**History and Theories of Self**

With the widespread of digital technology and the excessive use of social media, this has greatly affected the way we view our self and how we present ourselves to others. One of the most important literatures on self is the work of Goffman in his writing “The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life” (Goffman 1959). He discusses the concept of a persona and how it is considered an adaptive tool to protect the individual from the risks associated with society (Stocchetti 2019; 50). This concept directly relates to the modem prevailing tool of selfying. While the concept of selfying is not essentially a new concept with its origins beginning from self portraits (Cover 2014), the use of digital technology and social media sites has turned it into a daily activity with people feeling the need to document every moment. Moreover, posting a selfie on a social media platform subjects the individual to “friends’ criticisms, liking, additional tagging and sharing in ways that are not necessarily within our control as authors or users” (Stocchetti 2019, 49). Another theory that discusses self-representation is Gergen where he presents the concept as “self-construction” and states that “specific social processes in which the conception of the self is embedded and the …. critical assessment of the cultural and political outcomes of traditional beliefs in the self” (Stochetti 2019, 45).

Technology has not only affected our visual presentation of self, but it has also affected our written and quantitative presentations. According to Cover (2014), the written and quantitative presentations have a pre-digital history. In the digital era, written presentations are manifested by our blog posts, and Facebook status which are considered digital diaries and are descendant of their paper equivalent. As for the quantitative, this represents our habit tracking and to-do lists which have been revolutionized using wearable technologies and having the ability to track calorie count and sleep pattern. This raises the question of how technology affects our understanding of self?

Identity and Individualism are core constituents of SNS usage. There are some studies that have shown a positive correlation between image sharing and mental health. In research discussed by Mayer et al (2020; 2), “interaction on Twitter seems to be more impersonal and less likely to enhance a person’s social capital”. Other studies have shown a link between Facebook and depression. Mayer et al examined the difference in SNS usage in Baby Boomers, Gen X and Digital Natives and how it affects different individuals. Baby Boomers preferred anonymity while staying in touch with their contacts on SNS. Gen X were more enthusiastic about the self-tracking ability of technology and had more eminent fears of surveillance. Digital natives focused more on body optimization using self-tracking methods and extensive use of SNS. However, all generations reported self-relatedness with less individualism and less cyber stress in the Baby Boomers than in other generations.

**The World of Selfies**

The most common group to use selfies are young women. There are many criticisms in literature and media regarding this behavior. Many have speculated that this behavior is considered exhibitionist and can promote narcissism (Cover 2014; 17). Scholars such as Anne Burns have used Michael Foucault’s writing on how the hatred towards digital media is being used as a disciplinary tool to control young women (Cover 2014; 18). This interesting phenomenon is a question of power and who freedom of expression and sharing in public.

There has been rising concern about the link between social networking sites (SNS) and body image especially in young girls (Cohen et al 2007). Cohen investigated SNS usage and body image and eating disorders in a study with 259 participants. The results showed that SNS selfies were more linked to body image concerns rather than general SNS usage. Self-objectification was considered the main moderate between selfies and body image. However, movements such as the no makeup selfie have positively influenced young women’s behavior in a study by Fardouly and Rapee (2018), as it helps “reduce negative impacts of idealized makeup images on women’s facial concerns”.

A study by White et al (2017), explored the effects of selecting online profile pictures on self-perception and impression formation. The study presented 175 participants with 12 images from their SNS accounts. The participants were required to rank them according to least to most likely to be used in Facebook (social network website), LinkedIn (professional website) and Match.com (a dating website). People exhibit different behavior on different SNS contexts, which is highlighted by their image selection. Other people were required to rank the participants’ images where there are 20 people to rank per image. The results were ranked according to trustworthiness, attractiveness, and dominance to evaluate facial first impressions. Moreover, confidence and competence were used to evaluate professional and romantic success. In contrast to the theory that people select images that enhance their appearance, others evaluated pictures that were not selected higher. This was due to appearance of trustworthiness rather than unfamiliarity.

A picture containing graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

Other phenomena that have affected the vast population who uses digital media, is the idea of a filtered reality. The definition of a filter in the Oxford English Dictionary is the removal of unwanted content (Cover 2014; 21). Many social media websites including Instagram, snapchat and Tiktok. Technological features allow us to edit our images and filter out any unwanted content aesthetically that users might desire. Our understanding of the world is through filter and language and culture are also considered filters (Cover 2014; 20). While technological filters allow us to enhance or edit our content and be able to create our brand, it limits us in other ways such as word limit. Cover discussed the concept of being an effective neoliberal subject. The use of media filters out people who do not exhibit this kind of behavior. An effective neoliberal subject is someone who attends to fashions, is focused on self-improvement, and purchases goods and services to achieve “self-realization.” (Cover 2014; 24).

**The Quantified Self**

**Biomedicalization**