EATING DISORDERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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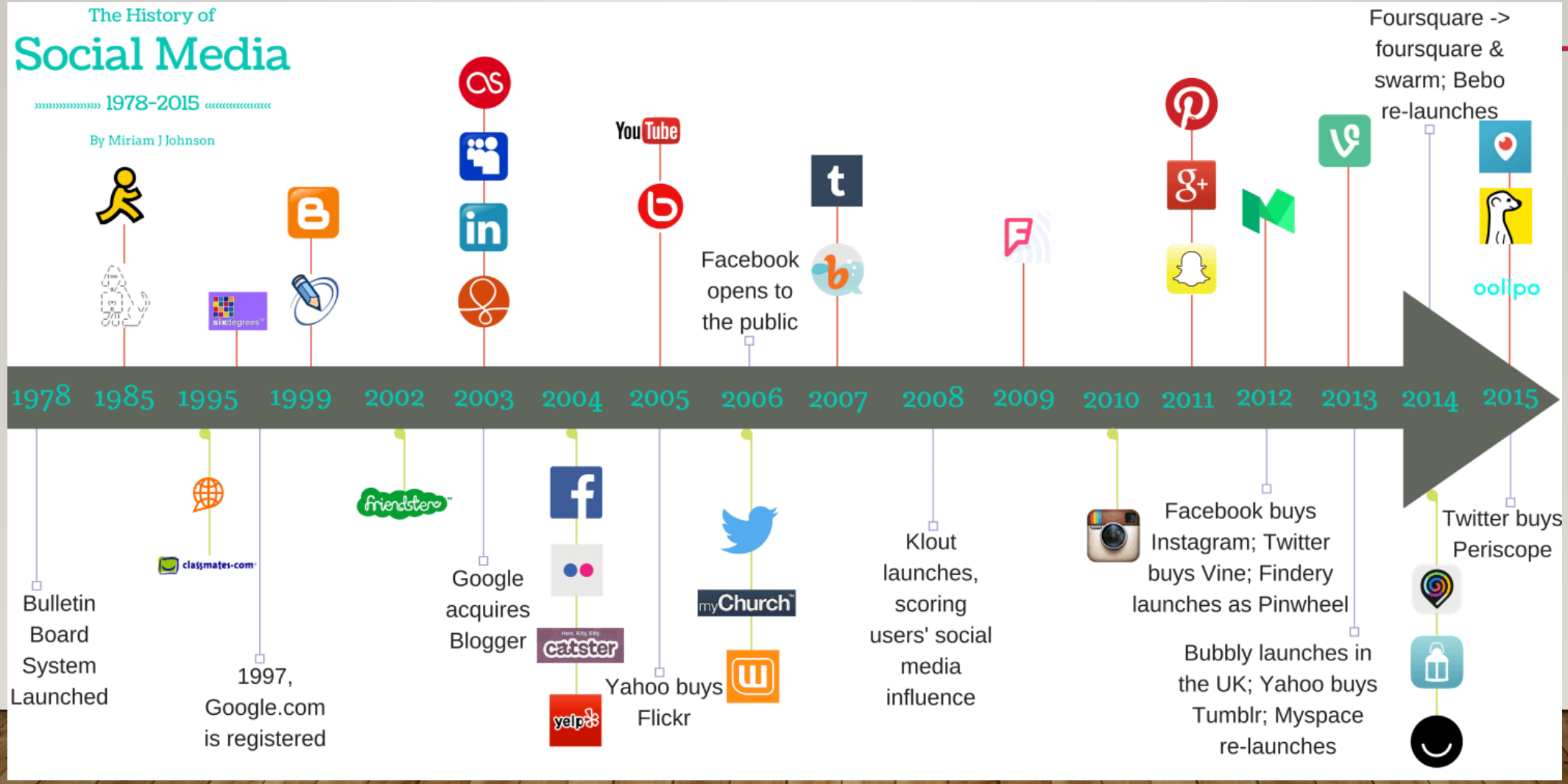
SOCIAL MEDIA

- Love it or hate it, social media is used in business, pleasure and everything in between.
- First social media site was formed in 1997 'sixdegrees.com' and lasted until 2000.
- The percentage of UK teens (16-25) who use social media increased from 5% in 2005 to 79% in 2019- huge increase.
- This also correlated with an increase in social media sites

SOCIAL MEDIA



EATING DISORDERS

- Eating disorders within this presentation include:
- Anorexia Nervosa- Restrictive eating due to body or shape concerns
- Bulimia- Eating normal/larger amounts but then purging
- Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder- Eating 10 or under types of food due to sensory needs
- Binge eating disorder- Eating a large amount of food, sometimes in secret
- Disordered Eating- Eating in way that is not perceived as 'normal' often due to trauma but can be other reasons. (NICE,2020)

- Eating disorders have the most mortality across all mental health conditions.
- Under 25's are at the most risk.
- Females have been and still are the most prominent gender to have eating disorders however the rates of males having eating disorders is on the rise (NICE,2020).
- Males have been treated with eating disorders since the 1960's and they are now seen as part of the ratio 1:4 therefore 1 in 4 being diagnosed as male having an eating disorder.

EATING DISORDERS CAN DEVELOP AND OCCUR FOR MANY REASONS

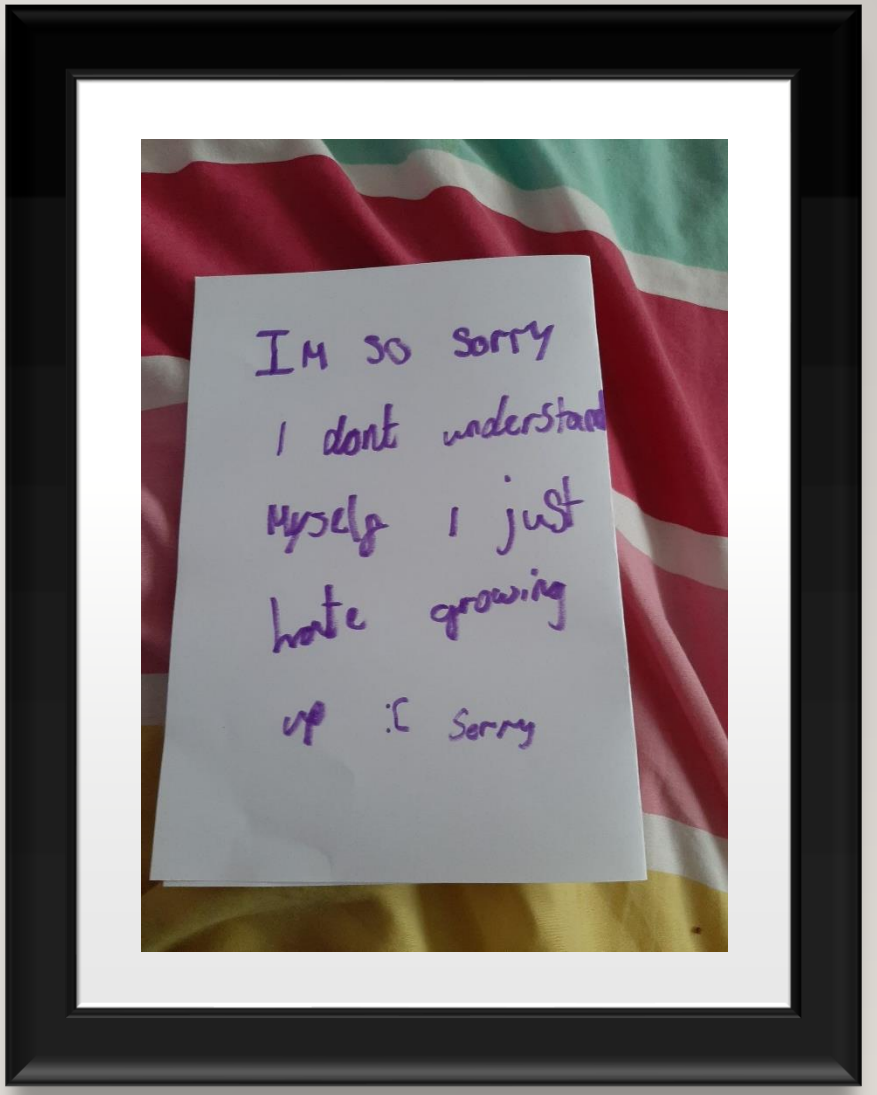
- Trauma
- Developmental difficulties as a child/'fussy eating'/allergies
- Gender questioning- not wanting to hit puberty/grow up
- Media influences
- Development of Autism or the masking getting recognised (more to follow)
- Perfectionistic traits
- Athletic goals
- Genetics

AUTISM AND EATING DISORDERS

- Current research suggests 20-30% of people with Anorexia Nervosa will have Autism (Babb et al, 2021).
- Due to the nature of autism these young people struggle with current recommended treatments
- Young people with autism are more susceptible to image and words on social media due to their style of thinking; often spoken about as 'black or white'.
- However young people with autism are less likely overall to use social media (Alhujailli et al, 2002)

THOUGHTS?

11yr old girl



QUICK RECOGNITION

- It remains essential that anyone with worries of developing an eating disorder receive care quickly (NICE,2020).
- BEAT (https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/) remains the leading charity in the United Kingdom and assists children, teens, carers professionals and everyone in-between!

A REFRESHER, COURTESY OF BEAT

CORRELATION?

- There can be many reasons why someone particularly in the under 18's age range may develop an eating disorder; however media, in particular social media is thought to play a part.
- More than ever teenagers and children are concerned with how they look and believe they should look a certain way in order to be perfect.
- Pre 1990's; magazines and newspapers would be the one's to advertise and attempt to influence and project thoughts towards young people.

EXAMPLES OF 80/90'S MAGAZINES

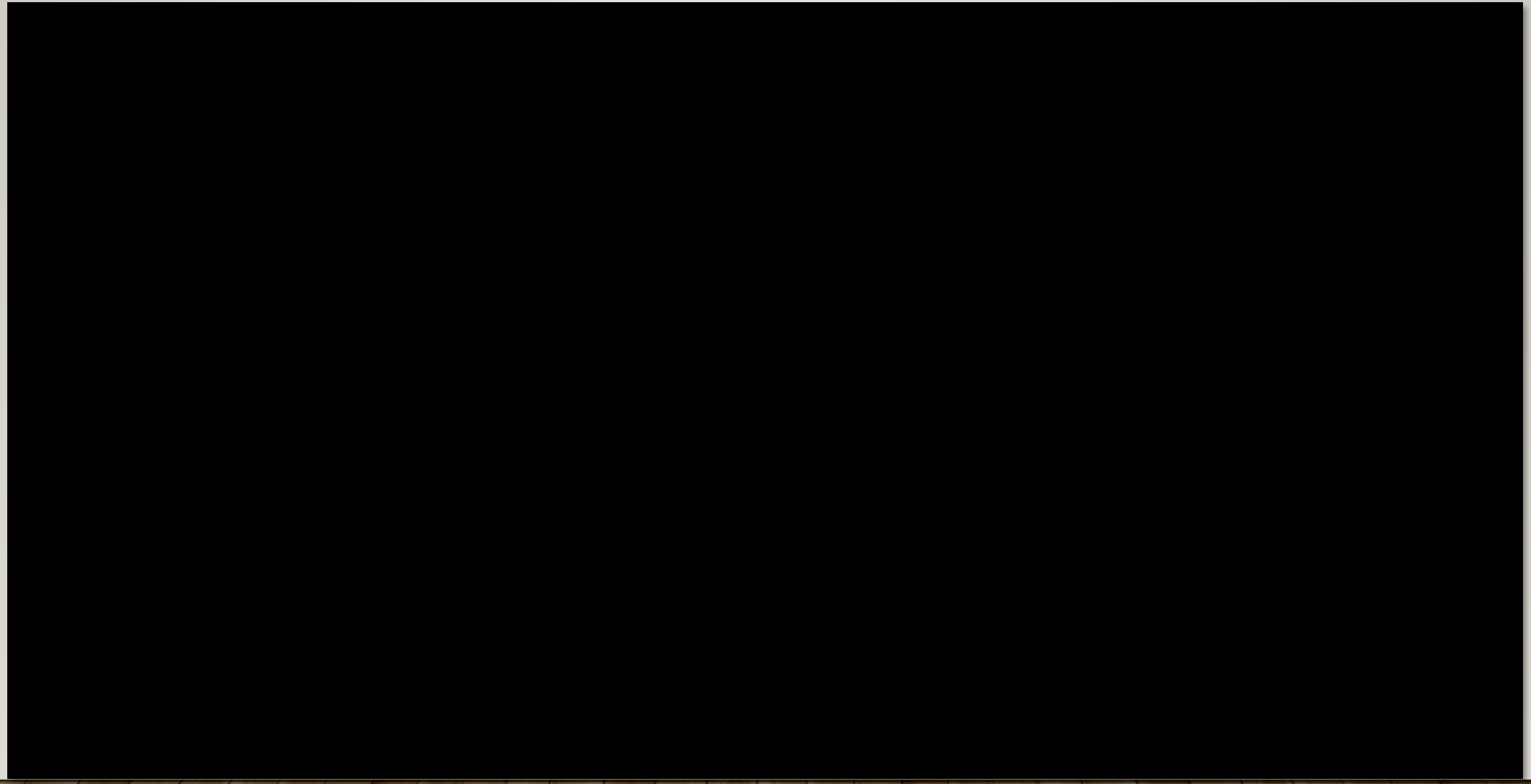
WHY MORE OF A PROBLEM NOW?

- The aetiology of eating concerns has been shown to be multi-factorial and includes biological, psychological, intrapersonal, and environmental influences. Recent new emerging social media, however, brings many aspects of traditional media with technologically facilitated peer interaction.
- Within magazines, there are still pictures, so although influential, social media has had a bigger impact.
- Social media such as Instagram/Snapchat and TikTok can all show video's which get into the brain and have a bigger impact on the person.

NEW WORDS…

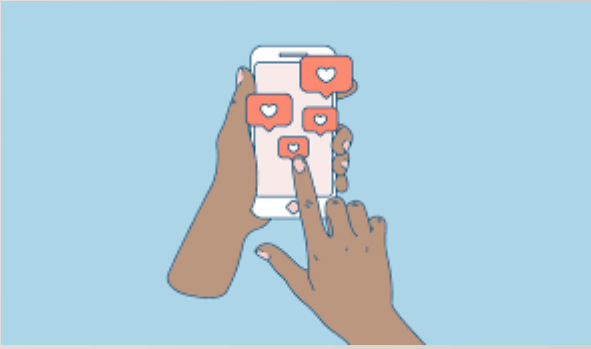
- Advertising is very clever in that new words are used to promote styles of eating, Goksenin (2020) discussed how words like 'healing' and 'bio-hacking' are reinforcing diet cultures.
- Bio-hacking in this context means: having a particular behaviour around food that improves your wellness?? (NEDA,2020)
- New diets are always around but it is how they are educated that is important.

THE BRAIN AND SOCIAL MEDIA



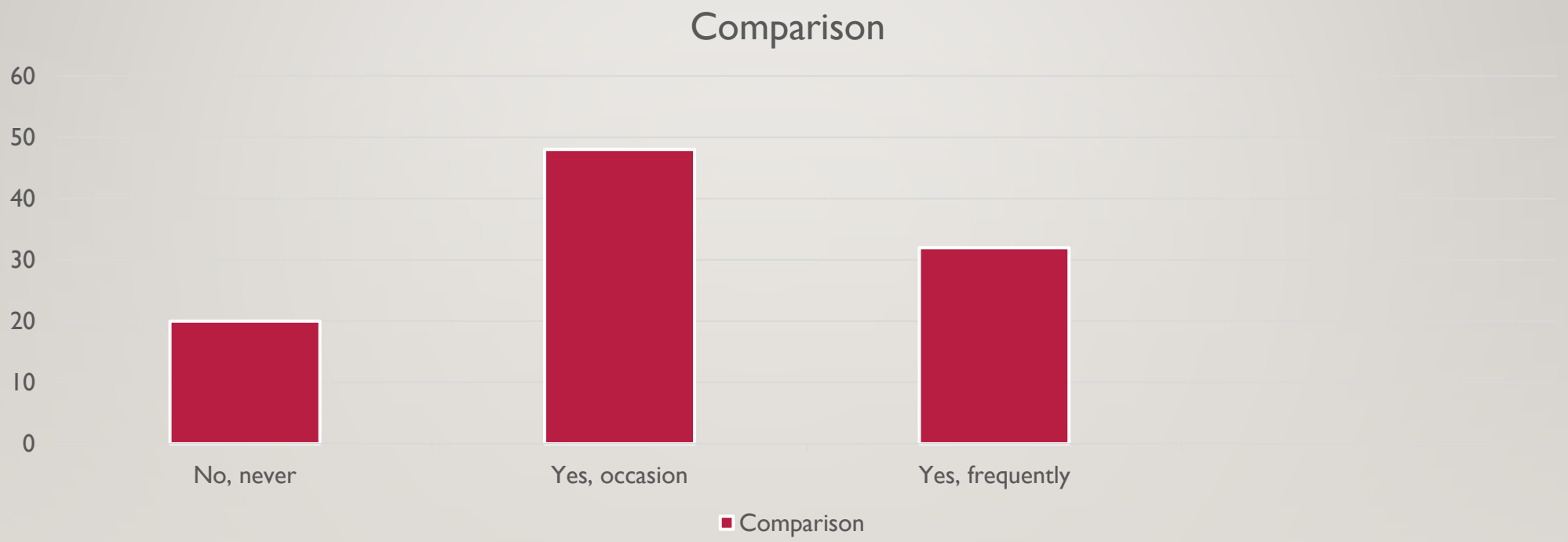
SURVEY RECENTLY CONDUCTED (AS PART OF ONGOING RESEARCH)

- 100 people surveyed with the age range <30years old
- 94% female 6% male
- 86% state they check social media platforms multiple times a day
- 0% said they don't access social media



- The average person spends 2 hours a day on social media- that equates to 5 years of your life (average person) (Lydon,2019)

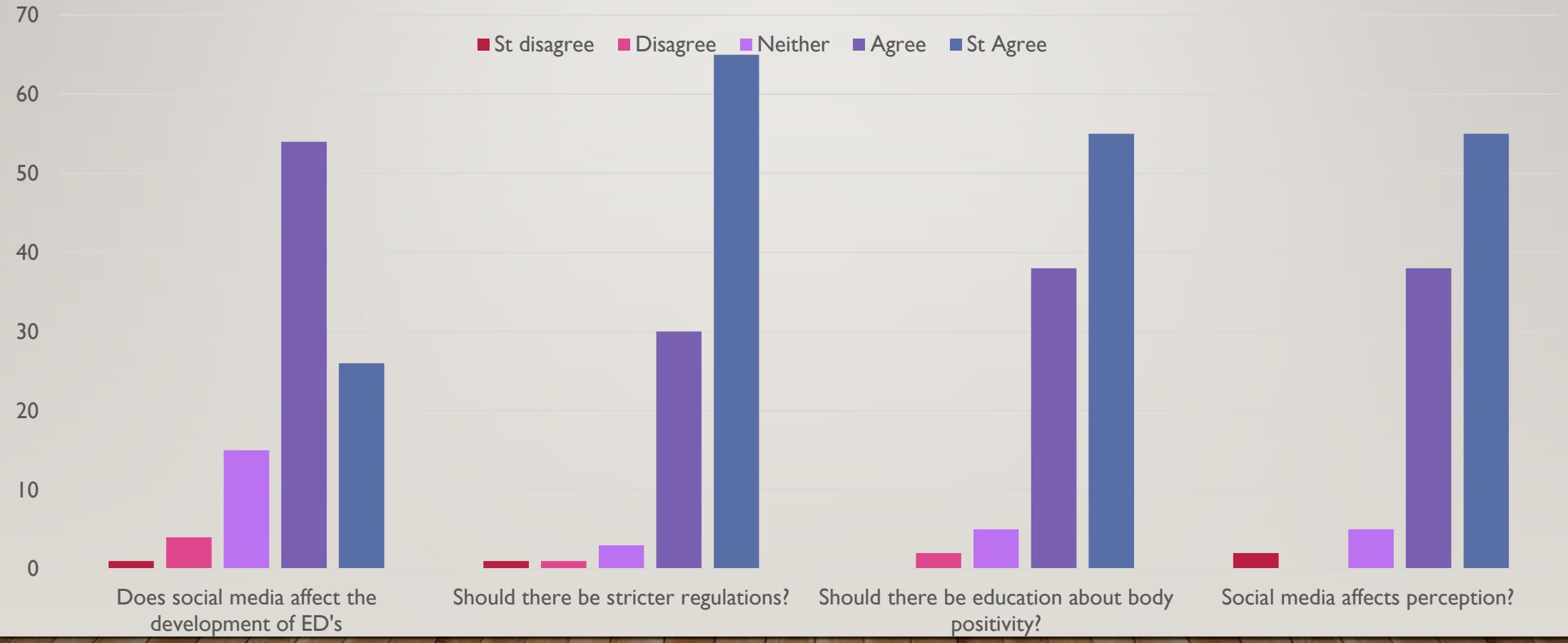
HAVE YOU EVER COMPARED YOUR BODY TO IMAGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



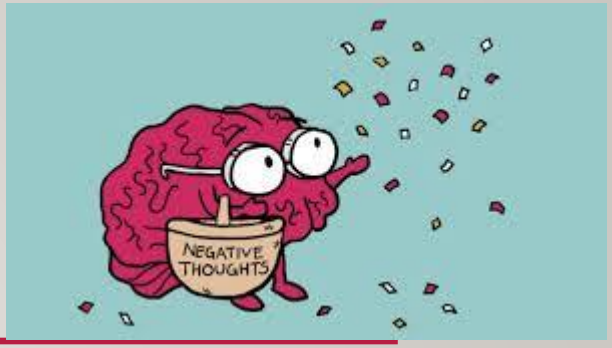
DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENTS A REALISTIC REPRESENTATION OF BODY SHAPES AND SIZES?

- Looking at the previous questions it is clear that social media has a large influence; however from research it has shown that people can see that images may not be realistic; however are influenced by them.
- Social media sells by using filters and vibrant colours/filters, as shown below

IN YOUR OPINION DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF EATING DISORDERS?



RESEARCH BASED OPINIONS? (NEGATIVE)



- Unrealistic expectations and set expectations
- Harmful content or promotion of 'pro-anorexia' or 'extreme calorie-counting
- Thinking that others lives are better than your own; only best bits portrayed/shown
- Inappropriate disclosures
- Misconception of real life
- Young people are incredibly impressionable, and being exposed to social media often can distort their views of themselves, other people, and the world around them

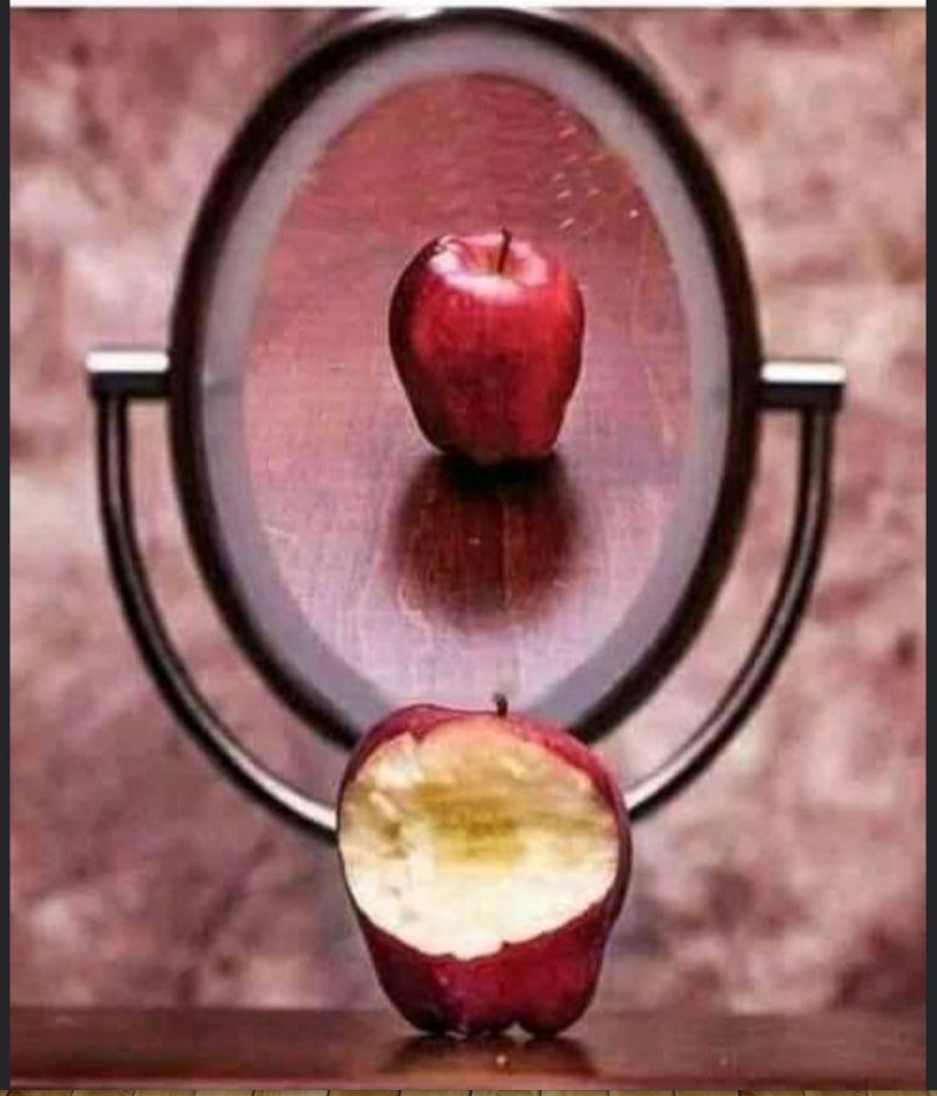
RESEARCH BASED OPINIONS (POSITIVE)

- ‘Ability to connect with friends/family’
- ‘A way to get positive information out there to inform people. Can also help people at times’.
- Body positive messages
- ‘Sharing posts/images/videos with friends and family either near or far away Comedy videos on tiktok Keeping up to date with news from friends and family also’.
- ‘You can gain understanding and seek support. Helps you stay in touch with friends and family It's a fine balance’
- ‘Spreading good news, normalising talking about topics often considered taboo’

THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE….

- Educate young people especially under 12's that images are not always 'real'
- If in a low mood; watch funny video's or content if using social media- if serious content is looked at when in this frame of mind more chance of it being taken literally.
- Ensure young people are aware of privacy settings and how to filter content
- Educate young people in seeing their bodies as a whole and not focussing on one part
- Be a good role model and be aware of cultural differences
- Educate young people that no one is perfect and its good to have flaws!

Thought for the day - Social Media never shows the whole picture. Perfection is an illusion



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- Thank you for listening
- Any questions/comments feel free to contact on marie.young.23@ucl.ac.uk
- Ongoing research is happening within my masters of clinical nutrition and Eating Disorders