

***Machobook: A critical analysis of how Facebook is effecting the amalgamation of male body insecurities known as the Adonis Complex.***

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### **Declaration**

I declare that the presented work throughout this research paper was authentically researched, compiled and written by the author, and has not been submitted to any other institution or university as fulfilment of any requirements.

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## **Abstract**

This research paper analyses the ramifications of social media in terms of body image. The presented study details the rise of male body insecurities through the depiction of the male form in Hollywood and the objectification of masculinity by the advertising industry. Through the proliferation of idealised male forms into the mainstream media, the male bodily ideal has shifted toward a muscular physique, which is notably difficult to attain. Furthermore, an examination of cognitive facets of body imagery and social media is delved into to present the findings of how the physical self is represented on the site. The manner in which one manifests themselves can have an effects on how one perceives themselves, whereby they make comparisons socially or to an idealised version of the self. Finally, the paper juxtaposes facets of the male bodily insecurities and the psychology of Facebook to contemplate how on may influence the other. Comparisons are made between how one depicts themselves through social media and how body imagery is susceptible to extraneous determinants in a social context.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The genesis of social media can be traced back to 1969 with the advent of the internet, an innovative means of computer mediated information communication. *CompuServe* were the pioneering company that implemented the anterior commercially viable internet service, through the employment of emerging dial up technology, which would promptly monopolise computer mediated communications. Through the materialisation of a breakneck structure as regards to information dissemination, the internet soon witnessed a besiege of societal elements desiring an expedient method of data distribution. The influx of internet proprietaries culminated in the escalation of surfacing network and the generation of an “information superhighway” in 1994 (Curtis, 2013). By 1997 the internet’s potential had been realised through the marking of the mechanism's one millionth web page, compounding its authority over established contemporary means of text based information transmission (Curtis, 2013). Ingenious startups forged an unfamiliar assortment of prosperous entrepreneurs propagating a new culture of tech savvy innovators aspiring to emulate *Google’s* nonchalant corporate ascendancy. *Friends Reunited* was one of the abounding additions to the internet's widening popularity and is retrospectively deemed the world's inaugural social networking site. Emanating from Great Britain, the site granted individuals the capacity to relocate and reconnect with old school friends, ultimately augmenting the fascination with social media and spawning the proceeding surge in online socialising. The turn of the century saw the formation of additional spheres of socially driven communication via the internet, through the establishment of *Friendster* in 2002, and *MySpace* in 2003. Both sites ultimately subsidised the accelerating popularity of the internet helping it garner its three billionth webpage by further coercing the populace to log on. Perhaps the most considerable contribution to internet socialising stemmed from the creation of *Facebook* in 2004.(Curtis, 2013)

*Facebook* was primarily established by Mark Zuckerberg in Harvard University during February 2004, and originally served as a social networking service for the privileged affiliates of the institution (Phillips, 2007). The socially driven innovations produced by the site, meant it promptly permeated into the prevailing internet paradigm, and became freely available to the masses by September 2006. The flourishing popularity of *Facebook* soon sparked interest from auxiliary internet companies, such as *Google* and *Yahoo*, aspiring to purchase the site for estimated figures of two billion dollars. Cutting-edge elements of the site differentiated it from preceding sites such as *MySpace* and *Friendster*, innovations such as the

“News Feed” and “Wall” permitted an individual to access a friend's latest information with fluency, ultimately bridging friendships in an online context. *Facebook* also allowed its members to upload images of themselves with relative ease, inviting a multitude of their friends to capture a glimpse into their intimate facets of their lives. Social media’s adoration progressively rose throughout the decade, with *Facebook* definitively gathering its one billionth active user by March 2013. Today, socialising in an online environment appears to be remarkably fashionable with *Facebook* members ranging from 18-34 years of age, and 48% of the individuals monitoring the site on a daily basis, authenticating it a significant contemporary socialising tool (Statisticbrain, 2014).

Since its emergence, *Facebook* has been correlated with varied body image issues among its members. Adequate research remains linking *Facebook* and bodily vacillation in adolescent girls, mainly through the dissemination of images of the self onto the site.

The increased use of FB has not only revolutionized the way people communicate with one another but also the way individuals view themselves. (Borrell, 2013)

Published data chronicling Facebook’s influence on the physical surety of teen girls, has revealed that viewing photos of oneself in an online context strengthened body hesitancy, concerning the perception of weight and idealism. Studies also disclosed the impact of the site through the continued self-objectification of one’s body image, and the propensity of the site to subsidise the perilous facets of eating disorders among women (Borrell, 2013). However, the preponderance of the data relating *Facebook* to body insecurities has been concluded through studies principally comprising of women, due to the amplified sensitivity of the female form and the sustained objectification of women in the mainstream media. Consequently, scant information detailing the sites effect of the male body is available, possibly due to the dominant perception the male objectification is not of importance (Borrell, 2013).

Emerging material contends that objectification of the male body is a legitimate concern, with the surfacing of muscular male physiques into the conventional media. Similar to women, men are being compelled to internalise an idealised image to which they measure their own physique due to this proliferation. The amalgamation of male body insecurities, predominantly due to media idealism, has been characterised as the Adonis Complex. This

study will chronicle the rise of the complex, the psychology of social media and determine whether *Facebook* has the probability of contributing to it.

The following chapter will review the securable literature relating to the Adonis Complex, media and body image, empirical body image data, online socialising and psychological facets of social media. Subsequently, a more comprehensive analysis of the emergence of the Adonis Complex will be examined, including the media's role, and assorted theories pertaining to body image and the self. Through the garnering of cognitive information regarding body image, the idiosyncrasies particularised by social media membership will grant insight into the function online socialising may play in the physical representation of the self. Finally, the psychology of social media will be juxtaposed with aspects of the Adonis complex, enabling one to contemplate how one may influence the other.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The aim of the research paper is to substantiate a relationship between the prevailing social media trend and the Adonis Complex. It is imperative to illustrate that only fragmented research encompassing the male body image and social media has been concluded. Consequently, a fundamental examination of literature analysing body dysmorphia, the media depiction of the male form, male bodily aspirations, and the negative effects of social media in terms of body image. This chapter will probe the Adonis Complex, through a comprehensive analysis of the assorted facets of the ailment, and refer to its source and rise to prominence. Also examined, will be the rise of male objectification and the psychology concerning the idealised form. Furthermore a detailed description online behaviours will be ascertained to discern how they make influence body dysmorphia. Narcissism and self esteem are supposedly inherit to body dysmorphia and integral to social networking, both these sensibilities will be delved into to garner a clearer understanding.

### **2.1: The Adonis Complex**

The Adonis Complex derives from the ongoing convolution of male body hesitancy, due to the proliferation of archetypal muscular physicality among the masculine exemplary depicted by the media.<sup>1</sup> It embodies superficial facets and arduous aspects of body anxieties, ranging from an ambition for defined muscularity to an exhaustive devotion to building a muscular body. Muscle dysmorphia is a body image disorder in which the individual postulates that they are never competently muscular. The syndrome has long been recognized by the bodybuilding community, with the term “bigorexia” being coined to characterize it (Pope & Phillips et al., 2002). According to Pope & Phillips muscle dysmorphia is a singular aspect of the Adonis complex. Other peculiarities comprise of the exacerbation of perceived body image flaws including endowment, hair thinning and muscle tone. The literature chronicled the ailment as almost compensatory, with the construction of a muscular body as a backlash toward individual’s shortcomings. Interviews conducted by Olivardia give a perspective of their mindset of the afflicted:

At least if I’m perfect on the outside it will make up for the nothing I am on the inside.  
(Olivardia, 2001)

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<sup>1</sup> Adonis is the god of somatic perfection and beauty derived from Greek mythology. His name is affiliated with archetypal youth perfection in modern times, and he is deemed the mortal god of beauty.

In recent years a masculine physique has been affiliated with muscularity. To the individual engrossed by the complex the muscular body is a sign of strength, sexual virility, admiration, self-esteem and control. Apart from an intensive workout regimen, men with the ailment repeatedly engage in compulsive mirror checking culminating in bodily dissatisfaction (Olivardia, 2001).

Pope & Phillips(2002, Pg. xiii) believe that there is a crisis among today's male populace, whereby the preoccupation with visceral physicality may be generating a hazardous infatuation with a muscle attaining endeavours. Through an amalgamation of biological, psychological and media coercions, an emergent bodily neurosis recognized as the Adonis Complex may be escalating. The characteristics of the complex include, compulsive gym exercise, excessive supplement use, use of anabolic steroids and the development of eating disorders. Many of the afflicted hide behind an athletic bravado, suppressing depressive and critical melancholia caused by anguish concerning masculinity (Pope & Phillips, 2002, Pg. 5). They are formidably burdened by trepidation as they find it hard to express their self doubts, sequentially culminating in a toxic mindset. Consequently, the complex erodes an individual's physical surety, leading to diminishing mental health, conclusively exacerbating the insecurities through the initiation of a laborious healing process.

Mazinani(2011) recounts some of the symptoms of the Adonis Complex in eloquent detail and equates the escalation of the disorder to the depiction of the male form in contemporary media. He juxtaposes the dissemination of the overly sexualised female with the advancement of eating disorders germane to women. Mizani(2011) debates whether an analogous depiction of the male body is a transmitting aspect of male bodily uncertainty, ultimately metamorphosing as in the Adonis Complex.

Probing the attainable literature, it can be ascertained that the Adonis Complex is a distinct but emerging concept with diverse symptoms contributing to the degradation of male body confidence. In this study, assorted aspects of the disorder will be delved into and set against the degrading cognitive ramifications of social media.

## **2.2: Media and the Ideal Male body**

Grogan(1999, Pg. 97) contends that men's culture has shifted to an intensified consciousness on the physical, primarily through the dissemination of idealised images that rupture the traditional elements of masculinity. As with the female body, men are stimulated to look at themselves as objects of consumer desire. The 1980's Nick Kamen laundrette advertisement for Levi's Jeans, shows how the standard advertising technique for objectifying women was likewise suitable of male objectification (Grogan, 1999, Pg. 97). The term new man has been used to characterise the nurturant and narcissistic male spawned by the 1980's style culture, and the ocular marketing pattern of the era. Culture throughout the 80's granted legitimacy to masculine body image concerns, shaping a climate of consumerism employed to amend the imperfections that deviated from the marketed ideal. Furthermore, Grogan(1999, Pg. 78) also illustrates how the rise of feminism and the rejection of John Wayne-style obvious machismo led to a departure from the traditional male.

A study from the University of Minnesota has established that the proliferation of muscular images into the media is influencing the behaviour of the male populace. The results allege that a recent muscular attaining climate prevails, culminating in an increased consumption of muscle building supplements such as protein powder and anabolic steroids(School Of Public Health, 2012). Danielsson(2009) maintains that teenagers today wish to emulate the glorified masculine ideal depicted by the media, with the assumption that they will heighten their attractiveness and boost their popularity. In this modern age, the internet is becoming a mirror image for teenagers and the need for acceptance and validation is becoming more pronounced (Schroeder, 2013). Through the exploration of compatible literature it can be ascertained that social media is emerging as a sphere for bodily validation, notably among the developing male populace. The garnering of descriptive knowledge relating to the media's role in male body idealisation, will aid in characterising the potential role social media could play. Furthermore, generalised male bodily aspirations will now be delved into to understand the cognition behind the preference.

## **2.3: Ideal Body Shape**

An assessment of male aspirations relating to body image is paramount due to the inflation of cultural encumbrance feeding male body hesitancy. There are three fundamental body types that both men and women assimilate to, these include the ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph. Mesomorphs bear well defined muscularity on the chest, arms and shoulders, and

include a V-Taper from the shoulders down. It is treated as the quintessential body type and is correlated with many positive idiosyncrasies including strength, contentment, bravery and kindness(Johnston, 2001, Pg. 107). The extent of body dissatisfaction parallels the degree in which an individuals body image digresses from the aforementioned mesomorphic ideal. Unlike female body anxieties, dismay among men is reliant on the degree in which they meander from the ideal, be it overweight or underweight. Grogan(1999, Pg. 60) describes studies conducted by Mishkind relating to body image. Mishkind took male concerns into account when arranging a study containing silhouette drawings of male body types. When the male volunteers were shown the drawings shifting from very thin to very fat, 75 percent reported their ideal was in discord with their current body size. Half of the men desired a slimmer physique while the other half aspired to be bigger with augmented muscle definition. Women naturally select a slimmer ideal, while male preference alternates, hinging on the extent they aberrate from the inherent mesomorphic ideal (Grogan & Richards, 2002, Pg. 220). Studies have exhibited commonalities in facets of body dissatisfaction among males. Grogan(1999, Pg. 62) alludes to research from Florida Community College that suggests 72 per cent of men would feel better if they were more muscular, and 80 per cent desired a more toned body. Only 22 per cent of the sample desired a thinner physique. Consequently, muscularity and definition are crucial when it comes to male body image, with muscle optimisation coinciding physical assurance. According to Heaven, men who are least satisfied with their biceps, shoulders and chest were more likely to reform their body, hence coinciding with the concept of the mesomorphic ideal. (Heaven, 1996, Pg. 69) Ní Cheanneachain(2011, Pg. 36) states that body satisfaction is akin to self esteem, this paper will delve into the correlation between the two.

## **2.4: Socialising Online**

Amichai-Hamburger(2013, Pg. 4) contends that in today's society, attractive people have noteworthy social and economic superiority. The term *Erotic Capital*(EC) has been coined to characterize the economic benefits the more alluring forms of humanity retain. Dr Catherine Hakim's infers that those who are more attractive (have more erotic capital) observe a 10-15% increase in monetary earnings, culminating in a surge in female multi-millionaires (high in EC) emerging in modern culture (Walden, 2010). Amichai-Hamburger(2013, Pg. 4) asserts that the emphasis on body image has spawned a culture inclined toward impression management, in which the individual consciously fabricates aspects of themselves online, to augment their self image. He also claims that impression management has led to a "second

life” or a duality, by which the self is divergent from their ideal representation on social networking sites(2013, Pg. 4). Pennington(2009) infers that perception on Facebook is affiliated with the attractiveness of the subject, as well the opinions of the subject's friends. Members of the site construct a depiction of the individual through friend’s notions expressed on their profile’s, rather than the concept fabricated by the profile owner. Bonds-Raacke & Raacke(2010, Pg. 28), reaffirm Pennington's hypothesis, that if a visually attractive person communicates with an individual via social media, it increases the perception of the profile owner from a third party perspective. They also claim that these social cues are harder to manufacture, meaning that social network users often judge an individual based on the manipulation difficulty of the available information, presented by the social network member. Furthermore, research stemming from social psychology has supported the idea that negative criticism of an individual has enhance significance over the opposed positive information, conceivably impacting upon unfavourable criticism relating to body image (Smith and Larsen et al., 2006, Pg. 210).

The novelty of a technology may amplify the messages transmitted through the medium, for instance, more gravity may be given to comments online than in the physical realm. This could have ramifications in terms of body image, as the information illustrated may augment an individual's bodily apprehensions.

Young people who are not involved in the subject matter transmitted by a digital device... may be so enamored by the novelty of the technology the ascribe higher credibility to the content(Sundar 2008, Pg. 82)

Additionally, correspondence on social networking sites may advocate impression formation based on smaller packets of information. Technological innovation in text based communication may influence the perception of an individual, whereby ideal personality traits are boosted, culminating in a diminished judgement of the individual.

Complexities in social interaction can have adverse connotations in terms of body image, with sufferers of body dysmorphia implicating bullying as a contributing factors to their disorder. Cyberbullying is an aggressive behaviour comprising of the internet and mobile devices, by which text or images are produced with the intent of harming or harassing another person. Recents studies have shown that a substantial quantity of young people endure cyberbullying:



- 42% have been bullied while online.
  - 35% have been threatened online.
  - 21% have received degrading or threatening emails.
  - 58% have said they have witnessed hurtful remarks about themselves online.
- (Amichai-Hamburger, 2013, Pg. 136)

Amichai-Hamburger(2013, Pg. 136) characterises cyberbullying as eminently harmful, as it invades the individual's private space through the constant connectivity of social media.

## **2.5: Self Perception and Narcissism**

How an individual interprets society will grant insight into key social phenomenon that ultimately contribute to the development of the self. Branaman(2001, Pg. 169) discuss' the notion that the self is fundamentally driven by social engagement. Since the optimal advancement of an individual is dependant on the social facets of their lives, an insight into how the self is shaped socially is fundamental when delving into body dysmorphia.

The self is a product of performance in social interaction.(Branaman, 2001, Pg. 170)

A strong sense of self can be equated to self presentation according to Groffman(1959, Pg. 2). This art of self presentation is an essential aspect of social interaction, which results in the self. Consequently, the image an individual has of themselves may contribute to an overall sense of control they have over the self (body dysmorphia).

The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group(Grenz, 2001, Pg. 307).

Branaman(2001, Pg. 170) asserts that a newborn child, at first, is not a self. Through experience and social interaction with parents and role models does a new infant develop a sense of self. Through the progressionary occurrence of adolescence and adulthood, we purely experience ourselves indirectly through social interaction and the attitudes of others. Furthermore, Branaman(2001, Pg. 172) claims that the self is determined by institutional roles or through impulses. For the institutionalised individual a strong sense of self comes from living up to the standards dictated by the institutional roles. The more impulsive individual

believes that the self is discovered when they are released from institutional roles and they are free to explore “spontaneous actions” and “uninhibited moments”(2001,Pg. 172). Society has shifted toward a more impulse driven individual, in which self definition comes from tastes, leisure, pursuits and inner thoughts. An impulsive society has the potential to be socially sensitive, where self worth is dictated by others and not internally driven. The individual who delicate may place greater emphasis on negative criticism, potentially feeding body hesitancy

Narcissism has been associated with imprudent social media engagement. Whitbourne(2012) describes narcissism as self centred and attention grabbing, with a tendency toward manipulating and deceiving others. In the extreme, narcissism is treated as a personality disorder with the individual encountering aggrandized notions of the self, both physically and cognitively. Conventional narcissistic qualities are inherent in all individuals and generally peak through the advancement into maturity(Whitbourne, 2012). Elkind’s theory on adolescent egocentrism makes the claim that teenagers feel that they have an audience following them wherever they go (Alberts and Elkind et al., 2007, Pg. 71). As per normal maturation this narcissistic focus shifts from oneself to others, through the development close relationships and families. An individual should observe a gradual decline in narcissistic traits as they mature, those who don’t, carry the high levels of narcissism affiliated with adolescence, into adulthood. High levels of narcissism is commonly correlated with belligerence, shortfalls in academic engagement and imprudent use of sexual language (Kauffman, 2011).

Leung(2013) draws a connection between narcissism and social interaction with self promotion. Higher narcissism often correlates with self promotion ventures online, where their idea of the self is ostensibly expanded. In addition, frequency of online activity is associated with strong narcissistic tendencies, with the naturally narcissistic adolescent engaging with social media with self augmentation(Leung, 2013, Pg. 998).

The narcissist distorts the true image of his body in his mind, by which all narcissists have some elements of a body dysmorphic disorder(Vaknin, 2014). A grandiose self image is often likened to a body image which is ideal to the narcissist. Somatic narcissists partake in endeavours to perfect their bodies in order to emulate the ideal notion of themselves, such ventures can include bodybuilding or excessive exercising. Vaknin(2014) deduces that the narcissist morphs their body in order to morph their physical perceptibility, ultimately

manipulating the extraneous social environment. To the narcissist, the world is how others perceive them and by shaping their image they can change others perceptions, hence creating an environment in which they can flourish.

Freud asserts that the ideal reality is that of self love which was experienced during childhood. Man has difficulty surrendering the narcissistic purity encountered during an individual's formative years (Sandler, 1991, Pg. xii). As one grows they are disturbed by the admonitions of others and the awakening of their own critical judgement, resulting in a loss of that narcissistic perfection that childhood grants. Hence, what the individual projects is a substitute for this lost childhood narcissism. Additionally, Freud affirms that an individual that is tormented by organic pain, gives up interest in things external as they do not concern his suffering. In individuals who have suffered some disturbance during development, Freud claims that they are seeking themselves as a love object, hence exhibiting qualities of narcissism. From a male standpoint, Freud believed it is pronounced by a sexual overvaluation of a loved one stemming from the child's original narcissism.

(Sandler, 1991, Pg. xii)

Through the amassing of a substantial knowledge of the self and narcissism, a correlation between one's body image, their internal perception of the physical self and the amplitude of their narcissistic traits can be delineated in a social media backdrop.

In closing, the intention of this chapter was to examine specific areas of literature relating to social media and the Adonis complex. Though the scrutiny of the accessible information associated with body dysmorphia, narcissism, the self, and the ideal body, there is grounds to explore the correlation between the two. An emergent online culture has become further fixated on the visual, whereby the individual may be appraised through their physical representation, illustrated by the available imagery (Pennington, 2009). Acknowledging this pre-judgemental disposition, social media can be considered as a sphere for self effacing on a physical level, by which the individual is aware of the shallow perceptions the medium governs. Furthermore, an examination of the male form as depicted by the media illustrated the repercussions of bodily idealisation and their cognitive effects on the male populace.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In order to determine the impact of social media on the male body, the collection of correlational and comparative data is fundamental, in order to analyze the material, and conclusively demonstrate the extent of the relationship between the two. Throughout the process an improved comprehension of Facebook's effects on body image will be ascertained, while conjointly shedding light on some essential questions.

1. What body image issues are the males struggling with today?
2. What are the repercussions derived from the dissemination of idealised masculine body imagery into social media?
3. Is Facebook feeding the Adonis Complex?

#### **3.1: Qualitative Data**

Although research from Chapter 2 suggests that there is some meaningful affiliation between social media and male body insecurities, the strength of the supposed connection must be resolved. Currently, only fragmented research relating these two areas has been conducted, leaving the consistency of such a connection open to interpretation. Primary focus on the female and methodological design differences in relation to body image, has made it difficult to draw conclusions on the effects of social media on the male form. A qualitative review of relevant studies will illustrate the potential effects, provide measurable variants and ultimately determine the magnitude in which social media feeds the Adonis Complex. The qualitative approach will be used to find out “in-depth ways in which people think or feel”(Mcleod 2008).

Generally, quantitative research information provides numerical data that can be analysed with ease. Results of this kind are highly accurate due to a strict scientific method, however, quantitative data does not provide any depth to particular phenomena or give any explanation. Therefore, a qualitative approach is befitting of a paper delving into the reasoning behind the cognitive occurrence. Humanistic psychology was originally rooted in qualitative research. Psychologist Carl Rogers used qualitative methods in his person centred approach of 1951, in which his theory involves the clients experience of the self in relation to the environment. Rogers was one of the first to audio record his counseling sessions for transcription later. These transcriptions would later be analyzed and the results documented.

Rogers attempt to understand clients' subjective experiences and their interpretation of reality, along with his systematic analysis of transcribed sessions has had a profound impact on subsequent qualitative research.(Willig, Stainton-Rogers, 2008, Pg. 456)

A qualitative means has been utilised in previous studies recounting body image issues among men. Morgan & Arcelus (2009, Pg. 436) used a qualitative methodology in their study correlating body hesitancy in gay and straight men, as they felt "it would reflect the subjective experiences of the research participants". According to Van der Velden & El Emam(2012, Pg. 17), qualitative research description is widely used in healthcare research and qualitative research methods are extensively used in studies on the effects of social media on individuals. Consequently, using the aforementioned studies as a guide, a qualitative approach is best suited when studying the effects of social media on body image, as it allows a for a personal understanding and an evaluation of the contributing factors to the Adonis Complex in the context of social media.

### **3.2: Secondary Data Analysis**

Secondary data analysis has been defined as:

any further analysis of an existing dataset which presents interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or different from, those produced in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main results.(Grinyer, 2009, Pg. 1)

Secondary data is generally retrieved from documents, conversations, photographs, documented studies and second hand interviews. Secondary analysis of qualitative data has been widely used for the utilisation of existing data, gathered from prior studies, for a contrasting area of research or alternative perspective. It can be used in conjunction with qualitative data, be it single or multiple sets. According to Heaton(1998):

the approach can be used to generate new knowledge, new hypotheses, or support for existing theories; that it reduces the burden placed on respondents by negating the need to recruit further subjects; and that it allows wider use of data from rare or inaccessible respondents (Heaton 1998).

### **3.3: Synthesis of Relevant Literature**

The collection of secondary data, detailing the effects of social media on male body image is difficult, as little research exists in the field. Due to this, a mergence of data relating to the both male body image concerns and the psychology of social media will be complete. This

examination will divulge the extent of the affinity between the two, and conclusively determine whether Facebook fosters body insecurities.

The first area of data collection concerns to the Adonis Complex, to attain a comprehensive familiarity, and to discern the social cues that provoke facets of the ailment. A coherent realisation of muscle dysmorphia is also imperative, in order to uncover the cognitive mechanisms that escalate negative physical perceptions of the self. Amidst an unambiguous awareness of the fine points concerning the Adonis Complex, an examination into the growth of male objectification will disclose the components contributing to masculine body insecurities. The imprint of Hollywood's depiction of masculinity on male perceptibility and the objectification of the male form in the media, will grant an understanding of the complex's origins. Physiological processes concerning the augmentation bodily comparison and bodily perception will disclose the logic behind physical apprehensions.

Literature and studies delineating the psychological aspects of social media will also be investigated, as such knowledge will aid in determining the cerebral mechanisms members of the Facebook engage in. Information regarding the process of constructing one's online identity, groupthink, cyberbullying, heuristics and relevant sociological theories will assist in distinguishing how one's online representation can affect their physical self. Through the demonstration of the rise of male body objectification and social media's cognitive processes, a correlation between Facebook and the Adonis Complex can be drawn. Psychological and theoretical works will be cited when comparing the two fields of research, in order to give relevance to the conclude results.

Definitive dissection of Facebook and the Adonis complex will assist in determining whether Facebook is feeding the Adonis Complex.

### **3.4: Ethical Considerations**

Research involving the collection and examination of secondary data has limited ethical implications, as much of the information is publicly available. The use of information that is published through websites, newspapers, books or other publicly available material, ensures that the anonymity of the participants in such studies is protected by the primary researcher. Permission retrieving processes regarding the use and publication of compiled information is typically carried out by the primary researcher, reducing the ethical burdens on the secondary

researcher. Confidentiality concerns are also diminished as the fundamental responsibility for maintaining confidentiality falls on the primary researcher. The prime ethical consideration for the secondary research is the gathering of permission to publish data and results secured by an author utilising primary mechanisms. In closing, the use of secondary data lessens much of the ethical concerns primary research presents, allowing for unimpeded extensive research into available material, to aid in proving or disproving a proposed research question. (Bailey, 1995)

## **Chapter 4: The Rise of the Adonis Complex**

### **4.1: An Explanation:**

The Adonis Complex is a complicated term that encompasses a wide array of body image preoccupations among men and young boys. The name is derived from Greek mythology, where Adonis was a half god, half man and the ideal in masculine physical perfection (Pope and Phillips et al., 2000, Pg. 6). Preoccupations vary depending on each individual, for example, some may worry they aren't muscular enough, while others feel they may need to cut weight, others simply focus on body features they deem to be unattractive. The complexity of the disorder is represented by the assorted obsessions derived from its affliction. It is considered a sub-category of muscle dysmorphia as the complex deals with specific male body image concerns, muscle dysmorphia can affect women as well as men (Darkes, 2013). The problem is ostensibly compounded by the besiege of idealised masculine perfection in media imagery, and the capitalisation of supplement companies promising a solution to image insecurities. Men are caught in a double bind whereby they are trapped between the impossible, media projected ideals, and restrictions presented by the taboo of expression. (Pope and Phillips et al., 2000, Pg. 5).



**Figure 1: Adonis Statue**  
(Granit, 2014)

Many women can now recognize and voice their appearance concerns, speaking openly about their reactions to these ideals, rather than letting them fester inside. But men still labor under the societal taboo against expressing such feelings (Pope and Phillips et al., 2000, Pg. 5).

It should be stated that the Adonis Complex is not an officially medically recognised term, but is a name used to describe the rise in a number of body image issues concerning men. Muscle Dysmorphia is an identifiable aspect of the Adonis Complex. The diagnosis criteria for the body image disorder is as follows (Grieve & Shacklette 2013):

- Preoccupation with muscularity and the desire to increase musculature.
- Excessive weight lifting, training through injury.
- Intense dieting, the use of dietary supplements and drugs, such as steroids.
- Limited social function and personal interaction due to preoccupation.



The depiction of the male form has altered throughout annals of cultural history. In contemporary times the portrayal of the body by Hollywood has manipulated the way one perceives the notion of the ideal physical form. Hence, a chronicling of the male form and the rise of muscularity in Hollywood will divulge how such a portrayal has given rise to the Adonis Complex.

#### 4.2: Hollywood and Masculinity:

In recent decades muscularity has been equated to masculinity. While the origins of the idealised male form is debated, many acknowledge the macho depiction of Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* as one of the recent bequeathing aspects of male objectification (Pronger, 2001). This sequentially culminated in the proliferation of the muscular physique into the mainstream, with the emergence of Adonis like figures onto Hollywood screens during the 1970's. This period has been characterized as the "remasculation of America",

"where the idea of real men as decisive strong and courageous rose from the humiliation and confusion of the U.S. loss in the Vietnam war"(Messner, 2004, Pg. 464). One such iconic figure was Arnold Schwarzenegger, who got his big break with the critically acclaimed documentary *Pumping Iron* (1977). The seven time Mr Olympia champion went on to forge a successful movie career,



**Figure 2:** Arnold Schwarzenegger – Predator(1987)  
(Woerner, 2011)

spawning the machismo associated with the leading man in Western movies (Figure 2). The protagonists of the 1980's action genre were customarily stoic individuals with a rugged persona, engaging with an enemy who was undermining American power and ideology. Blockbusters such as *Conan the Barbarian*(1982), *The Terminator*(1984) and *Commando* (1985), saw the materialisation of many leading men emulating Schwarzenegger's aggressive persona. Actors such as Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis and Jean Claude Van Damme all found success in the action genre, cementing Hollywood's perception of what the ideal man should be. Schwarzenegger's iconic phrase, "i'll be back", could be recognized as the remasculinization of the western male, "back" from the feminization of the 1960's and 1970's

(Messner, 2004, Pg. 464).

The late 1980's and early 1990's heralded a media consumer that had grown weary of the brash macho persona created by the archetypal Hollywood heroes. Obvious bulk and ultra masculinity were accosted with the irony synonymous with Generation-X. The 90's saw a shift of the quintessential male form, from that of over muscularity, to that of leanness complemented by muscle. Brad Pitt became the perfect specimen, an almost Adonis like figure, with the ideal combination of muscularity and definition. The iconic image of Pitt in the movie *Fight Club*(1999) added to the objectification of men in the media at the time (Figure 3). Throughout the movie, a shirtless Pitt shows off his physique, which quickly became the most sought after body according to *Men's Health* magazine (Mazinani, 2011). Pitt's character Tyler Durden sums up the growing internalisation of body image ideals, and social comparison that the 90's male began to observe. As Durden boards a bus he is confronted by an advertisement featuring a perfectly sculpted male body, he asks, "is that what a real man is supposed to look like?"(Seed, 2006).



**Figure 3:** Brad Pitt - *Fight Club*(1999)(Mehdi, 2008)

The muscular ideal is still the imperative among Hollywood leading men, with body transformations commonplace among the current assortment of actors. *Parks and Recreation* star Chris Pratt underwent an intensive physical transformation for his upcoming role in the film *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Pratt took to Instagram to show off his newly sculpted body

and revealed his six pack abs live on the TV show *Conan*<sup>2</sup>. This metamorphosis went viral, and Pratt's popularity immediately skyrocketed, from an almost unknown actor, to one of the archetypal Hollywood ideals (Loewentheil, 2013)<sup>3</sup>. Chris Hemsworth, star of the *Thor* movie franchise, is another actor who endured a physical transformation in order to earn the physique required to play a mythical god. Hemsworth has been vocal about his dislike of the excessive work out routine, necessary to chisel the figure appropriate for the role. "I basically overfeed on protein and endless amounts of chicken breast and steak and fish and vegetables and brown rice" (Enk, 2013). Adopting your body to fit Hollywood is almost necessary in today's movie world. The range of actors bulking up to play muscle bound lead roles is reminiscent of Hollywood throughout the 1980's. Tom Hardy, Hugh Jackman and Henry Cavill are other actors who have all manipulated their bodies, to meet the high standards set by the movie industry. Nutritionist and performance coach Mike Dolce states:

The pressure to perform in Hollywood is no different than it is in Major League Baseball, These are people whose salaries are partially dependent upon how they look(Nye, 2013).

Nye(2013) argues that 20% of the leading men in hollywood are turning to the controversial human growth hormone and performance enhancing drugs, in order to obtain the mandatory physiques that Hollywood craves.

The influence of the moving image on male bodily perceptions is palpable when recapitulating the portrayal of masculinity by Hollywood, explicitly in modern times. As with the moving image, the still and advertising images have likewise given rise to male physical inferiority complexes.

#### **4.3: Advertising Muscularity:**

With men becoming increasingly objectified by Hollywood in the past three decades, the advertising industry would also turn to objectification in order sell products. The past 30 years gave witness to a surge in the visibility of the male form in the western media. A strew of muscular physiques and toned abs appeared in magazines and advertisements, creating an unconscious self comparison environment for males. Law & Labre(2002, Pg.698) proposed

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<sup>2</sup> Instagram is an online social networking site that allows its users to share photos and videos which can be altered through a filtering process. It can be connected with other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

<sup>3</sup> Viral is the term used to to describe something that attains high popularity through internet sharing, prominently though social media.

that in recent decades the idealised V-shaped mesomorphic body has become more prevalent, with the increase in the percentage of those categorized very muscular in popular magazines. The study they conducted compared the changing standards in body image in magazines, such as *Rolling Stone*, between the years 1967-1997. They ultimately concluded that the male body imagery in these magazines had become increasingly slender and muscular, with the glorified V taper from the shoulders down. Some statistics from the study include:

- A 26% rise of imagery deemed very muscular.
- An increase of lower body fat percentages in the 1990's, with 62% categorized as low body fat.
- A decrease of medium body fat in imagery, from 51% to 30%.
- A peak in low body fat percentages was witnessed in the 1980's, with 70% of imagery fitting this category.(Law & Labre, 2002, Pg.705 -706)

Previous male generations were confronted by body imagery that was attainable. The portrayal of the male form with realistic comprehensions of muscularity and definition, granted young males a sense of satisfaction with their own bodies. The “new ideal” described by Law and Libre(Pg.706) is fashioning a new generation of men who are becoming self conscious.

just as female fashion models seen in the mass media do not represent how most American women look. If the average man to these images, a discrepancy may emerge between his own body and the ideal(Law & Labre, 2002, Pg. 699).

Tv advertising has also been entangled in exertion of male objectification. Most focuses on the Nick Kamen Levis advert in which he

believes the standard technique for sexualising women had shifted to also incorporate men. In the advert a shirtless James Mardel is seen donning a pair of jeans whilst in the bathtub. Consequently, this media shift in male bodily depiction compelled the male populace to perceive their body's differently, culminating in higher physical self awareness (Grogan,



**Figure 4:** Andrew Cooper - Diet Coke(Persuazn, 2005)

1999, Pg. 78). Recently, Gianatasio(2013) stated that some advertisers are taking advantage of the “sexed-up man boom”. He points to *Diet Coke*, who recently revisited the famous construction worker advert of the early 1990’s. Model Andrew Cooper is depicted as a hardworking landscaper who almost seems irresistible to the opposite sex (Figure 4). The ad conclusively leads to Cooper cooling himself down by spraying the product over his body. A disproportionate number of shirtless men are being used to advertise products not normally affiliated with sexualised images. The grouping of the two gives relevance to the slogan “sex sells”, no matter the gender that is objectified.

The representation of the male figure has veered toward a more idealised form, in both still and moving imagery, in the past few decades. Influenced by the resurgence of the macho physiques into advertising and entertainment, men have become progressively objectified. It could be argued that one muscular body (as portrayed by the media), begets another. It has been stated:

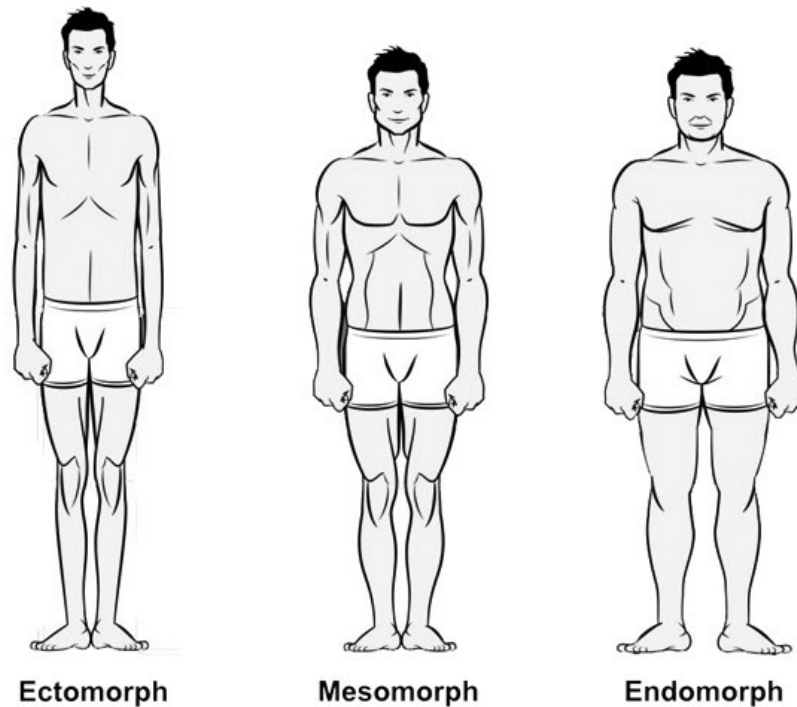
Because men are being bombarded with numerous messages and images concerning the ideal male body, physical attractiveness may become more important to men(Law & Labre, 2002, Pg. 698).

With the Adonis like figure “being disseminated in the mainstream Western media”(Law & Labre, 2002, Pg. 697), the trimming of male body fat in media imagery could be compared to the trimming of men’s confidence in their own body image. Furthermore, an analysis of empirical evidence associated with male preferences to body image will give credence to the supposed impact of Hollywood and the advertising industry.

#### **4.4: Empirical and Psychological Evidence of Dissatisfaction**

The muscular physique is intrinsic to masculinity in Western culture, projecting a sense of strength power and aggression. Muscularity and masculinity have become amalgamated, with the mesomorphic body shape rated the most masculine. This body architecture exhibits a personality associated with higher levels of activity, bravery and aggression, over the auxiliary endomorphic or ectomorphic shapes (Figure 5). Reviewing the silhouette studies conducted by Marc Mishkind, they affirm the assumption that men convey a sense of dissatisfaction if their body image is discrepant from the figure in which they are presented. 75% of men involved in the study disclosed a discrepancy between their ideal body shape and their own, roughly half wanted to be bigger while the other wanted to be slimmer with extra

definition (Grogan, 1999, Pg. 60). Concluding the study, Mishkind came to the realization that male dissatisfaction differs from that of women. The disparity of body insecurities in men and women stem from the desire for women to attain a slimmer physique, and men to reach their ideal though either dieting or bulking. Data from the Mishkind study indicates that a considerable number of men are dissatisfied with their body shape(Grogan, 1999, Pg. 60).



**Figure 5:** Illustration of Various Body Types(Muscle&Strength, 2005)

Clare Donaldson distributed body image questionnaires to a sample of 100 males aged between 18 and 45. The study took into consideration the variety of body sizes of the male populace, with a height range of 5ft 4 inches to 6ft 6 inches, and a weight range 7 stone 11 lbs to 17 stone 12 lbs. Results of the questionnaire demonstrated how men felt about specific areas of their bodies(Grogan, 1999, Pg. 62).

1. 38% showed dissatisfaction with their muscle tone.
2. 25% showed dissatisfaction with their lower torso, 28% with their mid torso and 37% with their upper torso.
3. 53% expressed some element of depression regarding body image, with 4% indicating more severe depressive states.(Grogan, 1999, Pg. 62)

The evidence from the Donaldson study lends support to alternative methods of research regarding the ideal male form. A higher percentage of lamentation toward the upper torso indicates that the sample desire the ideal V taper, with broad shoulders and a thin waist(Figure

6). The depressive states of the male sample serves as an indicator of general dissatisfaction with body shape and size.

This upsurge in male body dysmorphia can be attributed to the proliferation of the glorified male structure into various aspects of the media (Hollywood, Advertising). The presence of the muscular ideal “is argued to be the most likely cause of the recent increase in body dissatisfaction among men”(Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2009, Pg. 110). Exposure to imagery of muscular physiques results in negative ramifications in terms of body image. Peter Baker considers the communal pressure on men to conform to the definitive body shaped depicted in the media. He documents the escalation of alluring male anatomy in the media and equates it to the rise in male self-consciousness.



**Figure 6:** Idealised V-Taper(Panchal, 2014)

Mens self-consciousness about their appearance is greater now than ever before. How could it be otherwise, given the massive exposure of men’s bodies in the media?(Grogan, 1999, Pg. 97).

The affiliation of the media with male body insecurities has been authenticated, by which the image depicted becoming a reference point for self deprecation in the presence of a discrepancy. Hence, an exploration of psychological reasoning of deprecation in the face of idealism will divulge the conceivable cognition behind the Adonis Complex.

#### **4.5: Psychology of Bodily Perception**

Mussweiler(2011, Pg. 119 – 127) describes Leon Festinger's theory on social comparison processes, he divulges how we desire accurate evaluations of our abilities and attitudes. Satisfaction is sought through comparisons with other people when we are unable to evaluate ourselves directly. Upward comparisons are prevailing when the subject is determined to be a social superior, contrarily downward comparisons are made when one is deemed to be a social subordinate. This unconscious measure anticipates why people analyse their body image when confronted with media imagery. The perceiver of the idealised image makes an upward comparison, culminating in self-doubt. People who are continuously bombarded with a barrage of idealised images will ultimately enter a state of self criticism and negative emotions. Upward comparisons are almost impossible to avoid as there is always someone better. These comparisons, while detrimental to body image, can administer a fascination with

self improvement or an endeavour to better oneself through achievements. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger decorated his room with an array of bodybuilding posters in for motivation. Initially the mood felt through upward social comparison may be that of depression or anger, but conclusively the process is necessary as it serves as a mechanism for inspiration and self enhancement. In a paper concluding the influence of Facebook on the male body, Festinger's interpretation of social comparison theory could prove fruitful.

Markus's 1977 self schema theory concentrates on how individuals treat the content of media images. Grogan(1999, Pg.119) describes how Myers & Biocca utilized the original theory to document the effects of social pressures on the body. Self schema refers to an individual's particular idiosyncrasies that differentiate them from others.

people develop their sense of self through reflecting on their own behaviours from observing reactions of others to the self, and though processing social information about which aspects of the self are most valued(Grogan, 1999, Pg.119).

Grogan(1999, Pg.119) asserts that one's body image constitutes as a mental portrayal of the self, thus the perception of the body is a mental composition. If body image is indeed a construction of the mind then it is susceptible to change through the infiltration of new information. Body image is "elastic" with changing reference points(media, social groups and family) and depending on the context of evaluation or social cues, one could be subjected to self criticism or lowered self esteem(Stein, 1996, Pg. 96-109).

This chapter assisted in congregating a satisfactory understanding of the media's role in amplifying male body insecurities, and provided empirical evidence supporting the association between idealised forms and body image. Furthermore, an observation of the psychology behind body image will grant insight when comparing body image and social media. The next chapter will divulge the idiosyncrasies associated with social media membership, in an effort to garner a clearer correlation between Facebook and body image.



## **Chapter 5: Psychology of Facebook**

This chapter will illustrate the cognitive behaviours generated with the adoption of a social media lifestyle. Through this process, a profound comprehension of how these behaviours may contribute to body hesitancy will be attained. Amidst a coherent awareness of the aggrandizement of the ideal male form in Western media in recent decades, a clearer recognition of social media, namely Facebook, needs to be ascertained. Facebook was predominantly founded by Mark Zuckerberg on February 4th 2004 and had a notable effect on the sociological zeitgeist, with the installation of many new methods of social interaction (Phillips, 2004)(Figure 7). The magnitude of people a member could interact with eclipsed the basic forms of physical social interaction that had been conventional up to that point. An ostensibly insignificant comment could conceivably reach a wider multitude of people, providing a realm where society could exhibit their emotions on a sizeable scale. This immersion into the collective afforded people with the opportunity to interact with others from divergent socioeconomic classes, cultures and lifestyles. The bedroom's of individuals globally were no longer a haven from social interaction, instead inhabitants of the site could be approached at any given time via their computer. Facebook has over 1 billion active accounts and is bringing about unfamiliar social phenomena that could modify the way people view themselves, principally in the awareness of the body.



**Figure 7:** Facebook Creator Mark Zuckerberg  
(Lewis 2012)

### **5.1: Physical Regulation and Misrepresentation**

Facebook removed the anonymity affiliated with online social traditions of the 1990s and early 2000s. Online forums were overshadowed by the emergence of social media, thus anonymity was transcended by the disclosure of one's physical appearance (Figure 8). This emancipation of the online community approved judgment on the basis of appearance, which is considered a "focal determinant" in how we are perceived by our peers (Amichai-Hamburger 2013, Pg. 4). Today's culture is physically oriented whereby the most visually

enticing people are viewed as having significant superiority socially. It has been stated:

They are better liked, more frequently helped, and seen as possessing better personality traits and intellectual capabilities(2013, Pg. 4).

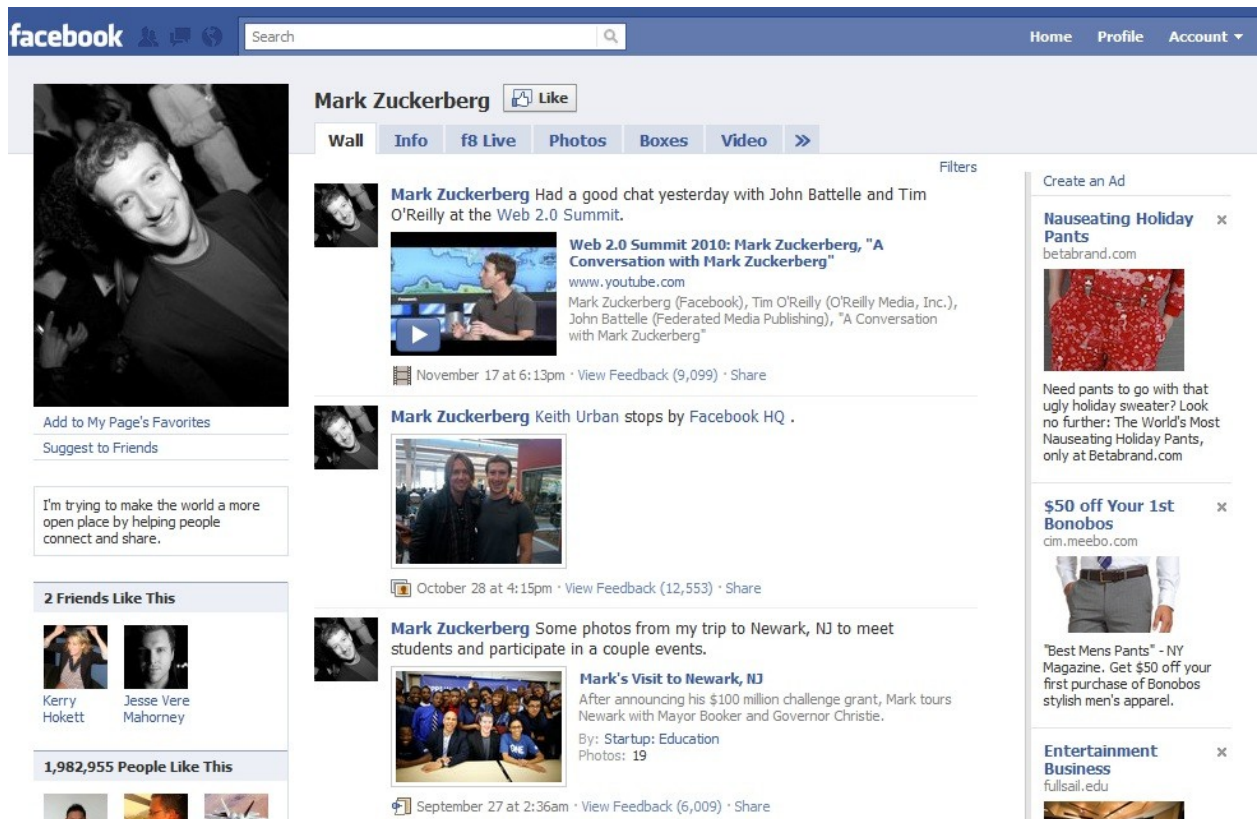


Figure 8: Facebook Profile Example(Glogster, 2012)

A cognitive bias recognised as the halo effect is culpable for this kind of association. Also characterised as the “physical attractiveness stereotype”, it is a tendency for people appraise an individual's character traits based on their level of attractiveness (Cherry, 2014). Those who are considered as superior in physical attractiveness observe the benefits from this inclination, the opposite is also typical for those considered subordinates of physical allure. As explained previously, through the concept of *Erotic Capital* those with augmented physical assets also observe economic benefits, with a potential of a 10-15% increase in financial earnings (Walden 2010). Facebook authorises members to expose as little or as much as desired, although the sharing of photographs is considered involuntary, a member has management over which images they display. This kind of appearance handling through social media has been described as “impression management” (Amichai-Hamburger 2013, Pg. 5). It is where an individual will duly cultivate a desired impression through the careful selection of images they display. With Facebook being considered as a person’s social I.D., this activity is

growing in prominence and has critical importance in terms of fresh social encounters. Impression management is culminating in people displaying photographs in which their greatest physical assets are emphasised. Overweight people have a tendency to convey images where they look thinner, and shorter people will present pictures where this feature is not accentuated. A gravity is likewise placed on the narrative structure of ones life through the imagery they exhibit. People nearly consistently wish to give the impression that they live full, rich lives void of unhappiness and physical imperfections. In a sense, people are displaying idealised images of themselves, much like the media is displaying idealised body imagery (Peluchette and Karl 2009, Pg. 32).

MySpace is an additional example of how regulation of the self takes place through the medium of social media. Although MySpace in a more media enriched social networking environment, the presentation of the physical self on the site has been linked to one's perception of the self in terms of esteem and mental health. As with Facebook, opinions of peers on the displayed self imagery customarily contributes to a strong sense of body confidence and social identity. Interestingly, the prosperous media environment of MySpace also contributes to an individual's social identity through the ability to present their media preferences, such as music or video. The users can affiliate themselves with images and brands, ultimately constructing a broader sense of self, which is more difficult to manipulate. However, the utilization of the media enables the MySpace user to promote themselves better, ultimately leading to an idealised form of themselves (Lukas 2014).

The form in which an individual personifies themselves online can impinge on the manner in which they express and distinguish themselves in real social interactions. In a recent analysis of online identity distortion, participants were asked to declare themselves as those with introverted or extroverted personality inclinations, through computer mediated communication (Amichai-Hamburger 2013, Pg. 54). Through this structure of mediation, varying degrees of identity manipulation came to pass, those who considered themselves as introverted demonstrated extroverted tendencies and vice versa. The indicated who distorted their identities in the context of social media, internalised their manipulations indicating that an identity shift took place. Hence, the research advocates that individuals who misrepresent themselves in an online context come to adopt the traits of the manipulated identity.

Self perception theory hypothesizes that individuals construe their own demeanor by

observing themselves through a third person perspective. Theoretically one's perceived identity is not undoubtedly their true identity, for instance an individual may be liable for varying degrees of identity replacement or manipulation(L. Jackson, 2014). Amichai-Hamburger(2013, Pg. 49) describes how Valins(1966) conducted a study comprising of heart rates per minute upon observing particular photographs. Participants were persuaded to believe that their heartbeats rose in accordance with viewing specific images, inferring increased levels of sexual attraction. This experience of elevated heart rates led the participants to correlate beats per minute with sexual attraction, hence rating those in the imagery more attractive based on the rate of their heartbeat. The research deduces that individuals, whose identity is manipulated, may come operate in accordance with the characteristics of the manipulated identity.

## **5.2: The Groupthink of Cyberbullying**

Groupthink is a hypothesis that suggest groups as a whole commonly make poorer choices due to cognitive deterioration caused by intrinsic group pressures. The groupthink mentality of Facebook is conceivably contributing to the bullying taking place on the site. The “deterioration of mental efficiency” in group environments has shown to have abundant negative effects on the cognition of individuals in the group (Callari, 2014). Hence, whatever the group deems permissible is formulated as the accepted paradigm. Decisions are never vacuous especially in a social context. Individuals possess leverage over the decision making process of others, in that the sheer presence of someone can alter their performance in decision processing. Consequently, groups as a whole do not make better decisions than the leading decision maker in the group, this is due to the phenomena known as “social loafing”(Callari, 2014). Therefore, the tendency for the individual to slack off in the ambience of a group may be contributing to bullying in an online context, due to the profusion of the following group propensities:

1. Morality, the group is so convinced they are in the right side of the matter, they ignore ethical issues that may arise.
2. Stereotypes, any challenger's group ideals are viewed stereotypically evil and ineligible for opinion
3. Pressure, opinion diversity is actively discouraged with individuals pressured to keep silent.
4. Censorship, individuals may ultimately suppress doubts in order to fit into the accepted paradigm(Callari, 2014).

The impulse for the individual to adhere to the herd mentality can be explained through the notion of heuristics. A heuristic is a mental shortcut that allows an individual to solve problems or make judgements more efficiently, in order to shorten moments spent on decision making. Many heuristics occur through interaction with society and are fixated on the social (Cherry, 2014). The “imitate the successful” heuristic concerns the modeling of one’s self with those who are receiving the aspired benefits, this social strategy has proven to be advantageous as it shortens learning time, conserving energy (Amichai-Hamburger 2013, Pg. 103).

In *Victims of Groupthink*, Janis(1972, Pg.73) describes the groupthink phenomenon as “a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing and moral judgement that results from in-group pressures”(Figure 9). Written over four decades ago this statement is never more relevant than in the social media driven world we live in today.



**Figure 9:** Illustration of Groupthink(anticap, 2014)

*Kony 2012* was a short film conceived to bring militia leader Joseph Kony to justice through funding of the charity *Stop Kony*. It is a perfect example of social media groupthink. The video went viral and hit every social media site worldwide. Friends saw friends post it and the scale in which it saturated the electronic information sphere, led to the assumption that the *Invisible Children* charity organization documented, was morally just. The reality, which was later divulged, affirmed that most of the money donated funded media creation and promotion, not categorically charity work. Therefore, Social networks stifle the individual

because mass opinion sharing can lead to a groupthink mentality (Holub, 2012). A network expert has stated:

An overabundance of connections over which information can travel too cheaply can reduce diversity(Boyle, 2014).

Cyberbullying can have potentially calamitous significance for the sufferer of the behaviour. Surfacing data relating to cyberbullying has determined that Facebook is the most precarious environment for those wishing to avert the abasement coupled with bullying. Reportedly, 87% of teenagers who logged on to social media experienced cyberbullying through Facebook, with the typical victim being a 19 year old male(Gayle, 2013). Gale describes media psychologist Arthur Cassidy's comment:

Many boys feel under pressure to demonstrate their bravado, particularly on the web, but this attitude and male deficiency in coping strategies can make them more vulnerable and open to trolling(Gayle, 2013).

The inclination for those victimised is to keep it secluded, exacerbating the negative effects associated. The average time period for the maltreatment was averaged out to be a month. Cyberbullying can carry a legion of adverse byproducts when it come to body image concerns, especially in young males, which will be delved into in the following chapter.

### **5.3: Impression Formation**

An hypothesis details that impression formation through social media can be derived from social cues deposited by friends on an individual's profile. Walther(2008) suggests that having attractive friends comment or share information on an affiliates wall can boost a third party observer's perception of the profile owner's physical attractiveness. Furthermore, the perception of the profile owner's social competence also rises, in accordance with the acceptance of "what is beautiful is good" (Amichai-Hamburger 2013, Pg. 108). To summarize, people use cues left by friends on social media to delineate an overall impression of the profile owner in the absence of superior information. However, people are customarily astute, therefore greater credence is granted to cues that are too complex to fabricate. Generally users of social media are mindful that their friends make an effort to present themselves in the best possible light, so through scrutiny of the target's profile, they form an impression based on fabrication difficulty of the given information. Additional studies described by Hogan(2010), deduced that friend's comments on a subject's profile picture

carried greater weight than the subjects own opinions on their physical representation online. Therefore, if a subject makes an effort to present themselves as glamorous or alluring online, the resulting positivity from their friends will influence a third party's impression formation process. Impression formation is an emerging field of research, but data indicates that one's opinion of themselves is frequently irrelevant and that impressions are composed of the opinions of others, especially in the domain of imagery and physical attractiveness.

#### 5.4: Narcissism

Narcissism has been defined as:

a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration and an exaggerated sense of self-importance”(Bergland, 2014)(Figure 10).

Narcissism is measured through the Narcissistic Personality Inventory(NPI) in social psychological research.



**Figure 10:** Illustration of Narcissism  
(Mohanji, 2013)

Self promotion embodies any act, within the confines of social media, that conclusively glorifies the party involved. For example, on Facebook such acts may incorporate frequent status updates, frequent posting of self imagery, posting of celebrity comparison imagery and quotes or slogans intended to aggrandize the self. (Williams, 2013)

An investigation into teen behaviour and Facebook was performed by psychologist Larry Rosen, as described by Science Daily(2011), disclosed the behaviours accentuated by social media utilisation. Rosen collected a sample of 300 teenagers and observed them over a 15 minute time period. Upon conclusion, the study determined that those who were imprudent with social media, exhibited a manifestation of narcissistic personality traits. A separate inquiry bridging self promotion and narcissism, again described by Science Daily(2011), established that those who use adopt social media with the principle intent of self promotion demonstrate narcissistic or insecure personalities. Mehdizadeh(2010, Pg. 358) argues that

Facebook spawns a fertile backdrop for narcissists as it initiates a channel for numerous shallow friendships and emotionally severed communication. In a study borne by Mehdizadeh a distinct correlation between Facebook communication and narcissism was further ingrained. Employing the Narcissism Personality Inventory(NPI), the investigation measured narcissistic peculiarities in people versus levels of Facebook interaction. An unequivocal link was discovered between the number of times Facebook was checked per day, and the time spent per session, with the augmentation of narcissistic personality traits. Significant correlations were predicated in the sphere of self promotion, explicitly in profile pictures, additional photos, status updates and notes. Participants in the sample who attended college were more likely to exhibit narcissistic tendencies through the external domain (e.g. physical attractiveness). They were less likely to participate in self promotion activities through text based self descriptions, yet were prone to showcase themselves visually, through imagery. Additional narcissistic indicators were ubiquitous in participants who partook in celebrity resemblance facets of Facebook. The *My-Celebrity-Look-alikes* application was prevailing among the self promoting narcissists of the sample (Mehdizadeh, 2010, Pg. 360).

Facebook users can receive public feedback on profile features from other users which can act as a positive regulator of narcissistic esteem(D'Costa, 2010).

The narcissistic fixation on the ocular aspect of Facebook, advocates that body image is imperative among the self promoting members of the site, hence a correlation between the two is palpable and in need of further exploration. As a result, it could be hypothesized that esteem and Facebook is dependent on the individual. Those who tend use Facebook to observe the self, amass narcissistic tendencies leading to higher self esteem levels, and those who make self comparisons often attain the lower self esteem associated.

### **5.5: Self Esteem**

Recent evidence suggests that Facebook may boost self esteem levels, however this may not be the case due to discrepancies in the study conducted. Objective self awareness(OSA) speculates that people experience the self as a subject or an object. The self as a subject is distinguished through the fulfillment of rudimentary tasks in daily life (e.g. eating, watching TV), while the self is actively engaging with life, they are doing so on an unconscious level (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011, Pg. 79). People become an object of their own absorption when their focus deviates from extraneous facets of life, to self observation, which can have



favourable or adverse connotations. Catalysts used to conjure awareness of the self include mirrors, photographs of the self, audio recordings, video observation and the writing of autobiographical information. Any stimuli that causes the individual to view themselves as they believe other do is a catalyst for objective consciousness (2011, Pg. 79). Social media can be considered as considerable stimulant for such self awareness, as it encompasses many of the stimuli affiliated with a consciousness shift from subject to object. Through objective self awareness people are inclined to self assessments through the consolidation of larger social standards, thus leading to “downgraded ratings of the self” (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011, Pg. 80). Where the individual falls short of these standards, awareness of the self is intensified and self esteem decreases.

In the study, conducted by Gonzales & Hancock, it was unveiled that selective self-presentation on Facebook negated the effects of OSA, leading to increased levels of self esteem. Participants actively assembled their profile to depict an idealised version of themselves, selectively choosing positive information to convey and heightening awareness of the optimal self (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011, Pg. 79). However, the study ignored the vacuity between the idealised self and the actual self, whereby a comparison with the heightened standards of the idealised self can often lead to emotional discomfort due to the disparity between the two self representations. Self discrepancy theory contends that aspects of depression are associated with an imbalance between an idealized self and an actual self due to emergent feelings of failure, disappointment, devaluation and shame (Pychyl, 2008) (Figure 11). Therefore, while composing an idealised form of the self, esteem may rise, however when comparisons are made between the actual and the ideal, negative emotions surface ultimately neutralising any positive effects. Through deducing the differences between the actual and ideal self, it can be concluded that self esteem is fundamentally reduced through social media, due to such contrasting differences between who we are and who we want to be. The study by Gonzales & Hancock also failed to take into account social comparison, as the editing and observing of the participants profile was done in isolation of such undertakings. As stated earlier in this paper, when upward comparisons are made to idealised forms, self esteem and body image conclusively lowers.

A correlation between general contentment and social media was analysed by the Public Library of Science, as described by The Economist(2014). They concluded that those who engaged with social media had diminished satisfaction and fulfillment with their day to day life. 82 teenage participants filled the sample and were observed over a two week time period. Each member reported their emotional patterns throughout the day, specifically during the instance of Facebook engagement. Analysis of the concluding data implied that frequent Facebook visitation correlated with a drop in overall life satisfaction. The most prevailing characteristics equated with recurrent use of the site were social tension, jealousy and isolation, potentially compounding other negative aspects of the site (The Economist, 2014). A contraction of the vitality associated with a fulfilling life can conceivably contribute to the leeriness surrounding body image insecurities, further correlation will be explored in the next chapter.



**Figure 11:** Illustration of Self Comparison(Leng 2013)

In closing, the popularity of Facebook means that compelling portion of the male populace may be experiencing many of the detrimental psychological effects linked with the engagement of the site. The ambition of this chapter was to unveil the psychological behaviours associated with membership of social media. Through the analysis of applicable information various cognitions relating to the representation of the self and emotional surety have been uncovered. The demeanor of the self in an online context will be measured against elements of the Adonis Complex in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Is Facebook Feeding the Adonis Complex?**

The intent of this chapter is to establish whether Facebook has the capability of influencing the male body image, by way of amplifying the Adonis Complex. Pertinent information deriving from the previous chapters will be juxtaposed and contrasted in order to ascertain the degree of the interrelationship between the two. Applicable theories concerning the representation of the self and an individual's surety in their physicality, will be applied in order to determine if the manner in which one is depicted, has the propensity to impact upon their body image. Through this process it will be disclosed whether Facebook is feeding the Adonis Complex (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Facebook Icon & Muscular Physique(sneakerscafe, 2014)(Mens Health, 2012)

### **6.1: Social Comparison**

Facebook is a distinct medium used for the articulation of expression, and as with any other communication method, it is just another venue where human idiosyncrasies are exhibited. As previously explained, Facebook is a felicitous environment for one to measure themselves in a social atmosphere. Members of the site admittedly spend hours deliberating what photos they should select in order to depict themselves in the finest possible light. This attitude in relation to social media has been characterised as “self-advertising”, and curiously the individuals who hone their image in this way, feel like they are singular in the process (Jay, 2012). Hence, Facebook for the self advertiser, consequently manifests itself as a backdrop for upward social comparisons, by which one’s rudimentary circadian tasks seem impotent when compared to the lives fabricated on social media. It has likewise been contended that Facebook augments body insecurities amidst its members through the proliferation of idealised or doctored imagery onto the site. In a recent inspection into Photoshopped images of men on social

media, as described by News(2013), it was discovered that a greater totality of males showcase altered photos of themselves than women (Figure 13). This ostensibly superficial reanimation of the self compounds Facebook as a sphere for upward social comparisons, not only in social activeness, but in body image. Some of the findings of the study are as follows:

- Nearly one third of men indicated they Photoshopped imagery of themselves, compared to 28% of women.
- 36% of men deliberately posted uncomplimentary photos of their friends to enhance their own appearance, compared to just 26% of women.
- 40% of men between 20 and 24 admitted to digitally enhancing photos of themselves

(News, 2013)

The spreading of idealised imagery throughout Facebook almost resembles the dissemination of the idealised male form in popular media. Instead of upward comparisons to male models or actors, people are comparing themselves to digitally enhance versions of their friends. Social comparison theory affirms that peers are relevant comparison targets, and those with low levels of body satisfaction are more likely to internalise an idealised body shape upon viewing idealised imagery.



**Figure 13:** Attempt at Self Augmenting(Jordan, 2012)

both men and women perceive themselves as less physically attractive after viewing photographs of highly attractive people(Oxley, 2010).

As discussed in the previous chapter, most people take an “impression management” approach when composing a Facebook profile. Individuals diligently cull the most alluring images of themselves for exhibition, any physical imperfections are diminished in order to create the ideal physical version of their body. It can be deduced that Facebook has the capacity to contribute to general body insecurities through social comparison, with the absence of relevant information, people will make upward comparisons to the idealised images on the site.

Blechert & Nickert(2009, Pg. 910-911) conducted a recent study comprising of participants suffering from body dysmorphia, social comparison theory and idealised images of the body. The data suggests that those with the disorder are greatly influenced by social factors. The sample combined those suffering from bulimia nervosa(BN) and a control, viewing peers rather than idealised models, while allowing for upward and downward social comparisons. Those suffering from BN had greater fixation times on imagery where the body fat of the coequal was lower, whereas the control showed no digression or preference for the imagery that exhibited lower or higher body fat. The study deduced that the afflicted were making upward social comparisons to those with lower body fat, hence governing deteriorating body satisfaction in those with BN. Additionally, the stricken demonstrated lower satisfaction with their own photographed image, after constructing upward social comparisons with what they treated as their ideal. An insight into the psyche of the participants with BN, awarded an explanation into why they were making upward social comparisons to the ideal. Conclusively, it was deemed the upward comparisons were made for self enhancement aspirations, with the decline in body satisfaction serving as motivation for control and manipulation over the body. In this instance it can be ascertained that Facebook has the potential to feed the more serious elements of the Adonis Complex. Members of the site with dysmorphic disorders, are inclined to make upward comparisons with their peers, lowering body satisfaction, ultimately motivating them to feed the disorder.

Amidst a more comprehensive understanding of how comparing oneself in a social context can impact upon their body image, the effects of continued objectification of the self in an online environment will now be determined.

## **6.2: We Are What We Do**

As previously discussed, self perception theory speculates that an individual procures their temperament and mindset through the surveillance of their own behaviour, not through the dictation of their inherent moral judgement. Acknowledging this, Facebook has ripened into a site where self objectification is a typical endeavor, and where sentient humans have been reconstituted as physical beings or objects(Whitbourne, 2013). Through the strenuous reproduction of remodeled images(identity misrepresentation), self perception theory would contend that the individual is contributing to the long-term objectification of the self. As previously considered, there has been a boost in the crusade for muscularity among western males due to the seepage of the idealised male form into the prevailing media archetype.

Healthy college males are proclaiming themselves as underweight, although they are within the normal weight range, with the prevalent consensus being an aspired 28 pound weight gain (Grieve and Helmick, 2008, Pg. 289). This intensification of body consciousness among males can be attributed to self objectification theory, whereby the individual is mindful of observations by others, culminating in an intrinsic cognisance of the physical self. Hence, merely entering the world of Facebook would cause an increase in self objectification, and through the refinement of the self in imagery on the site, individuals are further compounding their objectification. A study by Grieve & Helmick concluded:

men high in self-objectification reported a greater drive for muscularity and increased levels of muscle dysmorphia symptoms than men low in self-objectification.(Grieve & Helmick, 2008, Pg. 295).

The ongoing push for muscularity can be equated to the Hollywood classic exemplar of physical perfection. Just like the movie star who is employing acute methods to achieve somatic perfection, objectified males are capable resorting to the unhealthy behaviours associated with muscle dysmorphia. Anabolic steroid use, excessive dieting, social impairment and depression are all typical traits of muscle dysmorphia, possibly implicating the Adonis Complex in languishing physical and mental health of those afflicted. With the clearer understanding of the impact of self objectification, the group context of social media must be delved into in order to determine whether it has the potentiality to exacerbate any the adverse effects compounded by of continued objectification.

### **6.3: Group Influence**

Social media has been shown to harvest a setting where mental efficiency slumps and the fostering of narrow mindedness materialises. The accumulation of group pressures may be constructing a groupthink or herd mentality amidst social media consumers, leading to a decline in moral intuition, sequentially culminating in an online demeanor that digresses from that of the physical world. As discussed earlier, social heuristics and groupthink have coerced Facebook into a backdrop where decisiveness and moralistic ideals are impacted upon by social demands. According to Blumenfeld:

when individuals judge a particular behaviour or actions to be morally wrong, the organisational environment-that is, the perceived attitudes and behaviors of peers or co-workers can severely neutralise their previously held moral judgement(Blumenfeld, 2005, Pg. 3).

This is why cyberbullying is so prevalent amidst social networking sites, individuals often take actions that are consistent with the bureaucratic architecture. Social learning theory contends that those who are inherently contentious hold a higher social rank, enforcing the act



**Figure 14:** Illustration of Cyberbullying(Joseph, 2013)

of bullying as it allocates a sense of inclusion or belonging(Blumenfeld, 2005, Pg. 2)(Figure 14). Insecurity begets insecurity, as the self-doubt affiliated with bullying sustains the concerns relating to body image. The previous chapter profiled the quantity of males in anguish from the effects of cyberbullying, which relays the information that the

sufferer is inherently flawed. The adolescent, surfacing from the complexities intrinsic to physical growth, may be unable to distinguish between ostensibly trivial assertions and the entire perspective. Consequently, the victim may begin to subjugate their body in order to attune to the accepted paradigm, as they have little control over the extrinsic impetus compounding their melancholy. Once this manipulation mutates into a sweeping eating disorder, the victim is incapable of objectively perceiving their own body, leading to a control mentality whereby extreme methods are deemed necessary to achieve the ideal. Vesker(2011) describes how The *BBC* reported that approximately half of those suffering from an eating disorder expressed bullying as a reinforcing component. According to Veksler(2011):

Bullying can also cause Body Dysmorphic Disorder, a body image disorder defined by a neurotic, painstaking preoccupation with a subtle or imagined physical anomaly. The disorder usually cultivates during adolescence and treatment (usually cognitive-behavioral therapy) is arduous. Body dysmorphic disorder is on the rise.

Bullying, no matter the medium in which it is channeled, has the capability of supplementing the degrading facets of mental health.

Those students who are face-to-face bullied, and/or cyberbullied, face increased risk for depression, PTSD, and suicidal attempts and ideation(Veksler, 2011).

It can be deduced that the groupthink psychology of Facebook is subsidizing cyberbullying which, in turn, sequentially exacerbates perceived body insecurities among the victimised. In terms of the Adonis Complex, contributing factors consist of bullying and severe stress, making Facebook a quintessential feeding ground for the fixation. Amidst an acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of cyberbullying, the self esteem of an individual in relation to their idealised self will now be examined.

#### 6.4: Body Confidence

It has been demonstrated how Facebook can negatively affect an individual's self esteem. Self discrepancy theory is pertinent in terms of body image, due to the exposure of the self to idealised images, whereby the individual falls short of their idealised self, conjuring negative emotions. In terms of body image, analysts customarily focus on how one distinguishes themselves (actual self) and how an individual would prefer to be regarded (ideal/ought self) (Vartanian, 2012, Pg. 711). Acknowledging the conceivable internalisation



**Figure 15:** Illustration of Self Discrepancy (dietachudnutie, 2013)

of the ideal set by the continued objectification of the self through social media, one could embody the negativity affiliated with the persistent comparison of the ideal to the actual self. An unambiguous discrepancy between this duality of the self, often elicits dejection because the standard has been infringed upon, conclusively feeding any anxieties concerning the body. According to Apatkau (2013) in relation to Facebook

representation:

the medium abstracts and mediates the self, so there isn't a perfect correlation between the two. These expectations and mediations create the opportunity to intentionally diverge from the actual self and present in a manner more similar to the ideal and/or ought self (Apatkau, 2013) (Figure 15).

The resulting effect of one constructing their digital ideal is lowering of self esteem or depression. Facebook ultimately serves as a sphere where one fashions an ideal self and internalises many of the representations they themselves formulated, through this action the



self becomes is measurement against its ideal. Studies by Vartanian(2012, Pg. 712) have found that men exhibit a tantamount of discrepancies, in terms of the body, when compared to women. Assessments of the male body through self discrepancy theory have shown men would ideally choose a body that is more muscular than their current, much like women aspire to be thinner (Vartanian, 2012, Pg. 712). Theoretically, observing altered images of the self, may be widening the gap between one's actual and ideal. It can be ascertained that the development on an online identity in the form of a Facebook profile, one is representing themselves in an idealised form, creating discrepancies through the altering and posting idealised images, ultimately lower body confidence through continuous objectification of the self.

It has been discovered that if a discrepancy between the two is detected, the individual will try and mitigate it by engaging compensatory actions (Vartanian, 2012, Pg. 711). Hence, a discrepancy from the ideal can be seen as a contributing component to body dysmorphic disorders, such as muscle dysmorphia. Harrison(2001) conducted a study investigating if such discrepancies have the potential to influence the more malevolent facets of bulimia or anorexia. It was identified a divergence from the ideal self results in the emanation of dissatisfaction and disappointment (bulimic attributes) and divergence from the ought self acted as an impetus for improvement (anorexia). Harrison(2001, Pg. 294) contends:

Although males typically suffer from eating disorders less frequently than females, the results of the replication indicated that males with discrepancies were just as likely as females to engage in disordered eating.

Thus, it can be ascertained that through the engagement of Facebook the male form can be subjected to an idealised form of the self, which conceivably widens the discrepancy between the idealised, ought and actual self, conclusively feeding the Adonis Complex. Through the analysis of social media in the context of the physically apprehensive person, an examination of effect of social media on the narcissistic individual will now be delved into.

## 6.5: Body Narcissism

As discussed in the previous chapter, narcissism has been coupled with the self promoting convention of Facebook. Those who avail of Facebook in order to popularize their image often foster narcissistic characteristics, with individuals prone to flaunt their narcissism through the use of imagery on social media. Reider(2014) in a recent study argues that those who commit themselves emotionally to Facebook where more disposed to body apprehension, by which the narcissistic traits are serving as a catalyst for consciousness on a physical level. Rosen revealed that the imprudent use of Facebook exacerbates the narcissistic element of one's personality, merely by engaging with self promotion or exhibitionism (Science Daily, 2011). Contradictory to those with bodily discontent, the narcissist has an unashamed illustration of their own body and are subject to facets of vanity. Egan & Mccorkindale(2007, Pg. 2106) affirm:



**Figure 16: Gym Self Photograph(Motorcat, 2013)**

Persons higher in narcissism prefer to look at themselves in the mirror, but this behaviour could be construed as vanity, as it places greater emphasis on physical self-presentation.

Narcissistic individuals prioritise physical appearance and sexuality, often taking an interest in aesthetically enlarging endeavors such as physical fitness or appearance enhancing. This is due to the high correlation between vanity and narcissism, championing the physical self with heightened importance(Egan & Mccorkindale, 2007, Pg. 2107). Narcissism and self love are accelerating among men, with the egotistical view of the self definitively leading to a delicate self image. The male cosmetics sector is undeviatingly increasing as is the compulsion for male ascribed plastic surgery(Cohen, 2012). With Facebook contributing to the pattern of exhibitionism and self promotion, the genesis of the narcissistic male, shaping his body to conform the idealised paradigm, may be taking place. This can be seen in gyms globally, with individuals snapping photos of themselves during a workout, in order to seek validation that “their bodies looks good” (Heinrich, 2013)(Figure 16). As the narcissist is more likely to seek validation through social media, narcissism can be construed as augmenting the viewpoint

that “our bodies are objects that are on display and exist to be judged,” (Heinrich, 2013). The gym selfie becomes precarious when the individual is fixated on the aesthetic rather than well-being, adding to the foreshadowed stigma that our bodies should conform to a certain ideal in order to be healthy. “Fitspiration” selfies repeatedly show the body in a harmonised depiction, adding to the proliferation of idealised forms onto Facebook, further compounding the socially accepted aspirational form<sup>45</sup>.

In summary, as social media generates modernistic self promoters and narcissists, vanity dominates as the accepted protocol in order to conform to the aforementioned idealised construction of the self on the site. As the male narcissist is infatuated with their physical representation due to a delicate self image, it can be ascertained that the formulation of narcissistic traits on Facebook may be feeding the Adonis Complex. The disposition toward aesthetic endeavours can be seen as one pursuing an ideal form, conclusively bolstering body insecurities and aggravating tendencies toward reforming it. The gym selfie serves as validation that one is ultimately tailoring their body for objectification, placing encumbrance on the viewer through self discrepancy and the actor through sustained objectification of their body.

The ambition of this chapter was to determine whether the integration of social media into one’s rudimentary life would have an impingement on their physical confidence. Through the comparison of the two fields it can be articulated that the prominence of the supposed connection is prevailing. Hence, Facebook has the capacity to feed the Adonis Complex in diverse ways, depending ones depiction of the self on the site and the extent of their narcissistic traits. By way of simple engagement with social media, one exposes oneself to a precarious environment for somatic assurance.

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4 Selfie is a self portrait photograph often shared through social media.

5 Fitspiration is a term describing the inspiration to attain a level of fitness.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

In this paper a compilation of correlational and comparative data was accumulated in order to demonstrate the correlation between the *Facebook* and the Adonis Complex. A synoptic analysis concerning the recent surge in pertinent male body issues, emanating from the dissemination of idealised imagery within the conventional media, was chronicled to illustrate the ramifications of such physical glorification. The rise of the Adonis Complex can be ascribed to the objectification of the human body in contemporary culture, consequently propagating the archetypal male form depicted as fashionable, in many facets of modern society. As detailed, the Hollywood movie industry fostered physical idealism of masculinity as far back as the 1950's with the release of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, through the manifestation of the idyllic physique of *Marlon Brando*. Thereupon, an abundance of the classic masculine exemplar were cultivated throughout the 1970's, due to what was regarded as the "remasculation of America" as a reaction to the American drubbing in the Vietnam War. A profusion of muscle bound adonis's penetrated Hollywood screen combating those who deviated from the conventional American ideals. The advertising industry also recognised the commercial potential of male objectification, with established brands like *Diet Coke* employing muscularity in order to sell their commodity. This ultimately culminated in the idealisation of the mesomorphic body shape, with empirical data satisfying the proposed media repercussions on male body image.

Through the formulation of the consequences caused by the proliferation of male objectified images into the mainstream media, the psychology of *Facebook* needed to be scrutinised to verify if this site was a subsidising factor of male body insecurities. Several phenomena were uncovered that illustrated the effects of *Facebook* on the cognition of its members. The regulation of one's physical appearance demonstrated the conceivable bias the more alluring members of society garner, and how one will often modify imagery to enhance their more attractive assets or diminish the subordinate. Self perception theory revealed how one acquires a strong sense of self, through observing themselves from a third person perspective, consequently creating an objectifying environment for the members of *Facebook* through identity manipulation. The examination of the groupthink mindset of social media revealed how bullying has the capacity to accelerate in a social media environment. A herd mentality among Facebook member's causes a degradation of mental efficiency, culminating in a lethargic mentality and a decline in moral responsibility. Another necessary aspect of compatible *Facebook* psychology was the process in which impressions are formed on the

site. This exploration conceded that how one presents themselves through imagery is crucial for making favourable impressions, as a friend's comments on presented imagery will heighten the overall impression delineated of the individual. Imprudent undertaking of social media into one's rudimentary life can increase the level of narcissism within the individual. Those who ranked higher on the NPI scale often amass facets of vanity ultimately compounding physical awareness. The individual who adopts *Facebook* to self promote often demonstrate higher narcissistic traits and showcase themselves through imagery, sequentially contributing to the physicality of the site. Social media has repeatedly been related to the mental health of its proprietaries, indicatively in the realm of self esteem. Although initial research had indicated that constructing one's ideal self in an online context can enhance confidence, self discrepancy theory would reveal how comparisons to the ideal can conclusively cause discomfort, due to the emergent feeling of guilt and failure. Through the examination of the origin of the Adonis Complex and the diverse cognitive phenomena social media acquaints, a basis for linking these two areas of research was conceived.

The concluding phase of the paper explored the capability of *Facebook* of weighing upon male body image, through the feeding of the Adonis complex. The first area of comparison was analysed through the concept of social comparison. Research revealing the extent of male altered imagery, disclosed the prominent insecurity of men on the site and illustrated how *Facebook* has the potential to metamorphosize into a breeding ground for the permeating of augmented ideal imagery. Through the diminishment of physical imperfections the average social media consumer will make upward comparisons, culminating in a lower body image, hence feeding the Adonis Complex. Social comparison also was illustrated as a probable contributing factor to the more serious factors of the Adonis Complex, whereby the individual who had facets of body dysmorphia had higher regard for their interpretation of ideal imagery. The ramifications of prolonged self objectification, where the individual consciously amends images of the self, revealed how these behaviours can reconstitute the self as a physical being or object. Increased levels of objectification have been associated with an inflated pursuance of muscularity in men, which assuredly has the potential to contribute to male bodily insecurities. The correlation between the groupthink mentality of *Facebook* and prospect of bullying on the site was authenticated in chapter two. Analysis demonstrated how cyberbullying can have an adverse reverberation on one's body image and how one may attune their body to conform to the physical paradigm. Research also revealed how bullying is a bequeathing influence of body dysmorphia, ultimately nourishing body hesitancy among

male *Facebook* members. Self discrepancy theory was further delved into to in order to specify how the medium abstracts and mediates the self, and how one's perception of the physical self can be degraded through a comparison with their constructed ideal. Representations of the ideal were also shown to foster the more malevolent aspects of body dysmorphia. Finally, the effects of social media on the physically assured narcissist was analysed, to incorporate the influencing social media elements on narcissistic traits. It was revealed that the narcissist is inherently vain and is typically in pursuit of physical perfection, and regularly post images of themselves online for validation. This besiege of "Fitspiration" imagery onto the online domain is conceivably exacerbating perceived physical flaws in the less bodily assured, and heightening the pursuit of muscularity through the narcissists self objectification.

Conclusively, it can be deemed that *Facebook* has the propensity to augment perceived body image flaws among its male members. Relating the psychology of the site to the physical consciousness of the self, it can be delineated that social media further objectifies masculinity merely through the contemplation of a friend's imagery and the representation of the self. As previously stated, the Adonis Complex is an all encompassing concept used to characterise the escalated awareness of the somatic self among the male populace. Consequently, it can be hypothesised that *Facebook* is feeding the Adonis Complex through various ostensibly harmless behaviours on the site, ultimately heightening the awareness of the self, propagated by the mainstream media. It is vital to declare that due to the fragmented research in the area of social media and body image, and the limiting factors of secondary research, a further comprehensive analysis of *Facebook* and the Adonis Complex is required.

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