

Lauren Holguin

Mrs. Finnerty

2/24/06

Draft 4

What are the Psychological and Ethical Implications of Cosmetic Surgery in Modern American Society?

“How often have we looked into the mirror and wished that we could change something about our appearance? A prominent nose, bags under the eyes, wrinkles, and fine lines. With our society’s consistent emphasis on youth and beauty it is no wonder that we find ourselves attracted to the possibilities offered by cosmetic surgery. The endless search for physical perfection is creating a revolution of new anti-aging remedies.” Daniel Man, M.D. (Man and Faye 2).

Aging is the normal process of growing older, which everyone experiences (Maine 5).

America’s culture however, embraces unrealistic standards of eternal youth and physical perfection. The overwhelming growth of cosmetic surgery is reflected by the increasingly high statistics of people looking to get plastic surgery. In 2004, the American society of plastic surgeons (A.S.P.S.) gave statistics that cosmetic surgery was an 8 billion dollar industry in one year alone. A.S.P.S. also finalized statistics in 1992 showing that the total number of recorded cosmetic surgeries performed was 320,487. In 2004 that number drastically climbed to 1,120,048. The unrealistic and narrow standards of beauty proposed by the mainstream media, is a major contributing factor in why cosmetic surgery has become such a successful and accepted practice. The growing demand for cosmetic surgery in America shows that the majority of individuals who make up the

American culture, ethically accept cosmetic surgery and recognize an ideal standard of beauty. This standard affects individuals by creating pressures that are reflected by ones peers, family, and career.

### Relevance

As a young female in current American society, it is almost impossible not to compare myself to models and celebrities who are constantly being admired in the media's spotlight. I chose to base my exhibition off of the implications of cosmetic surgery, both ethically and psychologically, because of the personal relevance that the promotion of cosmetic surgery has in my life. The promotion of cosmetic surgery is represented through movies, magazines, television, and commercial advertisements, all of which are daily factors of my life. The powerful promotion of cosmetic surgery can affect anyone living in the United States.

### Reconstructive vs. Cosmetic

There is a difference between reconstructive and cosmetic surgery. Reconstructive procedures maintain or provide essentials for a physically healthy body, while plastic surgery is used to enhance ones appearance (Gilman 4). Reconstructive surgery is performed to help improve one's health. An example of a reconstructive procedure would be a man who has an abnormally large or defected nose resulting in difficulty breathing. A reconstructive surgery may be performed in hopes of improving the man's breathing for a healthier life style. Cosmetic surgery, however, can be illustrated by a man who has an "unattractive" or prominent nose, causing no physical harm or health problems, yet wants nose reshaping despite his perfectly functional nose. His hopes for getting surgery

are for improvement in appearance, not correcting a health issue. Cosmetic surgery is driven from superficial wants versus health threatening needs.

### Background History

Cosmetic surgery is a practice that dates back thousands of years. Some of the first procedures included rhinoplasty, commonly known as a nose job, and skin repair (Man and Faye 3). In India, a frequent punishment for adultery in the thirteenth century was amputation of the nose. Consequently, demand soon grew for physicians with knowledge in surgical replacement (Nolan 22). India originally viewed cosmetic surgery as a way to fix or hide from the consequences of adultery, while cosmetic surgery in Europe, specifically Germany and France, was viewed as a way of making the body beautiful in hopes of restoring mental health in the 19th century (Gilman 19).

Plastic surgery has undoubtedly evolved and improved over the years. One reason why plastic surgery has changed so significantly over time is because the idea of what is beautiful also changes. In America's culture during the 1920s and 1930s, advertising pushed the message that a cultural shift had been made from inner beauty to superficial. Ugliness was looked down upon, and in 1910, Elizabeth Arden opened America's first modern beauty salon. A huge growth in the cosmetic industry occurred as a reaction to America's praise of superficiality. In 1931 alone 760 million cosmetic products were sold (Tebbel 49). In the 1950s a full and curvaceous figure was the ideal look for women. In 1954 Miss America was 5'8" and 133 pounds, today the average Miss America is 5'8" and 116 pounds. Twenty seven years ago the typical fashion model weighed 8% less than average and in 1990 that number grew to 23%. The current ideal fashion model today is

6' and 123 pounds and the average woman is 5'4" and 140 pounds (D. Gilman, 73). The 1990s encouraged a more muscular body and today, thinness is associated with beauty (Cash and Pruzinsky 18).

#### Procedures and Cost

The expansion of the cosmetic surgery industry is shown through statistics given by A.S.P.S. of the top five cosmetic surgery procedures in 2004.

<u>Top five</u>	<u>number of patients</u>	<u>Cost</u>
1) Liposuction	270,000	\$2,220
2) Breast augmentation	253,000	\$3,370
3) Face lift	77,000	\$4,822
4) Rhinoplasty (nose reshaping)	47,450	\$3,330
5) Eyelid surgery	34,000	\$2,520

(American Society of Cosmetic Surgery). These top five procedures account for 76% of all surgical procedures performed (Man and Faye 6).

#### Growth of Plastic Surgery/ Increased Access

Cosmetic surgery has become one of the most popular fads in America today. One reason as to why cosmetic surgery has grown in popularity is because it is no longer reserved for the wealthy. Women and men of all age, race, and class are looking to plastic surgery for improvement in appearance, and ultimately improved self esteem (Cash and Pruzinsky 422). A.S.P.S. reports that more than 8.7 million cosmetic surgeries were performed in the U.S. in 2003, up 32% from 2002. Every year the number of people receiving cosmetic surgery climbs, implying that the demand for plastic surgery is both

prominent and on the rise (Maine 101). As the demand for plastic surgery rises, so does the demand for surgeons. At the end of World War two only 100 plastic surgeons were in practice. In 1965 that number grew to 1,133, and in 1992 3,850 plastic surgeons were licensed for a total of 320,487 cosmetic procedures performed that year (D. Gilman, 79).

Increased access of cosmetic surgery makes it easier to pursue now than ever before. Even shopping centers house clinics that are run by plastic surgeons (Kelly and Maine 101). These clinics give Americans the idea that cosmetic surgery is an ordinary part of everyone's lives. A.S.P.S. conducted a survey in 2001 showing that 8.5 million Americans received cosmetic surgery in that year alone (Man and Faye 3). In 1992, the number of female patients who received breast implants was 32,607. In 1997 that number amazingly grew to 122,285 as shown by a survey given by A.S.P.S (Tebbel 40).

Growing numbers of patients receiving cosmetic surgery not only reflect the women who are seeking it, but men as well. A.S.P.S.'s statistics showed that in 1999 men represented a small percentage of patients receiving cosmetic surgery. In 2001, however, more than one million men got plastic surgery increasing from previous years. Today, the number of men receiving plastic surgery continues to rise at an astonishing rate (Man and Faye 3). Looking to get cosmetic surgery for success in one's job is a large reason as to why many people, especially men, look to plastic surgery. A research study conducted by A.S.P.S. reported that in 1997 more men than ever before were wanting and receiving plastic surgery. The most popular procedures that men requested were eyelid surgery, nose jobs, face lifts, and liposuction. The intention of looking younger and more powerful

to compete and be more successful in the work place, is what motivates most men to cosmetic surgery. Australian cosmetic surgeon Dr. Douglas Mcmanany believes that 60% of male cosmetic surgery is motivated by wanting to elongate his career (Tebbel 43).

Women have also shown through studies that they feel attractiveness can help or hinder a career. An article in the Wall Street Journal suggested that people judge abilities of others by appearance. The article also stated that attractive people are often considered brighter and appearance can make or break a career (Man and Faye 4). A shocking 92% of women believe that appearance affects the success of an individual, as reported by A.S.P.S (Tebbel 42).

It is believed that people behave differently to those who are more attractive than others. This method of understanding is called the social expectancy theory, according to Cash and Pruzinsky, the authors of Body Image. It argues that a cultures value's influences the perceptions of others, which then influences the behavior of others (Cash and Pruzinsky 14). Most places of employment will not accept unwashed and shabby appearances proving that even employment reflects standards of beauty. (Marianne). One surgeon reflects on American society's values as a competitive culture. If individuals look old and unattractive, then those people will be treated differently in a negative way (Blum 270).

Physical appearance influences social perceptions and behaviors. How people view their body image, affects how they emotionally experience interactions with others (Blum 88). Cosmetic surgery will improve a person's confidence and overall success

Holguin 7

only if the individual's body image and self esteem is enhanced. A person with good self esteem and confidence is much more likely to have many good relationships with others.

Success in one's career can also be enhanced by an individual's self confidence (Cash and Pruzinsky 424). Thomas Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky, authors of Body Image, and professors of psychology, believe that cosmetic surgery patients experience a significant reduction in dissatisfaction with the specific feature operated on following the surgery. Although the surgery on the specific feature may cause higher self esteem, the person's overall confidence might only be heightened in that specific feature. Thus, cosmetic surgery may be a good body image treatment for people with specific concerns, but for those who are dissatisfied with their body image as a whole, cosmetic surgery may not improve the patient's self esteem (Cash and Pruzinsky 425). ■

#### The Media/ Psychological Affects

The media is the largest psychological motivation for one to seek cosmetic surgery. Both teenagers and adults seek plastic surgery as a reaction to the media's narrow standard of beauty (Tebbel 45). The media portrays an idealized physique for men and women equally. Women look to be thin and big busted, while men want to be bigger and more muscular (Gunter and Wykes 5). According to Barrie Gunter, and Maggie Wykes, authors of The Media and Body Image, the cultivation theory argues that the media represents social reality as stereotyped and repetitive. Regular exposure to these images "cultivates" people's consciences. This gives the idea that certain images are the norm (Gunter and Wykes 149). The cultivation theory would explain how and why the media affects so many individuals. The media produces models and celebrities that people

Holguin 8

compare themselves to on a regular basis. As a reaction, many individuals think that they should look like what "beauty" is supposed to be according to the media. It is very

unreasonable for one to compare to a model or celebrity because both models and celebrities are presented as flawless, and realistically no one is flawless. Poor body image is a common affect when comparing oneself to a model, which can then lead to wanting plastic surgery. Researchers Gonzalez Levin and Smolak reported that in 1995 people who watch more than eight hours of television per week showed greater body image dissatisfaction compared to those who did not watch as much television (Gunter and Wykes 160). This proves that the media directly affects self perception (Gunter and Wykes 138). Media is a reflection of a culture's values, and a culture's values influence individual's values and behaviors. Therefore, if a culture's values are unrealistic and superficial, it is likely that an individual's values will be as well (Cash and Pruzinsky 19).

A study conducted by A.S.P.S. shown in Psychology Today, found that in 1997 after only three minutes of looking at pictures of models in magazines, 70% of the readers felt depressed (Blum 79). The average model weighs 25% less than the average woman (Tebbel 21), which is a direct explanation as to why so many people feel depressed after looking at pictures of models. It is not realistic to advertise and promote models that are thinner than the average person, models should represent the majority of America. Healthy and average individuals should be used as models, not unrealistic images of what beauty supposed be. Unrealistic standards of beauty in American society have resulted in 56% of American women found to be unhappy with their physical appearance. Dissatisfaction with ones appearance is motivation to diet, increase use of cosmetics, and

Holguin 9

pursue cosmetic surgery in hopes of being satisfied with one's body image (Man and Faye 3).

A highly rated ABC family television show called Extreme Makeover inspired more than 10,000 people who called producers with hopes of being a part of the show after only one season (Kelly and Maine 101). The message of Extreme Makeover is that attractiveness creates success. The cosmetic surgery field is highly promoted from media messages like those that Extreme Makeover presents on a “family television channel” (Kelly and Maine 104). Another hit television show which promotes plastic surgery was shown from a Fox T.V. series called The Swan. This show takes normal looking women, who are referred to on the show as “ugly ducklings,” and uses cosmetic surgery to ready them for competition in the Swan Beauty Pageant. Shows like The Swan and Extreme Makeover, promote cosmetic surgery and gives superficial impressions that beauty is key to success and happiness (Kelly and Maine 101).

Doctor Virginia Blum believes that media, (movies in particular) is linked to the production of idealized bodies that Americans want to create and sustain. Blum reflects on the false imagery being promoted by arguing that people do not think about the effects of film editing. Film editing can change an imperfection to perfection (Blum 150). Marxists of Frankfurt School viewed the media as a way of putting ideas into a naive audience. The ideas being presented by the powerful media become the ones being accepted and supported by society (Wykes and Gunter 163).

Another effective way of promoting cosmetic surgery is a new technology called video imaging. Video imaging first became popular in the 1980s and allows patients to

Holguin 10

view what they would supposedly look like after the specific procedures had been performed. An advantage of video imaging is it can increase the patient’s trust in their

surgeon, therefore increasing confidence into the cosmetic surgery that they are about to receive (Blum 180). A disadvantage of video imaging is the promotion of an image that a patient hopes to see but may not become in the final product.

### Parents and Social Influence on Body Image

Parents can also influence their children psychologically in regards to plastic surgery. Parents can have a psychological impact on their child's appearance by selecting and commenting on their child's clothing and appearance and telling the child what they should and should not eat (Cash and Pruzinsky 69). Attractive children are also thought to be treated with more care, favor, and attention than those who are not as attractive. Attractive adults also receive more attention, positive interaction, help and cooperation (Gunter and Wykes 16). Role models from one's childhood can also lead to low self-esteem by comparing them self to a mother, sister, cousin, or friend. Having a sister who is perceived to be more attractive can lead to a negative psychological effect (Gunter and Wykes 143).

Body image development is a major contributing factor psychologically for cosmetic surgery. Thomas Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky, authors of Body Image, note the influences on an individual when considering to under go plastic surgery. They include developmental experiences such as appearance related teasing, and socio-cultural factors like the mass media's depictions of physical beauty (Cash and Pruzinsky 424). Doctors and researchers have both questioned the age at which body dissatisfaction begins.

Holguin 11

Researcher Harry Sullivan believes that a child's development of self begins when the mother begins to show love (Magill 525). Other experts believe that body image is rooted

in childhood. Children as young as six express body image dissatisfaction and weight concerns. It has also been observed that girls in late elementary school (fourth grade and beyond) show more concern about their body than younger girls (Cash and Pruzinsky 65). People are able to distinguish how their minds are unique by the ages of six to eight. This ability enables people to reflect on experiences, behavior, and observing others feelings, and beliefs, which leads to the foundation of self (Cash and Pruzinsky 31). Many agree that self esteem is established during childhood, and that being made fun of as a child can lead to long-term insecurity (Gunter and Wykes 147).

Others believe that body image develops in the early teens. Young girls, especially around the age of thirteen have been observed to show low body image esteem (Gunter and Wykes 4). Teenagers especially value their body and image as a source of their identity. Depending on ones appearance as a source of identity can lead to intensified insecurity, but for most identity is crucial to a persons sense of self (Kelly and Maine 18-19). Teenage rhinoplasty is one of the most common procedures for teens. Doctor Daniel Man recommends cosmetic surgery for teenagers that are self conscious about a certain body part. Doctor Man believes if self conscious teens do not get plastic surgery, low self confidence and a negative attitude may reflect in the teen's relationships and schoolwork (Man and Faye 101). For teenagers especially, peers can be a huge factor of influence on body image (Cash and Pruzinsky 69).

Holguin 12

### Race/ Ethnicity and Body Image

There have been many studies focusing on the possibility of race and ethnicity having an impact on individuals and their want for cosmetic surgery. A study run by Botta in 2000

compared white European American girls with African American girls regarding their body image perceptions. African American girls seemed to be more satisfied with their body image as a whole compared to white American girls. Most African American girls that were studied had a larger personal ideal body size than the white American girls. Both races were similarly found to both compare themselves to idealized celebrity and television images (Gunter and Wykes 200). There have also been theories that African American males are more satisfied with their appearance and bodies than other ethnic groups (Cash and Pruzinsky 77). No ethnic group is immune to developing negative body image. White, Asian, and Hispanic cultures all value thinness and believe thinness to be linked to femininity. Asian and Hispanic cultures are known to value thinness more than African American females because African Americans tend to be built larger and are more likely to associate positively with a larger body image ideal (Cash and Pruzinsky 169).

#### Personality Traits of Cosmetic Surgery Patients

Some people are more vulnerable than others to socio-cultural pressures on appearance. People who compare themselves to others on a regular basis tend to have greater body image dissatisfaction (Gunter and Wykes 142). What really drives certain people to cosmetic surgery compared to those who do not seek it? One surgeon believes that it is pure desperation that drives someone to cosmetic surgery. To actually make an

Holguin 13

appointment and follow through with the purpose of getting altered with no guarantee that the outcome will be the way you want it, is followed through by people who have truly tried everything else in attempts to heighten their self esteem (Blum 165).

Cosmetic surgery patients show a certain and common trait. A characteristic that all cosmetic surgery patients share is poor body image. Patients usually hold their bodies as a

defining characteristic of themselves (Cash and Pruzinsky 423). Plastic surgeon John Norris categorizes plastic surgery patients into four categories. The first is a patient who is driven to plastic surgery with realistic motivations. Realistic motivations are driven by individuals who want cosmetic surgery for themselves in attempt to improve their inner self with having improved body image after surgery. The second category is patients who seek cosmetic surgery in order to please others. Third is potential patient's that are children brought by their parents who want a change in their child's appearance. The fourth and last category is patients who Doctor Norris describes as "flighty." Flighty patients want cosmetic surgery for bizarre reasons such as a woman wanting a nose job because her favorite actress had a nose job as well. Doctor Norris refuses to operate on patients who fall into the second, third, and fourth categories (D. Gilman, 76).

Another possible reason for those to seek cosmetic surgery may be due to a disorder called Body Dimorphic Disorder, also known as BDD. Signs of BDD include an individual having a slight physical flaw, yet their concern of it is excessive and over concerned. It is a delusional problem and is classified as a psychotic disorder (Cash and Pruzinsky 312). People with BDD frequently try to treat their appearance concerns with cosmetic alterations. 7% of cosmetic surgery patients met diagnostic criteria for BDD in

Holguin 14

1999 (Cash and Pruzinsky 476). Guinevere Turner, author of "Body Image and conformity," argues that all body modifications come from the desire for attention and that people who receive cosmetic surgery feel the need to conform to society's standards of beauty (Turner).

It is imperative for a plastic surgeon to understand the motives of exactly why the patient is looking to plastic surgery (Man and Faye 245). In order for patients to understand

what their motives are, patients need to first realize the difference between internal and external needs; between psychological and cosmetic (Blum 103). There are two motivations for plastic surgery, internal and external. Internal motivations are those who are deeply self-conscious about a specific body part not only around other, but also for themselves. An example of external motivations would be a patient who wants to receive a face-lift in hopes for success in a job. Patients who hold external motivations are less likely to meet their goals after surgery. (Cash and Pruzinsky 427).

Abuse is also a possible component in the decision to get plastic surgery. Patients who have experienced abuse tend to blame physical insecurities or flaws on abuse. One woman, for example, felt that she had aged prematurely because of her experiences of abuse. She felt her aged face reflected internal damage which improved after receiving cosmetic surgery (Blum 117). The possibility of becoming addicted to plastic surgery arises in instances when patients find psychological relief after receiving surgery. People who repeatedly receive cosmetic surgery often lose sight of reality (Tebbel 45).

Holguin 15

### Ethics of Cosmetic Surgery

Ethics regarding cosmetic surgery vary widely. There are doctors who will operate on one patient, and not another, and there are people and organizations who either strongly support or disagree with the act of cosmetic surgery. Is cosmetic surgery ethical? How does a doctor determine who should and should not receive cosmetic surgery? Surgeon Daniel Man admits that he will not operate if he feels the operation should not be done. Doctor Man goes on to give an example of a patient of whom he would not operate on.

This patient was a young female who wanted extremely large breast implants. Man refuses to make implants abnormally large, and if the patient does not comply with his guidelines, then he will not accept them as a patient. Man will, however; proceed with a surgery if he feels the patient truly suffers from a physical insecurity. “As a plastic surgeon, it is my job to help people who desire a change and want to realistically look better, so they feel better about themselves” (Man and Faye 16). In Virginia Blum’s Flesh Wound’s Blum believes that plastic surgeon’s should not operate in the midst of an emotional crises (103). Most cosmetic surgeons should not and would not operate on a patient who is severely depressed or psychotic (Cash and Pruzinsky 428).

The training of a cosmetic surgeon can be a controversial issue as well. In the United States, federal laws do not govern the quality of training that a Physician receives. Federal laws do not dictate the procedures a surgeon wants to perform either. A med school grad can legally claim to be a specialist of whatever it is he/she chooses, with or without special training in that specific area. Medical directors, hospital administrators,

Holguin 16

and credentialing committees have a responsibility to help ensure that patients are treated by qualified surgeons (American Society of Plastic Surgeons).

For both doctors and patients, religion is an ethically controversial issue regarding cosmetic surgery. Dr. Robert Alan Franklyn (a plastic surgeon in the 1950s) makes a distinction between God and nature. He believes that he is here to, “Help the women that Mother Nature neglected” (Blum 87). As a surgeon in the 1950s, Franklyn dealt with many opposing views whom believed that people look the way they do and should stay that way because God made them like that. Franklyn responds “God made plastic surgeons too. He

must have had work for them to do” (Blum 87-88). In contrast to Doctor Franklyn’s view, Blum believes that cosmetic surgeons cause instabilities of identity. She believes that cosmetic surgeons participate in forgery as a way of identification, literally carving identities into the surface of the skin (Blum 164). Cosmetic surgery has been, and will continue to be ethically controversial as long as it is being practiced.

### American Society and Plastic Surgery

How a society defines what is beautiful for the physical body, reflects how the people in the society define themselves (Gilman 17). Cosmetic surgery is thriving with more demand than ever before because physical perfection is highly praised. French philosopher Guy Debord wrote The Society Of the Spectacle in 1967, attacking American societies concern with the surface of things over the meaning and content (Blum 165). Doctor Margo Maine defines society as a collective way of life. Society incorporates arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, inventions, language, media, technology,

Holguin 17

and traditions. Society is shaped through behaviors we encourage, and society also shapes us (Kelly and Maine 5). The success of cosmetic surgery reflects that enough individuals in America have agreed on standards of beauty (Blum 55). This means that the majority of individuals in America have agreed as a culture of what is and is not attractive.

### Positive and Negative Sides of Cosmetic Surgery

Receiving plastic surgery can be a positive experience. One male patient of plastic surgery reflects on receiving plastic surgery as something he truly did for himself. He believes that getting plastic surgery made him feel better about himself both physically and emotionally. He also believes that his relationships with others improved after getting

plastic surgery (Man and Faye 5). A 75 year-old woman named Pearl Knaus of Whittier California reflects on the time when she received cosmetic surgery. At the age of 52, Pearl had a face lift. “It was something I did for myself. I wasn’t pressured by others, but going through with the surgery was what I really wanted.” Pearl says that she was not going for a drastic change. She believed many people didn’t even know she had surgery following the procedure. “People just thought I looked refreshed.” Pearl had no regrets regarding her surgery and is satisfied with the outcome even though the results are now merely noticeable (Knaus).

For abused patients cosmetic surgery can mean much more than just a superficial fix. Scars of abused patients can be reminders of their experience with abuse. By getting plastic surgery, the patients feel that they are removing the pain and memory of the abuse. Some surgeons believe that for these patients searching for cosmetic surgery is

Holguin 18

positive because that means that they are ready to put the past behind them and want to look and to feel better again (Bingham). A.S.P.S. had a recent clinic study which showed that women who have had a facelift may live more than ten years longer than those who have not had one because facelift patients generally take better care of themselves by maintaining their overall health and fitness (Man and Faye 5).

There are also many reasons as to why someone should not receive cosmetic surgery. It has been found that women with eating disorders, who have received plastic surgery, have increased dissatisfaction with their body image after surgery because the psychological issues that they are facing are still present. A psychological fix, is not guaranteed by plastic surgery (Kelly and Maine 103). By operating on a specific flawed

feature a patient may still feel that after surgery their overall appearance is still not improved. Going into cosmetic surgery is always a risk because the patient has no idea what they will actually look like when the procedure is complete (Cash and Pruzinsky 425). Dr. Cholm Williams of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons reported that 70 deaths in the U.S. have been linked to a cosmetic procedure called Mega Liposuction. This procedure removes more than 5 liters of fat in just one session which alters the body's chemistry and can cause a heart attack (Tebbel 48). Pain, numbness, bruising, and discoloration are common effects of cosmetic surgery that can last up to six months after an operation has been done. Face lifts can also damage nerves, permanently numbing the face. Health experts estimate that the serious side effect percentage following breast implant surgery ranges from 30-50% (D. Gilman, 84).

Holguin 19

#### Possible Solutions

There have been many suggestions and ideas of what people can do to reduce the desire for cosmetic surgery. Cyndi Tebbel, author of The Body Snatchers, explains that the only way for American society to change is to have another revolution by stopping the portrayal of demeaning images of women. This will stop the future generations from seeking cosmetic surgery (Tebbel). Tebbel also believes that another reason for the interest in receiving cosmetic surgery is because of the false promotion. Tebbel believes that cosmetic procedure stories are mostly advertised in a positive way, barely looking into the downside. This is due to the fact that publications act to promote the doctors. The media is supporting a "code of silence" by failing to give equal coverage to the number of people who have been deformed or died as a result of cosmetic surgery (Tebbel 51).

Researcher Mary Douglas believes that the human body is treated as an image of society. She stresses that if American society had less concern with physical standards then the search and want for cosmetic surgery would be reduced (Gilman 17). Others believe that it should be equally possible for the media to use realistic models to promote a positive and healthy body image. This can be done by promoting a wider variety of size and race (Cash and Pruzinsky 47).

Advertisements for the product Dove are good examples of positive and realistic body image promotion. Dove often promotes plus size models, who range widely not only in size, but in race/ethnicity. Dove's new tactic specifically focuses on not promoting the ideal image of beauty in hopes of creating a revolution of healthy body image role models (Cash and Pruzinsky 96). Most media images contribute negatively to

Holguin 20

body image so the most obvious preventative strategy is to reduce the exposure of idealized body types. If individuals, programs, companies, and advertisements like the ones Dove promotes, focus more on reducing exposure to idealized body types, then that encouragement will help the media to show a wider range of body types. One final idea presented for how to reduce the want for cosmetic surgery is to focus on good self esteem development for young children to create realistic set of expectations physically (Magill 533). This would primarily be the parents responsibility and could be done by encouraging and supporting the child unconditionally. Teaching children to have healthy eating habits and daily exercise will also likely help the child's self esteem as well.

Cosmetic surgery is a procedure that adds to America's superficial standards of what beauty is and should be. Being confident and pleased with one's body image is nearly impossible due to the promotion of flawless models and actors, who set the standards of

beauty. Psychologically, Americans are bombarded with messages presented by the media. This affects how individuals view beauty, resulting in pressures on one another to look a certain way. Generally, America has come to value physical attractiveness over what should really matter, the personality. Elizabeth Arden (owner of the first salon in America) was quoted by saying, "I judge a woman and a horse by the same criteria: legs, head, and a rear end" (The beauty business). Judging others merely on looks alone is not only shallow, but naive. It is frustrating to see patients who have no need to receive cosmetic surgery, yet get it due to superficial wants. It is also disturbing that there are many people around the world who struggle from hunger and sickness, yet thousands or more is being spent on superficial cosmetic surgeries. Cosmetic surgery

Holguin 21

should not be as accepted as it is now in American culture. Americans should learn to be content with what they were naturally born with. It would be much easier to embrace that message if the media focused less on superficiality and more on personality. There are exceptions however, in justifying cosmetic surgery. Plastic surgery can be used positively, such as when it is used to help rebuild confidence in abused patients. In these cases, cosmetic surgery is not used just as a superficial procedure, but as surgery to help the patient psychologically and with physical health issues. Ultimately, the psychological implications of cosmetic surgery are mainly presented through the media, which then become reflected upon by individuals in America. The growing demand and acceptance for cosmetic surgery reflects the ethical values of the individuals making up American society, showing that superficiality is valued over personality.

---