationship between internalization of the thin ideal and body dissatisfaction is due to the large percentage of normal weight girls in the sample. Thus, there may not have been sufficient variability in body dissatisfaction to find a relationship. This is consistent with the low mean score for body dissatisfaction in this sample. Overall, this normal weight sample of girls was satisfied with their body size. It is also possible that at this age, children’s satisfaction with their own body is related to variables other than internalization of the thin ideal. For example, girls might base their ideas about their own body on messages they receive from their family, even as ideas about the ideal female body are based on other influences. It is noteworthy that body dissatisfaction was correlated with BMI in this sample. This finding suggests that while heavier girls are more dissatisfied with their bodies, internalization of the thin ideal does not relate to body dissatisfaction in this age group.

Few of the bi-variate relationships between media exposure and other study variables were significant, which prevented tests of mediation and moderation by perceived realism and internalization. One exception to this general pattern was the significant moderator effect of internalization on the relation between media exposure and antifat bias. However, contrary to the hypotheses, this moderation effect was such that girls with both low exposure and low internalization had the highest levels of AFB. One possible interpretation of this finding is that children who watch less TV and feel less connected to the characters on TV lead lifestyles that are more active and healthy. In the context of this lifestyle (promoted by family or sports involvement), overweight may be associated with a lowered health standard and therefore more
negative attributes were associated with overweight figures. Antifat bias was not related to any other variables of interest in this study. This may reflect the fact that antifat biases are present in many aspects of everyday life (e.g., comments by parents, peers) as well as the media. It is possible that the impact of AFB in children’s lives outside of the media (e.g., peers, relatives, etc) is stronger than that of the media.

Also contrary to the hypotheses, media preference was not correlated with any study variables and media exposure only displayed a significant relationship in the interaction between internalization and AFB, the direction of which was in opposition to the hypothesis. The difficulty in measuring this media exposure and preference is a possible reason for this lack of findings. While mothers and children did not differ significantly in their average reports of media intake and the mean hours for both children and parent were similar to that of the Kaiser Family Foundation, the ranges of daily television exposure varied greatly between parents and children and the two reports did not correlate with one another. Although there were no obvious outliers to exclude for either group, children were more likely to report exaggerated amounts of exposure. Some children reported watching television on school days for up to 10 hours, while others claimed they never watched television on these days. The reports could be truthful or, especially for the excessive numbers, could be exaggerations due to difficulty with the concept of time or social desirability. Even with detailed explanation and individual help, it was clear that some children were confused by the concept of time.

Media preference, measured by asking parents and children for the exact shows watched, was analyzed. Parents were relatively unsuccessful at reporting what specific television shows their children watched daily. Many parents reported knowing what networks their children watched (e.g., Disney, PBS), but not the individual shows. The types of shows on a network differ greatly by day and time and some display much more thin body idealization than others.
Finally, the scarcity of child focused television that does not portray a thin ideal may account for some of the difficulty in this construct. Because most of the shows that children reported watching do support a thin ideal, there is not enough naturally occurring variability to ascertain the impact of this message on children using the methods employed by this study.

**Limitations and future directions**

Although this study does make some contributions to our understanding of the role of media in children’s body image, there are many important limitations to note. First of all, the results of this study are correlational and do not imply causation, although social learning theory and cultivation theory suggest interpretable directions of the effects. In addition, the small sample size has low power which may have led to erroneous acceptance of the null hypothesis for many analyses. Although pragmatic constraints such as the length of the study (an hour), the time of year (during school time), and the nature of the research (e.g., sensitive questions about body image) limited the size of the sample, future research with a larger, more representative sample might yield different results. It is also possible that relationships among variables were attenuated by the high percentage of normal weight participants in the sample. A higher variability of BMI and age could have shed more light on the relationships among these variables. Future research which focuses on overweight girls who are at higher risk of body image concerns would contribute greatly to this literature.

In sum, this study expands the literature on the subject of body image by adding to the understanding of the relationship between perceived realism and internalization. Future research should expand on these findings with a major goal being more widespread media literacy among children. Because of the psychosocial risks associated with poor body image later in life, efforts to interrupt the formation of these attitudes in childhood may be beneficial to healthy development.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX A
MMIS

Please circle one numbered box as your answer for each question!

1. I try to look like the people on television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really Agree</td>
<td>Agree a little bit</td>
<td>I don’t Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree a little bit</td>
<td>Really Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I learn how to look attractive by looking at the people on television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really Agree</td>
<td>Agree a little bit</td>
<td>I don’t Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree a little bit</td>
<td>Really Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I compare my body to television stars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really Agree</td>
<td>Agree a little bit</td>
<td>I don’t Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree a little bit</td>
<td>Really Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I would like my body to look like the people on television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really Agree</td>
<td>Agree a little bit</td>
<td>I don’t Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree a little bit</td>
<td>Really Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. I try to look like the actresses in television shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really Agree</td>
<td>Agree a little bit</td>
<td>I don’t Agree or Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree a little bit</td>
<td>Really Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please place the picture where you think it belongs in one of the boxes between each word pair.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKS HARD</th>
<th>IS LAZY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NICE</td>
<td>MEAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOESN'T GET</td>
<td>GETS TEASED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD LOOKING</td>
<td>UGLY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
PERCEIVED REALISM SCALE

Please circle one numbered box as your answer for each question!

1. Most schools you see on TV shows are very similar to schools in real life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. TV school programs show people what it is like to go to school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Shows, like Hannah Montana and iCarly, show the same type of girls and stuff happening that you see in real schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. The teachers and adults in schools on TV shows handle stuff that happens just like real teachers and adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. If I were to go to a school, I would not expect it to be like the schools I see on television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Television tells me about what my world is really like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. I feel that I can learn a lot about people from watching television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. By watching television, I can learn how to avoid bad stuff happening to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Really Agree</th>
<th>2: Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3: I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4: Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5: Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
9. You cannot learn much about the real world by watching television.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Characters in programs like Drake and Josh or The suite life of Zach and Cody, are very similar to people in the real world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. The relationships of boyfriends and girlfriends shown on TV shows are not at all like relationships in the real world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. The problems characters have in shows, like Drake and Josh or The suite life of Zach and Cody, are very similar to problems people have in the real world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. The events that come up in programs, like Drake and Josh or The suite life of Zach and Cody, are very similar to events in the real world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. You cannot learn anything about real life by watching TV shows about schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. The bodies of the girls on TV shows are very similar to the bodies of girls in real life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. The way that girls on TV look is how girls in real life should look.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
17. By watching TV I learn how girls in real life dress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18. By watching TV I learn how my body is supposed to look.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

19. The bodies of most girls on TV are different from the bodies of most girls in real life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Really Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree a little bit</th>
<th>3 I don’t Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>4 Disagree a little bit</th>
<th>5 Really Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX D
BODY DISSATISFACTION SCALE

1. Which figure looks the most like you? (Circle one)

2. Which figure is the best way for a girl to look? (Circle one)

3. Which figure would you want to look like? (Circle one)
4. Which figures do you think are ok to look like? (Circle them)

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

5. Which one would you NOT want to look like? (Circle one)

A  B  C  D  E  F  G
APPENDIX E

MEDIA EXPOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE

Media exposure and preferences (to be filled out by participant)

Please write down the names of your 3 favorite television shows. These are the shows you would want to watch more than any other shows.

1.
2.
3.

Please write down the names of the shows you usually watch during each of these times…

1. Morning before school:
2. After school and before dinner:
3. After dinner and before bed:
   (Weekends)
4. Before lunch:
5. After lunch before dinner:
6. After dinner before bed:

Please write down how many hours you think you usually spend watching television during each of these times… if you don’t watch television during a time slot put “0.” For example, if you watch one Sponge Bob or one Wizards of Waverly Place, that is a half an hour. If you watch two shows it is an hour.

1. Morning before school:
2. After school and before dinner:
3. After dinner and before bed:
   (Weekends)
4. Before lunch:
5. After lunch before dinner:
6. After dinner before bed
APPENDIX F
DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics (to be filled out by the participant’s mother)

1. Child’s age and birth date:

2. Which race/ethnic group best describes your child? (circle one)
   - Caucasian
   - Hispanic
   - African American
   - Middle Eastern
   - Asian
   - Mixed/Other ______________

3. Please list all siblings that live in the home with your daughter along with their ages and genders.

4. Number of televisions in the home:

5. Is there a television in this child’s room?

6. Please report all television restrictions (certain channels or shows that are off limits, hourly restrictions, etc)

7. Which of the following categories best describes your total yearly family income?
   - Under $15,000
   - $15,000 - $35,000
   - $35,000 - $55,000
   - $55,000 - $75,000
   - $75,000 - $95,000
   - $95,000 - $115,000
   - Over $115,000

8. Please list your daughter’s top 3 favorite television shows (to the best of your own knowledge):
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

9. Parent’s birth date:
   Father (month/day/year): 
   Mother (month/day/year):

10. Which of the following best describes the father’s educational background?
    - Some high school
    - High school graduate or equivalent (GED)
    - Some college
    - College graduate (e.g., Associate or Bachelor’s Degree)
    - Some graduate or professional school experience
    - Master’s degree
    - Professional or Doctorate degree
11. Which of the following best describes the mother’s educational background?

- Some high school
- Some graduate or professional school experience
- High school graduate or equivalent (GED)
- Master’s degree
- Some college
- Professional or Doctorate degree
- College graduate (e.g., Associate or Bachelor’s Degree)

12. How many hours a day is the television on in your house even when no one is watching it?

13. How much time in each time block does this child usually watch television?
   - Morning before school:
   - After school and before dinner:
   - After dinner and before bed:
     (Weekends)
   - Before lunch:
   - After lunch before dinner:
   - After dinner before bed:

14. What shows does this child usually watch in each of these time blocks?
   - Morning before school:
   - After school and before dinner:
   - After dinner and before bed:
     (Weekends)
   - Before lunch:
   - After lunch before dinner:
   - After dinner before bed:

15. On a typical weekday how many hours do you watch television?

16. On a typical weekend day how many hours do you watch television?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Bowling Green State University. I am conducting a study on the media’s influence on the body image attitudes of young girls. Previous research suggests that the media’s portrayal of the “ideal” thin female form negatively affects the body image of adult and teenage women. Very little research in this area has been conducted on younger girls, but this small amount of research has also found similar negative results. This study may help to shed light on how the media affects young girls. This research will be valuable to researchers, clinicians, educators, and parents.

I am asking for your permission to let your child participate in this study. If you give permission, your child will be asked to fill out a few questionnaires. The session will be conducted by a trained researcher while at the center from which you were contacted. First, your child will be asked if she would like to participate in the study. If she decides that she does not want to participate, she will be politely excused. If she decides that she does want to participate, she will answer numerous questions and do activities set up to collect information on the study’s research area. For example, your child will be asked to assign adjectives to figures representing women of various body sizes. She will be asked to report her media preferences and exposure amounts. There will also be other questionnaires about your child’s own body image attitudes and attitudes regarding media. Finally, she will be asked if she can be weighed and measured for height. The entire session should take no longer than 45 minutes. The child’s mother or guardian will also be asked to report on certain aspects of the child’s media exposure with this questionnaire taking about five minutes to complete. All of you and your child’s responses will be kept completely confidential. A copy of the final report will be sent to the center from which you were contacted, where you may view it if you wish. The risks of participating are not much greater than what your child experiences in daily life. It is possible that answering these questions may make your child more aware of attitudes she holds about the media and her own body image. In our experience, however, children enjoy participating in these activities and are very comfortable expressing their opinions.

We hope that you will allow your child will participate in this important study. Please return the next page to your child’s school if you would like your child to participate. Deciding to participate or not will not impact your relationship with the center from which you were contacted or Bowling Green State University in any way. If you have questions about this study, please contact me, Allison Kiefner, at akiefne@bgsu.edu or the project advisor, Dr. Dara Mush-er-Eizenman, at (419) 372-2948 or mushere@bgsu.edu. Additionally, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, at (419) 372-7716 or hrsb@bgsu.edu, with questions about participant rights.

Thank you very much,

Allison E. Kiefner
Child Development Research Group
Bowling Green State University

PLEASE KEEP THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS
Department of Psychology

I have been asked to allow my child to participate in research on the media’s influence on the body image attitudes of young girls. I have been given a full explanation of what will occur during this study. This study will help psychologists understand how the media influences the body image attitudes of young girls.

Data from this study will mostly be reported as group data, and every possible effort will be made to preserve confidentiality regarding this data. However, the researcher may quote or paraphrase my or my child’s responses. If this occurs, my name or my child’s name will not be attached to the response.

My child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and I can stop her participation at any time. By signing this form, I am giving consent for my child to participate in this study. But, if my child chooses to do so, she can stop participating at any time. Deciding to participate or not will not impact my relationship with the child care center or Bowling Green State University in any way.

If I have questions about the study, I can contact Allison Kiefner at akiefne@bgsu.edu. I may also contact the project advisor, Dr. Dara Musher-Eizenman, at (419) 372-2948 or mushere@bgsu.edu or the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, at (419) 372-7716 or at hsrb@bgsu.edu with any comments, questions, or concerns about this study.

Child’s name: (please print) ____________________________________________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ____________________
(Sign here to give consent for your child to participate in this study)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND THE ATTACHED QUESTIONNAIRE TO YOUR CHILD’S CENTER!