

Running head: EFFECT OF ANTI-OBESITY MEDIA

Effect of anti-obesity media on body image and antifat attitudes

BY

Laura Jakul

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Psychology  
University of Manitoba  
© July 2005



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

0-494-08875-3

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*ISBN:*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

*ISBN:*

**NOTICE:**

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

**AVIS:**

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

  
**Canada**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**  
**FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**COPYRIGHT PERMISSION PAGE**

**Effect of Anti-Obesity Media on Body Image and Antifat Attitudes**

**BY**

**Laura Jakul**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**LAURA JAKUL ©2005**

**Permission has been granted to the Library of The University of Manitoba to lend or sell copies of this thesis/practicum, to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to University Microfilm Inc. to publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.**

**The author reserves other publication rights, and neither this thesis/practicum nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.**

## Table of contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	6
Abstract	7
1. Introduction	8
1.0 Body Image Disturbance	8
1.01 Definitions	8
1.02 Prevalence	9
1.03 Effects of body image disturbance	10
1.1 Media Exposure	12
1.11 Empirical Sources	13
1.12 Personal accounts	13
1.13 Correlational studies	14
1.14 Experimental studies	15
1.15 Content Analyses	16
1.16 Thin Ideal Internalization	18
1.2 Theories of Body Image Disturbance	20
1.21 Appearance schematicity	20
1.22 Social learning theory	22
1.23 Social comparison theory	22
1.24 Self-discrepancy theory	25
1.25 Weiner's theory of controllability	26
1.3 Obesity	27
1.4 Fear of Fat	29
1.5 Stigma Toward Obesity	30
1.6 Controllability of weight	32
1.61 Controllability and Stigma Toward Obesity	33
1.7 Summary and Present Research	38
1.71 Hypotheses	41
2. Method	43
2.1 Design	43

	Page
2.2 Participants	43
2.3 Materials	44
2.4 Independent variables	44
2.5 Covariates	44
2.6 Dependent variables	45
2.7 Procedure	52
3. Results	54
3.1 Pilot Study	54
3.2 Formal Study	56
4. Discussion	74
4.1 Anti-obesity attitudes	77
4.2 Body image disturbance	79
4.3 Drive for thinness	79
4.4 Self-Classified weight	80
4.5 Anti-obesity media vs. thin ideal media	81
4.6 Covariates	82
4.7 Summary and implications	82
4.8 Limitations	83
4.9 Future research	84
5. References	87
6. Appendixes	100
6.1 A. Questions about the newspaper articles	100
6.2 B. Anti-obesity condition	103
6.3 C. Anti-obesity plus controllability of weight condition	104
6.4 D. Health-anxiety placebo condition	105
6.5 E. Eating Disorders Inventory-2-Drive for Thinness Subscale	106
6.6 F. Self Classified Weight Scale	107
6.7 G. Antifat Attitudes Questionnaire	108
6.8 H. Body Shape Questionnaire	109
6.9 I. The Thirteen-Figure Contour Drawing Ratings Scale	110

	Page
6.10 J. Eating Attitudes Test-26	111
6.11 K. Forbidden Food Survey	112
6.12 L. Penn State Worry Questionnaire	113
6.13 M. Positive and Negative Affect Scale	114
6.14 N. Stanford 7-day Physical Activity Re-call Scale	115
6.15 O. Information and Demographic Questionnaires	117
6.16 P. Pilot Questionnaire	119
6.17 Q. Consent Form	120
6.18 R. Debriefing Form	121
6.19 S. Additional integrity check results	122

## List of Tables

		Page
Table I.	Description of pilot data	55
Table II.	Description of participant groups	57
Table III.	Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Primary Dependent Variables as a Function of Condition	61
Table IV.	Univariate Multiple Analysis of Covariance Results for Primary Dependent Variables as a Function of Condition	62
Table V.	Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Secondary Dependent Variables as a Function of Condition	66
Table VI.	Univariate Multiple Analysis of Covariance Results for Secondary Dependent Variables as a Function of Condition	67
Table VII.	Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Information Variables at Pre-test and Follow-up as a Function of Condition	72
Table VIII.	Univariate Multiple Analysis of Covariance Results from Pre-test to Follow-up for Information Questionnaire Variables as a Function of Condition	73

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for their valuable feedback on my thesis. In particular, I would like to thank my research advisor, Dr. Norah Vincent, for all of her help and support.

I would also like to thank the University of Manitoba and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their financial support of this project.



## Abstract

This research examined whether exposure to anti-obesity media contributes to body image disturbance and antifat attitudes, and whether attributing obesity to internal factors leads to more negative evaluations of body image and more antifat attitudes.

Attributional theory (Weiner, 2000) formed the theoretical basis for study predictions.

Participants were 220 female university students randomly assigned to read one of three messages: anti-obesity (condition 1), anti-obesity and the controllability of weight (condition 2), or health-anxiety placebo (condition 3). Participants were assessed on measures of body image disturbance and anti-obesity attitudes before and after the experimental manipulation and at one-week follow-up. Using four multivariate analysis of covariance procedures, results showed that reading newspaper articles about obesity improved antifat attitudes except when the message that weight is controllable was included. Results also demonstrated that high drive for thinness and perceiving oneself as underweight were pre-existing characteristics that tend to improve body image disturbance.

## Effect of anti-obesity media on body image disturbance and antifat attitudes

Body image is a multidimensional concept that is defined differently throughout the literature. A generally accepted definition is that body image involves the thoughts, feelings and attitudes related to one's own body (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Body image disturbance is generally defined as any form of affective, cognitive, behavioural or perceptual disturbance that is related to a part of physical appearance (Thompson, 1995). Specifically, affective body image disturbance refers to anxiety or depression related to body image; cognitive disturbance indicates an excess of attentional resources devoted to body image disturbance; behavioural disturbance denotes a surplus of behaviours related to body image such as grooming, weighing, and making comparisons with other bodies, and can also involve avoidance of body image related situations such as wearing certain types of clothing, attending particular social activities, and eating restraint; and perceptual disturbance refers to body size overestimation.

### *Body Image Disturbance*

#### *Definitions*

Definitions of body image disturbance tend to be relatively stable within the literature. In a discourse analytic study on understanding body image disturbance within the field of mental health, Moulding and Hepworth (2001) found that body image disturbance is typically defined by three distinctive themes: cognitive-behavioural, gender and socio-cultural. Cognitive behavioural themes are drawn from cognitive behavioural theory which proposes that body image disturbance involves perception,

cognition, emotion and behaviour. According to this view, individuals perceive external and internal stimuli, think about the stimuli, respond emotionally, and this sequence determines behaviour. Gender themes are also an important part of body image disturbance. While both males and females can have a disturbed body image, it is widely recognized as more common and more acute in females as compared to males. A third component of body image disturbance involves socio-cultural themes. Cultural expectations about what is defined as the ideal body are considered an important component of body image disturbance.

### *Prevalence*

Body image disturbance is prevalent in Western cultures, particularly in females. To illustrate, a survey conducted by Garner (1997), found that 89% of 3,452 women surveyed about body image were dissatisfied with their bodies and wanted to lose weight. Rodin, Silberstein, and Striegel-Moore (1985) have claimed that even with women who do not experience eating disorders, general body image dissatisfaction, or overall body image disturbance, is pervasive enough to be characterized as “normative discontent.” Body image disturbance is not relegated to adult females alone. High levels of body image disturbance are found in elementary school girls and boys. Approximately 50% of girls and 30% of boys are dissatisfied with their bodies and wish they were thinner (Littleton & Ollendick, 2003). However, the current discussion of body image will be limited to females because, at every age, females are much more likely to have body image disturbance (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002).

Body image disturbance becomes increasingly common for females at puberty. By mid-adolescence, it is normative for females to report dissatisfaction with weight, fear

of weight gain, and preoccupation with losing weight (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). For instance, in a study sample of 2279 females (aged 10-14), McVey, Tweed, and Blackmore (2004) found that 29.3% of the participants were currently trying to lose weight. Furthermore, 31.3% of the sample reported feeling "too fat" despite the fact that only 7.2% of the participants were above the upper limit of a healthy weight range according to the Body Mass Index (BMI). Weight dissatisfaction is positively correlated with actual weight; however, the majority of females who report feeling fat are within the normal weight range (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Moreover, comparable rates of dissatisfaction were found in a study by Cash (2002) in which 46% of 803 participants were dissatisfied with their weight. Similarly, Jones, Bennett, Olmstead, Lawson and Rodin (2001) found that 27% of 1739 female participants (12-18 years of age) had significant symptoms of disordered attitudes about food and weight, and unhealthy weight loss behaviour, as evidenced by scores above 20 on the EAT-26. These studies suggest that body image disturbance is widespread in Western cultures, at least amongst adolescents and in University populations.

#### *Effects of body image disturbance*

The widespread nature of body image disturbance is especially disconcerting given that the consequences of body image disturbance can be devastating. From an early age, body image affects emotions, thoughts and behaviours, as well as both public and private relationships (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002). Consequently, body image disturbance can influence psychological well being and quality of life (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Furthermore, body image disturbance is associated with lower self-

esteem, obesity<sup>1</sup>, emotional distress, depression or anxiety, appearance rumination, unnecessary cosmetic surgery, and is one of the strongest predictors for eating disturbances (Littleton & Ollendick, 2003; Stice & Shaw, 2002; Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999; Wardle, Waller & Fox, 2002). Specifically, it is suggested that body image disturbance can lead to dieting because there is a commonly accepted belief that dieting is an effective weight control technique; dieting, in turn, can increase the risk of eating disorder pathology because restrictive dieting can lead to binge eating and compensatory behaviours, such as excessive exercise and avoiding the consumption of forbidden foods (Stice & Shaw, 2002). Because body image disturbance is so prevalent in our culture, and has such serious consequences, attempts to understand body image disturbance are imperative.

The aetiology of body image disturbance has received much attention in the research literature due to the prevalence of such concerns in Western society. As a result of these studies, different factors such as self-esteem, the disparity between one's physical appearance and social standards of beauty, the media, peer influence, family environment, and teasing about physical appearance as a child, have been identified as potential risk factors for body image disturbance (Polivy & Herman, 2002). These risk factors have subsequently been used as the basis of prevention programs for body image disturbance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Although there are some problems with the terms "obese" or "obesity" they are used throughout this paper whenever possible in order to avoid confusion with the Antifat Attitudes Questionnaire. The use of "obese" or "obesity" does not, however, imply a medical condition.

### *Media Exposure*

One potential risk factor that has received a great deal of attention in the body image literature is the impact of the media. Almost every American household has a television set, and it is on for an average of 7 hours a day, with people watching approximately 3 or 4 hours a day (Tiggemann, 2002). Furthermore, children and adolescents typically spend more time watching television than any other activity apart from sleeping. This level of television exposure means that each individual may see up to 35,000 commercials per year. In addition to television exposure, most adults also read newspapers every day (Tiggemann, 2002), and at least 50% of adolescent girls regularly read magazines such as *Seventeen* or *Vogue* (Levine & Smolak, 1996). Such widespread exposure to the media has many potential ramifications because the media carries messages about the social norms regarding the importance of physical appearance, the role of physical appearance as a central component of femininity, the stigma surrounding obesity, and the thin ideal (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002; Tiggemann, 2002). Repeated presentations of thin females and muscular males in the media makes these images seem like the standard of attractiveness and therefore makes the media an influential carrier of the sociocultural ideal of attractiveness (Jones, 2001).

Several researchers have highlighted the connection between the promotion of sociocultural ideals of beauty in the media and body image disturbance. For instance, Levine and Smolak (1996) argue that the media is a context for the development of disordered eating. They contend that the media endorses unhealthy messages and beauty ideals that can lead to the development of body image and eating disturbances. Some of the proposed negative messages that the media endorses include: 1) promotion of the

importance of image as substance, 2) encouragement of individuality while restricting standards of physical beauty to a narrow range, 3) defining slenderness as the ideal, which then creates widespread anxiety, self-consciousness, and dissatisfaction about weight and shape, 4) equating slenderness with beauty, fitness and feminine morality, 5) promotion of slenderness as the means to achieve social, sexual, and occupational success for women, 6) hatred of obesity and obese women, 7) emphasis on the potential, desirability and safety of changing personal appearance through fashion and dieting, 8) endorsement of gender roles founded on unrealistic expectations, and 9) simultaneous glorification and confusion surrounding the issues of self indulgence and self control. Levine and Smolak propose that these damaging messages about body image propagated by the media can help to encourage the development of body image and eating disturbances for individuals with potential preexisting vulnerabilities.

### *Empirical Sources*

Evidence for the detrimental effects of the media on women's body image comes from several sources: personal accounts, correlational studies of media exposure, and experimental studies of the immediate impact of thin ideal images (Tiggemann, 2002).

#### *Personal accounts.*

Females report that idealized images in the media are detrimental to their body image. In a large survey of 4,000 readers of *Psychology Today*, Garner (1997) found that almost half of the females reported that thin ideal images in the media make them feel insecure and consequently want to lose weight. Moreover, in open-ended interviews with females, they often spontaneously offered the media as the strongest source of pressure to be thin (Tiggemann, 2002). Furthermore, females diagnosed with eating disorders often

relate that thin ideal media was the trigger for the onset of their disorder (Tiggemann, 2002). Therefore, according to the personal accounts of females, the presentation of the thin ideal in the media has a detrimental effect on body image.

*Correlational studies.*

Many researchers have used correlational studies to investigate the prevalence and effect of the thin ideal in television programs, in movies, and in advertising, on women's self-esteem and body image disturbance (e.g. Stice, Maxfield & Wells, 2003; Groesz, Levine & Murnen, 2002; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Stice & Shaw, 1994). For instance, Gonzalez-Lavin and Smolak (1995) reported that females who watched 8 or more hours of television per week had significantly greater body dissatisfaction than individuals who watched less. Additionally, Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood, and Dwyer (1997) found that females who read more fashion magazines were more dissatisfied with their bodies, frustrated about weight, and feared gaining weight as compared to females who spent less time reading fashion magazines. Some argue that those who already have an interest in dieting and weight control seek out images and information that reinforce their beliefs. However, Harrison and Cantor (1997) found that exposure to thinness-depicting and thinness-promoting media was associated with increased eating disorder behaviours, drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction and feelings of ineffectiveness, even when the effects of interest in fitness and dieting were controlled. These results suggest that greater exposure to the thin ideal in the media is associated with greater body image disturbance.

Further support for the association between media exposure and body image disturbance comes from studies that have looked at differences in media directed at males



versus females. It is more common for females to experience body image disturbance compared to males, and these differences are reflected in the media directed at males and females. Anderson and DiDomenico (1992) examined the disparity in weight loss media in magazines marketed toward males and females. They looked at 10 magazines for males and 10 magazines for females with the highest readership for individuals ages 18-24. They found that magazines directed at females had 10 times as many weight loss articles than magazines directed at males. This study suggests that the differential exposure to media that promotes the thin ideal may be related to the disparate levels of body image disturbance among males and females. Overall, correlational studies of media exposure and body image disturbance suggest that greater exposure to media endorsing the thin ideal results in greater body image disturbance.

*Experimental studies.*

Another empirical source supporting the connection between the media and body image disturbance is experimental studies. Several studies have found a short-term negative impact on body image as a result of experimentally manipulated exposure to thin ideal media. For instance, Turner et al. (1997) looked at the effect of magazine reading on body image disturbance. In their sample of 49 females, they had 24 of the participants read fashion magazines, and 25 read news magazines without body image content. They found that individuals who read fashion magazines prior to answering questions about body image dissatisfaction wanted to weigh less, and had lower ratings of the self than individuals who read news magazines. Furthermore, in a recent meta-analytic review, Groesz et al. (2002) examined the effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body image satisfaction in females. They found, that across 25

studies, body image was significantly more negative when participants viewed images of thin models compared to when participants viewed models of average size, obese models, or inanimate objects. The results of studies that employ an experimental manipulation of exposure to thin ideal media point to a direct relationship between exposure to the thin ideal and body image satisfaction.

In an attempt to replicate the relationship between thin ideal media and body image disturbance in a naturalistic setting, Stice, Spangler and Agras (2001) assigned 219 adolescent girls to either a subscription to a fashion magazine, or to a no subscription control condition. They expected to find that greater exposure to fashion magazines would increase body image disturbance, thin ideal internalization, dieting, negative affect and bulimic symptoms. Contrary to their hypotheses, Stice et al. found that participants in the fashion magazine subscription group did not have increased scores on the dependent measures unless they initially had a score that was one standard deviation above the mean on a scale measuring pressure to be thin. The authors concluded that prolonged exposure to thin-ideal media had an adverse effect only for adolescents already at risk. This study suggests that in a natural setting, thin ideal media may only have a detrimental effect on females with preexisting vulnerabilities.

### *Content Analyses*

Content analyses of the media have found that there is an over-representation of young, tall, long-legged, and extremely thin females, many of who would meet the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4<sup>th</sup> ed (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) for anorexia nervosa (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). This type of female is found in magazines, film, and television—including children's

television (Tiggemann, 2002). In a study comparing the body shape and weight of females featured in popular magazines to the body shape and weight of average females, Wiseman, Gray, Mosimann, and Ahrens (1992) found that the cultural ideal for female body size is considerably smaller than the average size for females, and it possibly becoming even thinner. Content analyses of magazines have shown that they are also filled with articles and advertisements promoting weight loss (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992; Nemeroff, Stein, Diehl, & Smilack, 1994). For instance, Wiseman et al. (1992) analyzed the content of 6 magazines for females and found that there was a significant increase between 1959 and 1988 in the number of diet, exercise, and diet and exercise articles. Furthermore, the focus on weight loss and the thin ideal is more pronounced in magazines for females as compared to magazines for males. In a content analysis of traditional, fashion and modern magazines for females and males, Nemeroff et al. (1994) found significantly more body-oriented articles in the magazines directed at females as compared to the magazines directed at males.

Although most researchers agree that pressure to be thin is consistent or rising in the media, Nemeroff et al. (1994) came to a different conclusion. In their 12-year longitudinal study of the content of magazines for females, they argue that pressure to lose weight is decreasing in magazine article content. They contend that while there are some articles that focus on exercise for the purpose of losing weight, there are also articles that simply focus on exercise. However, norms of attractiveness have recently become even more specific in terms of what is ideal (Nemeroff et al., 1994). Not only is the ideal body for females thin, but it is also toned, adding fitness to the thin ideal. Therefore, Wiseman et al. (1992) argue that articles that focus on exercise are merely

weight loss articles tailored toward the new thin, toned ideal, and accordingly, the emphasis on the ideal body for females has continued to increase over the years.

### *Thin Ideal Internalization*

One of the proposed effects of media exposure is internalization of the thin ideal. Repeated exposure to the sociocultural ideal endorsed by the media can lead females to internalize the thin ideal so that it becomes the reference point against which to judge themselves (Tiggemann, 2002). Moreover, the media does not endorse the thin ideal alone. This ideal is part of a cultural script that associates thinness and attractiveness with happiness, desirability and status. If females accept this cultural script, then self-worth becomes contingent upon perceived attractiveness, and appearance becomes a core aspect of self-evaluation (Tiggemann, 2002). For instance, in a study on the thin ideal in the media and body image disturbance, Low et al. (2003), found that internalization, not simply exposure, to the thin ideal was predictive of body image disturbance. Similarly, in a study of 238 college women, Stice, Schupakneuberg, Shaw and Stein, (1994) tested the relationship between media exposure and eating disorder symptomatology. Using structural equation modeling, they found that internalization of the thin ideal mediated the relationship between media exposure and eating disorder symptomatology. They also found, however, a direct path between exposure to thin ideal media and body image and eating disturbances. These results suggest that media exposure may result in internalizing the thin ideal, which may subsequently play a role in the development of body image disturbance.

The thin ideal is often endorsed in the media by pairing thin female bodies with positive feedback. For instance, Fouts and Burggraf (2000) analyzed 18 prime time

television situation comedies and found that 76% of the female characters were below average in weight, with 19% and 5% being average and above-average weight, respectively. Furthermore, the thinner the female character, the more positive comments she received about her body from male characters. They concluded that the message for female viewers is that, in order to be attractive to and receive positive comments from males, one has to be slim; and the message for male viewers is that it is acceptable to make positive comments about female bodies when they are thin and to withhold positive comments when they are obese. Fouts and Burggraf argued that exposure to differential verbal reinforcement dependent on weight may contribute to the internalization of the thin ideal in female viewers.

Even though there is empirical evidence regarding the detrimental effect of the thin ideal in the media, it does not influence all females in the same way. Ruggiero, Levi, Ciuna and Sassaroli (2003) contend that internalizing the thin ideal may be more likely for individuals with certain personality styles. Specifically, body image and eating disturbances may be related to individual variability in tendencies toward perfectionism. The stress over conforming to the thin ideal may initiate eating disturbances in individuals with a perfectionistic personality. However, even though all women are not affected by exposure to thin ideal media in the same way, the consequences can be devastating for those affected. Several studies have found that internalizing an ultra thin, unattainable, beauty ideal can lead not only to body image disturbance, but negative affect, low self-esteem, dieting, obesity and eating disorders (Groesz et al., 2002; Stice & Shaw, 2002; Rodin et al., 1985).

*Theories of Body Image Disturbance*

There are several theories about the ways in which media can influence body image, however, the various theoretical perspectives center around two points: 1) the media promotes and reflects body shapes, styles of clothing and images that symbolize complex themes of gender, class, beauty, success and self-control (Levine & Smolak, 1996; Stice & Shaw, 1994); and 2) the media is part of a sociocultural network, that includes families, peers, school, athletics, business, and health care professionals, which generates and legitimizes a variety of messages; these messages combine with preexisting vulnerabilities, such as low self esteem and genetic susceptibility to obesity, to beget the continuum of eating disorders (Levine & Smolak, 1996; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Specific theories looking at the role of the media in body image disturbance that have received attention in the body image literature include appearance schematicity, social learning theory, social comparison theory, and self-discrepancy theory. Weiner's theory of causal attributions will also be discussed as a potentially useful theory for explaining the effect of media exposure on body image disturbance.

*Appearance schematicity*

Certain individual differences make it more likely that media exposure will result in body image disturbance: weight (heavier women tend to have more body image disturbance), eating disorder symptomatology, trait body dissatisfaction, self-consciousness, a penchant for social comparison, and high degree of internalizing the thin ideal (Tiggemann, 2002). These individual characteristics associated with body image disturbance are often referred to as "appearance schematicity" (Tiggemann, 2002). Cash (1995) proposes that individuals can have cognitive schemas about their own appearance