

# Response paper on media and the rhetoric of body perfection by deborah harris-moo...

[Science](#), [Biology](#)



While Harris-Moore presents many facets of the rhetoric of body, the one that I found the most interesting and opinionated was that of the medical field. She states on numerous occasions that the medical field helps to perpetuate and harshen the rhetoric of body perfection; I disagree with this position. Harris-Moore argues that “ people are not true agents until they accept improvements as a cultural imperative”. Agency at its core is the ability to freely act. If they choose not to accept bodily improvements as the cultural norm, then they are still making a freely chosen decision.

Harris-Moore discusses the growing popularity of television doctors. She discusses how they have reaffirmed standards of beauty by broadcasting it to the masses. While this may be true in a sense, most if not all plastic surgeons make a point to state that they cannot make anything perfect. For example, Dr. Paul Nassif, one of the surgeons from the TV show *Botched*, only talks in terms of what percentage they can increase the aesthetics by. He does not perpetuate unattainable goals, and he is just an example of numerous doctors who do the same. Harris-Moore discusses how “ The medical notions of health, wellness, and normalcy have become destabilized and less attainable”. While I agree with it becoming destabilized, I don't believe that it has become unattainable; as agents, we have the ability to change and become healthy. “ Doctors and mass media have the rhetorical power to define normal and better bodies...external definitions of better bodies by people who profit from consumer compliance”. The analysis of Jordan's argument presupposes that it is the plastic surgeons have a hegemony over agents and that they have the power to determine and add to the rhetoric of the perfect body. I would argue that this is incorrect, the

surgeons are only demonstrating interpellation; wherein they internalize the larger social norms. They are a symptom of the rhetoric, not the cause.

Harris-Moore, throughout *The Problem of Agency*, discusses the ideas of competition and how it has a negative impact. To this, I would respond with, “ why is competition bad?” Harris-Moore states that there are two models; the medical model, and the public health model. Harris-Moore believes the medical model assigns blame to people for their inability to manage weight and food choices. I believe the two models, ultimately, rely on the same principal; they rely on us as agents to choose to maintain self-control and make better decisions. Harris-Moore discusses Adler and Smith citing the example of their friend who went to the doctor with acid reflux and was told to lose weight. She discusses how she felt victimized as if her weight were the only thing being seen; a symptom of the rhetoric towards bodies and fatness. I believe that the doctor did nothing wrong, one of the symptoms commonly associated with being overweight is an increased rate of acid reflux. Doctors should see their patient as a problem that should be fixed, that is ultimately the oath they took.

In conclusion, while I believe that Harris-Moore presents many valid points about the rhetoric of body perfection and the many social factors that cause people to seek out plastic surgery, attempt weight loss, or otherwise perceive beauty standards. I disagree that the medical field is one of the main perpetrators of the rhetoric surround body perfection. Doctors take an oath to do no harm. They have to create terms such as overweight and obese in order to better classify people and their susceptibility to certain

diseases. While plastic surgery offers the opportunity to become their “perfect” self; I believe that it ultimately helps people feel comfortable in their own skin. Throughout the text she continually contradicts herself, stating that we aren’t agents in some portions where it serves the overall argument; and stating we are agents in some sense when it does serve her argument.