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Evolution of preschool girls' beauty standards over the recent 10 years: findings of the experimental longitudinal study

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Abstract

Context and Relevance. Body dissatisfaction is a risk factor for the development of eating disorders, which has also been found over the recent decades among children and adolescents. In turn, eating disorders are associated with an increasing psychological ill-being, and namely, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The body positivity social movement has been expanding recently countering thinness standards imposed by Western culture, while raising experts' concerns about the normalization of obesity. **Objective.** The aim was to investigate how the representation of the female beauty standard has evolved among preschool girls. **Hypothesis.** Despite some changes in the propagated female beauty standards that have been occurring in mass culture over the recent decade, girls still prefer dolls with ultra-thin bodies. Dolls act as role models, with their appearance forming the basis for girls' perceptions of attractiveness. **Methods and materials.** The article presents the findings of a "Doll Choice" experiment, replicated 10 years after the original one, which involved 30 girls aged 4 to 8 years. **Results.** Similar to their peers from a decade ago, contemporary girls continue to prefer ultra-thin dolls (fashion dolls) that embody the values of consumer society, wherein the body and overall appearance are regarded as objects subject to manipulation with the aim of enhancement and presentation to others. At the same time, a doll with a regular physique of a 5–6-years-old girl evoked negative emotions and was rejected. The girls paid more attention to the design of appearance than we had previously observed. **Conclusions.** The current generation of children finds itself in an unfavorable social environment for development, under the influence of pathogenic consumer society values, which are risk factors for the development of mental disorders and emotional maladjustment. This situation necessitates the development and implementation of specialized educational programs for parents to prevent mental ill-being in children and adolescents.

Keywords: dolls, girls, beauty standards, longitudinal study, physical perfectionism, eating disorders, consumer society

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Динамика стандартов красоты у девочек дошкольного возраста за последние 10 лет: данные экспериментального лонгитюдного исследования

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Чувство неудовлетворенности телом является фактором риска развития нарушений и расстройств пищевого поведения, рост которых, в том числе среди детей и подростков, наблюдается в последние десятилетия. В свою очередь, расстройства пищевого поведения коррелируют с ростом психологического неблагополучия — сниженной самооценкой, тревогой и депрессией. В противовес навязываемому канону худого тела в западной культуре ширится социальное движение бодипозитива, которое вызывает обеспокоенность специалистов по поводу нормализации ожирения.

Цель. Исследовать динамику представлений о стандартах женской красоты у девочек дошкольного возраста. **Гипотеза.** Несмотря на некоторые изменения в пропагандируемых стандартах женской красоты, произошедшие в массовой культуре за последние 10 лет, девочки по-прежнему отдают предпочтение куклам с ультратонкими телами. Куклы выступают как ролевые модели, внешность которых девочки соотносят со своими представлениями о привлекательности. **Методы и материалы.**

В статье приводятся данные эксперимента «Выбор куклы», повторенного спустя 10 лет, в котором приняли участие 30 девочек от 4 до 8 лет. **Результаты.** Современные девочки, как и их ровесницы 10 лет назад, отдают предпочтение ультратонким куклам (fashion doll), олицетворяющим ценности общества потребления, где тело и внешность в целом становятся объектом для манипуляций с целью улучшения и презентации другим. При этом кукла с нормальным телосложением, соответствующим телу девочки 5–6 лет, вызывает негативные эмоции и отвергается. Девочки больше внимания, чем было нами зафиксировано прежде, уделяют оформлению внешности. **Выводы.** Современное поколение детей находится в неблагоприятной социальной ситуации развития, испытывая на себе давление патогенных ценностей потребительского общества, являющихся факторами риска по развитию психических расстройств и эмоциональной дезадаптации. Данная ситуация требует разработки и реализации специальных просветительских программ для родителей с целью профилактики психического неблагополучия у детей и подростков.

Ключевые слова: куклы, девочки, стандарты красоты, лонгитюд, физический перфекционизм, нарушения и расстройства пищевого поведения, общество потребления

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Introduction

In 2014, we conducted a study on a contribution of fashion dolls and the accompanying production (girl magazines, social media) to development of preschool girls' physical attractiveness standards (Shalygina, Kholmogorova, 2014, 2015). At that time, the standard of anorexic "beauty" was extremely popular in the

mass culture. The pursuit of this standard cost many women their health and often their lives. Internalizing the scaffold of attractive looks with its obligatory attribute of a young, thin and fit body¹ translated through socio-cultural messages, on the one hand, and a negative attitude towards people with larger body sizes and weight, on the other hand, is one of the risk factors for the development of disordered eating

¹ "The Substance", a movie by Coralie Farja (2024), demonstrates the current society's demand for physical beauty, youth and perfection very vividly.

and eating disorders (DE and EDs)², as well as mental problems, including low self-esteem, distress, disorders of body image, anxiety and depression³.

We decided to replicate the “Doll Choice” experiment ten years later to find out whether the preferences in perceiving physical attractiveness had changed in the new generation of preschool girls, whose frame of reference including the ideas about beauty develops relying on their environment. At each developmental stage, *“there develops a completely original, exclusive, single, and unique relation, specific to the given age, between the child and reality, is formed between the child and the surrounding reality, mainly the social reality, that surrounds him. The social situation of development represents the initial moment for all dynamic changes that occur in development during a given period. It determines wholly and completely the forms and the path along which the child will acquire newer personality characteristics, drawing them from the social reality as from the basic source of development, the path along which the social becomes individual”* (Vygotsky, 1984, vol. 4, p. 258).

Skeletal thinness has given way to a sporty physique with a thin waist and visible muscle relief (Kholmogorova & Rakhmanina, 2020). The body positivity movement has been growing and has tended to normalize obesity and promote bodies of a dangerously large weight. The body has ceased to be an individual's personal given having become an object of close attention at all – macrosocial, family, personal and interpersonal⁴ – levels. *Physical perfectionism* (an increased concern about one's appearance, one's wish to meet unhealthy standards) was studied in several Russian studies under the supervision of A.B. Kholmogorova. Their findings allow us to trace the dynamic changes in the spread and pathogenicity of this phenomenon. These studies showed that 80% of younger adolescents studying in Moscow grammar schools were dissatisfied with their appearance and physique; more than half of them invested efforts to lose weight and even expressed readiness

for surgical intervention in order to improve their appearance (Kholmogorova & Dadeko, 2010). They confirmed the effect of macro- and microsocial factors on the development of physical perfectionism, the severity of which correlated with the levels of emotional distress, depression and anxiety symptoms (Tarkhanova, 2014); and revealed a high correlation between the physical perfectionism levels and a fear of negative evaluation and rejection from other people (Kholmogorova & Rakhmanina, 2020). It was found that women who participated in fitness marathons and spent a significant amount of time on Instagram⁵ both had heightened expectations as to their own physical perfection, and demonstrated symptoms of mental distress, including suicidal tendencies (Lepesheva & Kholmogorova, 2021). A study of the family context of DE in adolescents showed that the cultural focus on external perfection and adherence to unhealthy standards manifested itself in interpersonal relationships within the family via general perfectionism: The desire to meet the others' high expectations, demonstration of a prosperous façade, and a focus on one's own imperfection (Sukhanova, & Kholmogorova, 2022).

Stice et al. (2017) note that the disturbed attitudes toward weight, body shape, and nutrition are crucial for the development and maintenance of destructive, lethal, and costly EDs. The classification of EDs as lethal is confirmed by statistics: According to the American National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Related Disorders (ANAD), 10 out of 200 American deaths each year are caused by eating disorders, that is, one death every 62 minutes. More than 70% of people with EDs also have other medical conditions, most often anxiety and mood disorders⁶.

EDs occur mainly in adolescence. Girls begin to worry about their weight as early as at 6–10 years old; at 14 years old, 60–70% of girls attempt at losing weight; about 12% of teenage girls have some form of ED⁷. A meta-analysis of 32 studies using the SCOFF questionnaire (January, 1999 – November, 2022) embracing 63,191 people from

² Phillipou et al. (2018) consider body image disturbances to be the core symptom and the driving force behind restrictive eating in anorexia nervosa and purging practices in bulimia nervosa. They believe that they differentiate these disorders from other EDs and suggest classifying them as “body image disorders.” Phillipou, A., Castle, D.J. and Rossell, S.L. (2018). Anorexia nervosa: Eating disorder or body image disorder? Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 52, 1, 13–14 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0004867417722640>

³ See, for example: Kholmogorova, A.B., Tarkhanova, P.M. (2014) Appearance standards and culture: the role of physical perfectionism and its consequences for the emotional well-being of people in our era. *Issues of Psychology*, 2, 52–65.

⁴ Our research relies on a multifactorial psychosocial model of affective spectrum disorders (Kholmogorova, Garanyan, 1998); (Kholmogorova, 2011).

⁵ Forbidden in Russia.

⁶ <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/blog/eating-disorder-statistics-what-the-numbers-reveal>

⁷ <https://anad.org/eating-disorder-statistic/>

16 countries, showed that the share of EDs in children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 years was 22%, with girls reporting EDs significantly more often than boys (López-Gil et al., 2023). Russian medical specialists also registered cases of the onset of EDs as early as at 6–7 years old (Sukhanova & Kholmogorova, 2022). The growth of disordered eating is confirmed by the obesity statistics, and in particular, the obesity epidemic among children and adolescents⁸. The study findings (Flitman et al., 2024) suggest a high level of comorbidity between obesity, depressive symptoms and anxiety in children and adolescents.

The severity of EDs, their high prevalence and early onset necessitate comprehensive investigation, including studies on the development of ideal beauty standards in childhood and adolescence⁹.

In previously published articles, we emphasized a special role of the dolls in the development of children's identity, their emotional impact on the child's developing personality. In 2016, the Mattel company released a new Fashionista line of Barbie dolls with varying body types: The standard Barbie (Original) got a company of “plump” dolls (Curvy), tall (Tall) and miniature (Petite) dolls, all except Curvy were excessively thin. These dolls were used in a study (Harriger et al., 2019) of attitudes to body shape and size in girls aged 3 to 10¹⁰. We refer to the results of that study for the purpose of comparison.

Methods

Sample.

The study involved 30 girls (28 preschool girls aged 4 to 6 years old studying at a pri-

vate Moscow kindergarten) and 2 first-grade students of a Moscow grammar school (aged 8 years old); parental consent was obtained for all the girls.

«Doll Choice» Experiment Procedure

Five dolls were presented to the girl. Four of them belonged to the “fashion” segment, and namely, a Barbie doll, a Bratz doll, a “Surprise Tube Doll”, a KariKids doll and one was a porcelain doll of the same height and a regular child physique (a Girl Doll). The dolls were selected based on the number of marketplace reviews confirming their popularity. The girls were asked to choose the doll they liked the most, and to describe it. Then, the doll “went about its business”, and the child had to make a choice from the remaining dolls again until there was only one doll left, which the girls described as well.

Results

Each choice from the first to the last was assessed on the scale from 4 to 0, respectively (i.e. Top 1 = 4, Top 2 = 3; Top 3 = 2; Top 4 = 1; Top 5 = 0). Table 1 presents findings describing the results of the girls' choice.

The Barbie doll was in the lead. It was the first-choice doll more often than others; it was followed by its cheap analogue — «a Surprise Tube Doll», KariKids — a doll representing a fragile pre-teen girl — was slightly behind it.

It should be noted that the range of dolls has changed over 10 years. Barbie, Bratz and Monster High that used to be highly popular have lower representation on the market places. Their price has

Table1

Distribution of the Dolls by the Choice Order, Number of Choices and Total Score

Doll's name	Number of corresponding choices / Sum of the Scores					Total score
	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice	
Barbie	10/40	8/24	7/14	4/4	1	82
KSurprise Tube Doll	9/36	7/21	7/14	3/3	4	75
KariKids	8/32	7/21	8/16	5/5	2	74
Bratz	2/8	7/21	6/12	8/8	7	49
Girl Doll	1/4	1/3	2/4	10/10	16	21

⁸ In the Russian Federation, the overall incidence of obesity among children increased by 21.4% in 2014–2018 (Flitman et al., 2024).

⁹ Having studied ideas about the beautiful body in 140 girls aged 4 to 17, Volokhova and Gurina (2023) noticed increasing demands for thinness as a marker of beauty. Whereas in 7-year-old girls this marker was found only in 26% of the participants, it grew to 50% in 8–9 year-olds, and in 12–13 years old, 70% of respondents called thinness and slimness an indispensable attribute of a beautiful body (Volokhova, Gurina, 2023).

¹⁰ The 4 dolls “participating” in the experiment had identical heads and wore identical bikinis and differed only in height and body size.

See <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6857835/pdf/nihms-1055799.pdf>

increased sharply¹¹. When comparing the choices in 2014 and 2024, it can be noted that Bratz dolls¹², which were at the peak of their popularity in 2014, have lost their leadership. Their large detachable feet and massive shoes left the participants bewildered, whereas earlier this feature used to be perceived positively. It can be assumed that the girls' choice was influenced by the fashion for the doll and its popularity.

The Girl Doll was out of the girls' focus again. It became the first and the second choice only once; twice it became the third choice, it remained the last, that is, not chosen, 16 times. In their experiment, Harriger and colleagues (2019) also showed 4 dolls to the girls limiting their choice with 2 options: To choose the one they would like to play with and point to the one they would not like to play with. The "Curvy" doll was characterized as "ugly" (59%) and most often (39%) they pointed to it when the experimenter asked the question, "Which one of them would you not like to play with?", arguing their refusal with its "plumpness" and thickness (25%)

or presenting no arguments at all (25%). The girls almost never pointed to the original Barbie when asked this question (1.7%).

We conducted a qualitative analysis of the dolls' descriptions and divided all the mentioned characteristics into two categories: Representing the actual body image characteristics and representing the decorative characteristics related to clothes, accessories, shoes and makeup. Each mention of a particular characteristic was registered in Table 2, regardless of their valence (positive or negative).

The first thing the girls mentioned was the dolls' hair, its color, "texture" (A., 6 years old), length. They used such epithets as "beautiful, long, unusual, smooth, sleek, lush, silky, like Cinderella's" often comparing it with their own hair,

"Her hair is almost like mine, as if it were made from my hair" (A., 6 years old); "Her hair color is the same as my tips, look" (A., 7 years old).

It is interesting that in Harriger and colleagues' (2019) experiment, where the dolls had the same hair and hairstyles, 14% of the girls said they did not like the "Curvy" doll's hair.

Table 2

Dolls' Body Characteristics Mentioned by the Girls

№ п/п	Observed body characteristics	Barbie	Surprise doll	KariKids	Bratz	Girl doll	Total mentions
1	Hair	31	30	26	23	25	135
2	Eyes	4	2	13	11	10	40
3	Lips	4	5	1	18	5 негатив.	33
4	Legs (toes, heels. Knees)	7	4	7	6	0	24
5	Hands (elbows, wrists)	3	6	5	3	1	18
6	Eyelashes	1	1	9	5	1	17
7	Face	2	4	2	3	0	11
8	Brows	0	2	4	4	0	10
9	Skin	5	1	2	5	0	13
10	Physique	2	3	2	2	2	11
11	Ears	1	3	0	1	1	6
12	Teeth	4	0	0	0	0	4
13	Breast	0	3	0	0	0	3
14	Smile	2	0	0	0	1	3
15	Nose	0	0	0	1	1	2
16	Cheeks	0	0	1	1	0	2
17	Fingers	1	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>		67	64	72	83	47	333

¹¹ The AST publishing house will launch production of its own dolls under the Neo Stars brand to replace popular Mattel dolls. The Komersant writes about this referencing the director of the publishing house's toy department E. Yuryeva. She did not disclose the volume of the investment in this development, but admitted that the market situation after Mattel's departure "allows to recoup the investment fairly quickly." Some sources estimated the investment as 400 million rubles. <https://retailer.ru/izdatelstvo-ast-zapustit-proizvodstvo-kukol-na-zamenu-barbie/>

¹² In 2016, MGA, unable to withstand the competition, stopped producing Bratz dolls, the price of the dolls in the series increased; while this article was being written, marketplaces reported the return of Bratz dolls - "the legendary foursome of friends whose passion for fashion and desire for success are still strong."

Facial features (119) were top 2 among most frequent characteristics mentioned, especially when the eyes were highlighted. For example, Barbie and Surprise Doll have eyes matching the facial proportions, and the girls hardly paid any attention to them; Barbie's eyes were mentioned only 4 times, and Surprise Doll's eyes were mentioned twice. Meanwhile, as the eyes grew larger and brighter, the number of mentions increased sharply: KariKids had 13, Bratz and Girl Doll had 11 and 10 mentions, respectively. Bratz's pumped-up lips earned 18 comments, 14 of which were positive, "I like her coloured lips" (A., 6 years old); "Her lips are plump and beautiful" (M., 5 years old); some statements conveyed parents' preferences, "I don't want this one, she has big lips, and my mother and I don't like big lips" (A., 7 years old).

There were 5 mentions of Girl Doll's lips, but they were all negative,

"The lips are not very good – somewhat thin" (M., 6 years old); "The lips are yellow, but they should be red, I don't like it" (E., 5 years old); "Her lips are all mush, as if she has just eaten porridge" (K., 6 years old).

These contrasting descriptions do not only reflect what the girls thought the lips should be like, but also what they thought they *should not be like*.

Another characteristic mentioned was skin: "I like her skin, it's a little tanned" (T., 6 years old); "Her skin is beautiful – it's glossy" (S., 6 years old). There were 13 comments like that, whereas in 2014, during the experiment, we found almost no comments about skin¹³.

When describing the fashion dolls' physique, girls used such words as "slender; tall; neat; flexible; thin; very thin; thin body shape; a good physique – a thin waist; and it's curvier here; I like it very thin on top, but thick here". The girls explained the doll's thinness by ballet classes or sports, "She has a figure that suits ballet" (T., 7 years old). 22 assumptions were made that fashion dolls did sports (running, swimming, stretching, gymnastics) and

15 assumptions were made that they did ballet or dancing. Only 2 assumptions out of 37 described a girl doll (that she did somersaults and danced). The girls seemed to directly associate thinness with physical activity. The girls' predictions about the physical activity of each doll are shown in Table 3.

Just like 10 years ago, during the experiment, we observed the process of *identification*, i.e. comparing one's looks to the doll's appearance, which confirms the hypothesis about the girls' perception of the dolls as role models involved in the development of ideas about attractiveness. Here are some examples,

"She has long hair like Rapunzel. I also used to have long hair, but I cut it, and now I regret it, because I also want long hair" (A., 7 years old); "I like her eyes and dress, my mother bought me almost the same one, but black. Her eyes are cute, I like them, the arrows reach here, I also had them on my face until they disappeared, I also have a heart on my face. Her sneakers are like mine and my mother's" (A., 7 years old); "Her eyes are brown, like mine (laughing). I have brown eyes too" (M., 6 years old); "She looks a little like me – brown eyes and hair, (then, looking at her earrings), – But I'm afraid to pierce my ears" (S., 6 years old); "She looks like me, her hair and her eyes are of the same color" (N., 8 years old).

The girls compare their appearance with the dolls' looks, and compare their own and dolls' skills,

"She can do the splits, I also do gymnastics, I just need a bit more time to do the splits" (A., 7 years old); "This is how she can do it, like a ballerina. I can do it too, but it makes my bones crunch" (A., 7 years old); "She likes stretching, I do it too" (S., 4 years old).

In one case, we encountered a projection of one's feelings onto the Girl Doll, "She is very sad because she is leaving kindergarten for school" (S., 7 years old).

Much attention was paid to the doll's external design, and namely, clothes, especially the

Table 3

Girls' Assumptions about Dolls' Physical Activity

Types of physical activity	Barbie	Surprise doll	KariKids	Bratz	Girl doll	Total mentions
Sports: gymnastics, stretching, swimming, running	3	3	5	10	1	22
Dancing: ballet, break dance	9	3	1	1	1	15
<i>Total</i>	12	6	6	11	2	37

¹³ The school-age girls mentioned skin as a significant feature in their doll description blogs, whereas none of the preschool girls mentioned this characteristic.

dress (one of the dolls was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt), shoes, accessories, including those that decorated the clothes, e.g. buttons shaped as beads or glitter on the dress and makeup. The frequency with which a particular detail of the image design is mentioned is reflected in Table 4.

As we can see from Table 5, the number of comments on decorative characteristics (420) exceeded the number of mentions of bodily characteristics (333). The girls associated clothes and accessories with the doll's assumed lifestyle and status. Their statements show how the children adopt both the ideology of consumerism¹⁴, and the idea of building one's Self on appearance and the "all-for-show" lifestyle. The fashion dolls' lifestyle as verbalized by the girls appears as idle, full of narcissistic admiration,

"Her favorite pastime is trying on crowns" (A., 8 years old); "She's just a Princess, she walks around the house and has fun, does what she wants, puts all sorts of beautiful dresses on, plays with her friends" (A., 6 years old); "It'll go to a beauty salon or a clothing store" (M., 6 years old); "She will go to the palace to give orders and relax" (E., 6 years old); "She would go dancing where they decide who has the most beautiful dress – to a fashion show" (A., 6 years old); "[She will go] To the store, she will buy everything she wants there – a tablet and a live dog" (A., 5 years old); "She looks like a queen. She can do everything she wants. She will meet boyfriends" (K., 6 years old); "She will go to a disco with her (female) friends, where everyone is having fun, dancing and singing" (E., 6 years old); "She is

Table 4

Number of Comments on Decorative Characteristics

Doll's Decoration							
№ п/п	Category	Barbie	Surprise doll	KariKids	Bratz	Girl Doll	Total
<i>Clothes and footwear</i>							
1	Dress (skirt, sundress)	34	33	34	1	21	123
2	Other clothes	6	0	14	33	11	64
3	Shoes	2	-	20	26	11	59
<i>Total</i>		42	33	68	60	43	246
<i>Accessories</i>							
1	Crown	0	26	0	–1 (no crown)	0	27
2	Bows, headband)	6	4	4	9	9	32
3	Earrings	-	2	-	20	1 («needed»)	23
4	Barrette	18	-	-	-	-	18
5	Bracelet	-	-	-	16	-	16
6	Other accessories and decorative elements	2	7	11	1	4	25
<i>Total</i>		26	39	15	47	14	141
<i>Makeup</i>							
1	Makeup (eyeshadow, eyeliner arrows, lipstick)	14	6	4	9	-	33
<i>Total comments on decorative characteristics</i>		82	78	87	116	57	420

Table 5

Total Number of Comments for Each Doll

Total comments	Barbie	Surprise doll	KariKids	Bratz	Girl Doll	Total
Bodily characteristics	67	64	72	83	47	333
Decorative characteristics	82	78	87	116	57	420
Total comments on the doll	149	142	159	199	104	753

¹⁴ "Having freed themselves from the educational and upbringing functions, the world mass media have changed their focus and functioned as stimulation consumption <...> Consumerism is a socio-cultural system in which social identification is grounded in things beyond the sphere of labor and production, beyond work, that is, primarily in entertainment, and, first and foremost, in showing off, demonstrative entertainment." (Ilyin, A.N., (2013) Consumer society and its essential features. *Values and meanings*, 6 (28), 22–35. URL : <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/obschestvo-potrebleniya-i-ego-suschnostnye-osobennosti> (date of access: 12.01.2025)).

Table 6

Dolls' Assumed Activities¹⁵

Doll's Name	Preferred Activity
Barbie	Loves to dance / Does ballet / She will go to a ball / To a fashion show (2) / To perform at a disco with friends (2) / To a friend's birthday / To a party / To go on vacation somewhere / To do gymnastics/ She has such arms and legs, it appears that she does jogging / To pick out a dress for someone / To go to a ball to dance and eat strawberries
Surprise doll	She is just a princess, walks around the house, has fun, does whatever she wants / She will go to the palace to give orders and relax / She looks like a queen who came to the ball and did whatever she wanted there / She is a princess/queen, will go to the ball to choose a prince / She will be greeted at the ball as a queen / She will go to a meeting with a king and a queen, she is a lady-in-waiting / Her favorite activity is trying on crowns / She will go to the store for a crown or a headband / She will go to a ball / To a party/ She is a singer / To a masquerade – she is an artist / To the store for a royal pet / To her wedding with a boyfriend / To the royal wedding / On a date / To the pool / To the ball
KariKids	She is a fashion designer / She will go play the violin / To take photos / To draw, she is an artist / She will go to her wedding / To a beauty salon or a clothing store / To visit friends / To dance the samba / To the store, she will buy everything she wants – a tablet and a live dog – there / She will go ice skating/ Developing flexibility / Gymnastics/ [She will] Dance beautifully / Works at CIAN, where my mother works / She will go to the theater / horseback riding / to a Halloween party
Bratz	She loves to do break dancing / She will go on vacation to relax, swim in the sea / collect shells / Go to the beach / to the sea / She works as a waitress in a cafe in hot countries / A French or English chef/ Goes to feed animals in the zoo/to take pictures of animals / to do sports, gymnastics / She will perform at a concert, sing, dance / She is a singer / To a fashion show / She loves to put on makeup and try on outfits / go to the store to buy outfits
Girl doll	She goes to kindergarten / definitely to kindergarten / She goes to school / likes going to school / A schoolgirl, an excellent student / She is ordinary, she will go to school / She will be a doctor and treat them all (dolls) / She works as a hairdresser / She will go to learn how to cook / She will go for a walk, ride down the slide and ride on the swings / She likes to go to the theater, she was given the role of Matryoshka there / She will go to a drawing school / Play games / hide and seek / dolls / Will clean the castle of two Barbies / Do somersaults at gymnastics / She will go to eat and walk in the park / Likes to make things with her hands at home / Looks like a day in the village – everyone is like that there, singing Russian folk songs / She will go to a dog show to choose a dog for herself / Loves to walk with friends in the park. Now she will go to the Sokolniki Park and meet her friends there/ I would give her the role of a villain in a cartoon where she is a criminal child

stunning, she wants to dress up for the ball. She has a beautiful dress, without a dress she is not so stunning. She has a crown, there is space in the dress for boobs (points to the cleavage). When the boyfriend comes to her, he will say, “You are stunning, just like me!” And they will go to the ball” (A., 7 years old).

In some cases, the dislike of the appearance indicated that the beauty standards had already been formed. For example, when describing Bratz, S., 7 years old, said,

“I don't like her. Her suit is shabby, there is a spot which is like a mole on her face, I don't like thick boots, earrings. There is nothing good. She would go and dye her hair white.”

If we look at Table 6 and read the girls' statements about the dolls' intended activities carefully, we will see that they are good at reading the image implied by the creators (Surprise Doll is most often associated by the girls with the image of a princess/queen, whose life is filled with dresses, balls, plea-

tures and boyfriends; Bratz is associated with exotic countries, the sea, the beach, and cafes).

Unlike the fashion dolls, Girl Doll is presented as an ordinary one, going to kindergarten (2 answers) or school (7 answers),

“She is a schoolgirl, an excellent student, excellent girls are always like that, with ribbons instead of loose hair” (A., 6 years old); “She is realistic, just like a person. She is going to the store to buy an album and paints” (A., 8 years old).

Her potential activities include walking in the Sokolniki Park, hide-and-seek or other games, drawing; she could be a doctor, a hairdresser (no one sent her to a ball or a fashion show). In the only case where the girl doll was a Top 1 choice, S., 6 years old, said, “She – her hair, dress, eyes, smile – looks very beautiful”, but other descriptions sounded rejecting, snobbish, even aggressive,

“Is it possible not to choose her? I don't like her, I don't like everything about her: her sundress, her T-shirt, her curly hair. And what a

¹⁵ The girls were asked to guess what the doll likes to do and where she will go after the conversation.

face, uh! It's ugly! Let her go to the dog show to choose a dog for herself" (A., 5 years old); "I don't like this one the most, I don't even want to keep it, the skirt is like a servant's one, I don't like her at all. Her hair is not like Barbie's. She will clean the castle of two Barbies I have already mentioned, they live in the castle" (S., 7 years old); "She has an old dress, she looks like Cinderella when she is at home" (S., 6 years old); "Her head is somewhat small (laughs), awkward" (M., 6 years old); "Her sandals are strange" (E., 5 years old); "I would give her the role of a villain in a cartoon where she is a child criminal" (N., 8 years old).

One of the girls told the following story about this doll: "Her lips are all mush, as if she had just eaten porridge, and her hands are big. She came to us from the coolest park on our planet, because she was expelled from there, because she looks ugly there. She needs to put on earrings, go get her ears pierced, put on a rainbow dress, put on beautiful shoes on her feet, so that everyone will greet her" (K., 6 years old).

In this story the girl worded the ideology of consumerism imposing the attitude of external perfection, and the need for others' admiration quite accurately. There is no place for those who *look ugly* in this world. Erich Fromm, who laid the foundations for understanding of the role that cultural pathology plays in the origin of personality pathology¹⁶, was deeply interested in the difference between being and possession. He inferred that "...possession and being are two basic modes of human existence, the predominance of one of which determines the differences in the individuals' characters and types of social character" (Fromm, 1990, p. 22).

Discussion

We deem the studies on fashion dolls to be important as fashion dolls represent the values of the contemporary society, including the desire for physical perfection.

The findings of the "Doll Choice" experiment replicated 10 years after the original one confirmed the hypothesis that standards of external attractiveness and beauty develop very early, and

by the senior preschool age, the girls preferred fashion dolls with their unrealistically thin bodies, and rejected a doll with a regular physique. Body slimness was often associated with physical activity, i.e. sports and/or dancing. Skin was a new significant body characteristic that the girls mentioned.

Much attention was still paid to the external design and decoration, i.e. clothes and accessories. In 2024, the number of the related comments turned out to exceed the number of comments on bodily characteristics (in contrast to the findings as of 2014). The girls listed even the most insignificant outfit details meticulously, often giving them an emotional assessment (I like – I don't like / beautiful – ugly).

The girls associated the dolls' appearance with a certain life style. They believed that fashion dolls bought clothes, went to parties and visited friends, performed at some shows, while "ordinary" Girl Doll went to school or kindergarten, worked as a doctor or "*made something with her hands*".

It is worth mentioning that most girls emotionally responded with admiration and joy when interacting with fashion dolls, whereas Girl Doll evoked neutral or negative emotion. Vygotsky believed **experiencing (perezhivanie)** to be a unit for studying personality and environment, "*The child's perezhivanie is also this kind of very simple unit about which we must not say that in itself it represents the influence of the environment on the child or the individuality of the child himself; perezhivanie is the unit of the personality and the environment as it is represented in development. Thus, in development, the unity of environmental and personality factors happens in a series of perezhivanie of the child. Perezhivanie must be understood as the internal relation of the child as a person to one factor or another of reality*" (Vygotsky, 1984, v. 4, p. 382, translation by Veresov, 2017, p. 64)¹⁷.

Nowadays, social and mass media have been promoting body positivity ideas. There are TV shows engaging participants with higher weight. However, our experimental data confirm that a thin body has remained the preferred beauty standard in girls aged 4–8 years. The subject of developing standards of physical attractiveness in children and adolescents is extremely relevant and requires further research.

¹⁶ Kholmogorova A.B., Garanyan N.G. Narcissism, perfectionism and depression // Counseling psychology and psychotherapy. 2004. Vol. 12. No. 1. P. 18–35. (In Russ.). DOI

¹⁷ Veresov, N. (2017). The Concept of Perezhivanie in Cultural-Historical Theory: Content and Contexts. In: Fleer, M., Gonz lez Rey, F., Veresov, N. (eds) Perezhivanie, Emotions and Subjectivity. Perspectives in Cultural-Historical Research, vol 1. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4534-9_3

Conclusion

1. The results of the experiment and the analysis of the girls' verbal statements allow us to infer that they prefer bodily standards represented by fashion dolls with unrealistically thin bodies and reject dolls with a regular, realistic body type. This finding is consistent with similar findings of other colleagues (Harriger et al., 2019). The criteria of attractiveness also embrace bright design including makeup, clothes, accessories. Contemporary girls paid more attention to these details than their peers 10 years ago and associated external attractiveness with situations of acceptance, success and admiration. Thus, it can be argued that the social situation of the girls' development in the modern world has remained unfavorable, contributed to the development of stereotyped ideas about body attractiveness, narcissistic attitudes and the consumer society values.

2. The analysis of the findings of the numerous studies allows us to infer that early internalized ideas about the bodily perfection are risk factors for the development of physical perfectionism, dissat-

isfaction with one's own body, emotional distress, low self-esteem; they contribute to the development of eating disorders.

3. The current situation of contemporary children's development necessitates the task of preventing mental ill-being in the younger generation, developing and implementing educational programs for parents. An important target of this work could be pathological parental attitudes of physical and socially-induced perfectionism, which have been found to be associated with development of DE in children and adolescents (Sukhanova & Kholmogorova, 2022). It is important to emphasize that it is the family that can become the barrier to the pressure of pathogenic cultural values that are unsafe for the children's mental health.

4. The subject of the development of the beauty and physical attractiveness standards in childhood remains relevant and requires further research.

Limitations. The sample size is limited by both the number of participants (30 people) and the territory (Moscow).

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All authors participated in the discussion of the results and approved the final text of the manuscript.

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Холмогорова А.Б. — идеи исследования; планирование исследования; контроль за проведением исследования; оформление и перевод рукописи.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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