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DMS 474 Final Essay

Come on, you know you like big butts. Okay, maybe *you* don't, but society sure does. They seem to be everywhere these days. Whether you are at the grocery store, church, or the mall you are bound to encounter someone who has had some visible cosmetic procedures. Over the past two decades' plastic surgery has been on a rise. Interestingly enough, over the past two decades, technology has also been evolving. This paper will examine the correlation, or perhaps, causation, between the two phenomena.

At the eleventh Beyond Humanism conference Katherine Hayles is interviewed and explains, "I wasn't talking about humans in general, I was talking about a particular vision of the human which emerged from the enlightenment." A new type of human has indeed emerged from new media. Katherine Hayles discusses virtual bodies and cyborgs throughout her book "How We Became Post Human." She discusses what it means to be a cyborg and that "cyborgs actually exist. About 10 percent of the current us population are estimated to be cyborgs in the technical sense, including people with the electronic pacemakers, artificial joints, drug implant systems, implanted corneal lenses, and artificial skin." While I do not believe Hayles was referring to bodies being enhanced for cosmetic reasons, I do believe this can fit under the category of a virtual body being that these bodies exist because of a virtual world. With this book being written over two decades ago, there was no telling that plastic surgery would have taken the

world by storm. However, I believe that Katherine Hayles would agree that plastic surgery is a result of the post human lifestyle.

A year and a half ago, I was in Lockwood Memorial Library scrambling to print out work for class. I could not help but notice another student trying to do the same, except she was on FaceTime with one of her close friends. I overheard her end of the conversation, she asked her friend, “how do my lips look, do I look like Kylie Jenner?” She proceeded to tell him, “My mom asked why do my lips look swollen and I was like ‘uh I don’t know I gotta go to class.’” She then told her friend that she had gotten lip injections. When I got a glance at her face, she indeed had lips the size of Kylie Jenner’s except hers were purple, possibly from irritation. While I cannot for sure say that this young lady got lip injections due to social media, she made it very clear that Kylie Jenner was her source of inspiration. However, Kylie has over 231 million followers on Instagram, I would not be surprised if this young lady was one of them.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, “Americans received more than seven million neurotoxin injections in 2018, and more than two and a half million filler injections. That year, Americans spent \$16.5 billion on cosmetic surgery; ninety-two per cent of these procedures were performed on women.” These statistics are shocking considering the fact that twenty years ago plastic surgery was considered more or less taboo. With the rise of social media there has been new ways in which women are taught to embody feminism. One of these tactics that women learn is that self-objectification is embodying because you are consenting to it and you are in control of your body. Being rewarded for beauty is nothing that women are not used to; now it takes place on a digital platform.

An Update on Social Media in Academic explains, “the internet has 4.4 billion users, and there are nearly 3.5 billion active social media users.” There is no denying what the internet and

software has done for us in general, however, social media is an entire different entity. Social media was created with the intent for communication. There is no such thing as time or distance when it comes to these platforms. There is just existence. New media, as Lev Manovich describes it in *Software Takes Command*, continues to evolve. At one-point social media was a place where you “poke” people, play games, and of course interact, but not on the wide scale level we see today. As social media grows, its usage and purpose knows no limits.

Social media has become a dominant platform for promotion. I personally know many peers who promote their music, their beats and photography skills. With the amount of people on social media, promotion on these platforms make so much sense because you are guaranteed to reach a large crowd. Also due to the advances in software, there are algorithms in place to make sure consumers are enticed based on their interests. This promotion does not only take place on a small scale, big corporations also follow suit. According to *An Update on Social Media in Academic*, “approximately 90% of retail brands use multiple social media channels, and 81% of all small and medium businesses use some kind of social media platform. The realization that social media could be valuable for plastic surgeons came about in 2011.”

Dr. Kassir is verified on Instagram with 411K followers. He seems to specialize in rhinoplasty surgeries, as most of his page showcases before and after pictures for that specific surgery. The infamous Dr. Miami has 901.9K followers on TikTok and has generated 14.6 million likes. He has 1.6 million followers on Instagram and his page is private. In addition to this impressive following, he has a reality TV show on WE network. He, of course, is verified across all of his social media platforms. Dr. Ashkan Ghavami is also verified on Instagram. He has 499K followers and specializes in rhinoplasty, face, breast and body surgeries, including

Brazilian butt lifts. His profile not only showcases before and after photos, but also videos of him actually conducting these surgeries.

Of course, Dr. Ashkan Ghavami was not the only surgeon to showcase actual footage of him completing a surgery. Many doctors use this promo technique. These images can be considered graphic to some. However, those in search of a surgeon can rely on social media for reviews. They are also able to see how skilled these doctors are and get a glimpse at their bedside manners. These videos of procedures as well as the before and after pictures receive thousands of likes and a half of million views per video. Social media allows for people who do not personally follow these doctors to still view their posts. Some of these doctors have more followers than actual celebrities.

The process of plastic surgery being displayed to us without having to look to far for it can subconsciously influences the crave for surgery, if the impulse was not already there. Doctors are very passive, for lack of better words, with their patients as well these days. I went to my dermatologist for a routine skin checkup. I have always been self-conscious of the skin under my eyes that people often mistake for bags. I asked the doctor if there was anything I could do to fix it and he casually suggested Botox. He explained that he was able to do it at that very moment if I wanted it. He did not pressure me into getting it, but it seemed as if he thought I was going to agree to the procedure without giving it much thought or consideration.

I do not believe that doctors are pushing surgery and it is indeed more so them going along with society's trends. Dr. Diamond explains "thirty per cent of people come in bringing a photo of Kim, or someone like Kim—there's a handful of people, but she's at the very top of the list, and understandably so." As much as we may hate to admit it, celebrities influence us, a lot. A large percentage of celebrity income comes from endorsements; this is due to the fact that they

help generate a lot of revenue for whatever it is that they are advertising. According to Celebrity Influence Affecting Public Interest in Plastic Surgery Procedures: google trends analysis, For the prophylactic mastectomy category (Fig. 1a), all five search terms demonstrated peak interest (100%) during the month of May 2013, following Angelina Jolie's announcement that she had undergone a prophylactic double mastectomy in the same month. For the search term "mastectomy," interest increased from 7% in April 2013 to 100% in May 2013, a 1328% increase. For the search term "prophylactic mastectomy," interest increased from 22 to 100%, a 324% increase. For the term "BRCA1," interest increased from 24 to 100%, a 316% increase. For the term "BRCA2," interest increased from 42% to 100%, a 138% increase. Finally, for the term "BRCA gene," interest increased from 22 to 100%, a 354% increase.

In a nutshell, “popular culture events such as Kylie Jenner's lip augmentation, Kim Kardashian's rumored butt implants, and Caitlyn Jenner's gender affirmation surgery correlated with markedly increased popularity of search terms related to these procedures.” Celebrity Influence goes on to explain, “the increased search volume for each of these procedures was not limited to the immediate period after each respective celebrity event, but represented a significant and persistent increase in interest for the majority of search terms.” It is safe to say that A-list celebrities in particular do not only influence cosmetic surgery trends, they are also able to shift them in any direction they want to.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) 2018 statistics report, between the years of 2000 to 2018, "buttock lift" procedures increased by 256%. According to American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) Statistics Reports, "buttock lift" procedures increased by 148% in the same period.” Bear in mind that ASPS and ASAPS databases only have data that is reported by member surgeons, this does not account for illegal

surgeries done in people's homes nor does it account for surgeries performed out of the country; so in reality, the statistics are probably higher than what has been presented. Another limitation of this study is the fact that there is "limited demographic information of the Google search users whose data are reflected in this research." However, this study is arguably still reliable because Google is one of the top search engines used across the globe.

These social media applications arguably promote plastic surgery within themselves. For example, Snapchat is an app that is primarily known for filters. These filters are not always drastic; however, they do make everyone appear slightly more attractive. RKB Surgery explains, "some patients use surgery to try and replicate their look using a favorite filter. Rather than bringing in a celebrity shot as an example, some patients use Instagram images of themselves, to show a surgeon a favorite angle. Patients are very aware of what they like in their looks."

Jia from *The New Yorker* explains, "the human body is an unusual sort of Instagram subject: it can be adjusted... art directors at magazines have long edited photos of celebrities to better match unrealistic beauty standards; now you can do that to pictures of yourself with just a few taps on your phone" Social media has society striving for "perfection" even after undergoing surgery to be "perfected." Just a few days ago, Instagram model Alexis Sky, who has made quite a few adjustments to her body, posted a picture that was very obviously photo shopped to make her waist appear smaller than it already is. Jia went on to say, "follow celeb face for a month, and this constant perfecting process begins to seem both mundane and pathological. You get the feeling that these women alter photos out of a simple defensive reflex, as if FaceTuning your

jawline were the Instagram equivalent of checking your eyeliner in the bathroom of the bar.”

Without digressing too much, it makes me wonder about the mental health aspect that is associated with social media and plastic surgery. Kim Kardashian constantly denies her fake butt rumors. Reginae Carter has spoken out against surgery multiple times on social media and has even encouraged her fan base to “love yourselves,” while denouncing surgery. She has been a victim of body shaming and people have told her to get a boob job on social media platforms, she responded by saying “I’m good” and letting the naysayers know that “society ruined you.” However, not many months after Reginae’s new breasts made their debut on social media.

With social media there is bound to come a lot of comparisons. Celebrity Influence explains, “it has also been shown that users of social media sites compare themselves to each other in an effort to manage their mood.” With fake bodies being plastered everywhere, women of all ages become drawn towards it. Humans are so addicted to social media because notifications give us a rush of dopamine which is a chemical that makes us feel good and brings us joy. Women who have bigger assets tend to get more likes on social media when it comes to pictures, regardless on whether or not their features are real or from the creation of a doctor. Women who are not naturally built with these assets tend to get surgery, this could be to get likes so that their dopamine levels can increase, and to rid themselves of the negative feelings associated with comparisons on social media previously mentioned. This is not to say that every woman who goes under the knife is looking for approval, but it would be ridiculous to not acknowledge that this is a very real reason that people undergo surgery.

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