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Claremont McKenna College

Portrait of an Insecure Young Man; An
Exploration of the Online Propagation of
Mewing

Submitted to
Professor Kevin Moffett
And
Professor James Morrison

By
James Cockburn

For
Senior Thesis
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Abstract

As social media becomes more ubiquitous in our cultural existence as humans it plays an increasingly large role in the formation and expression of identity. On many social media platforms, the way people look is emphasized, with more attractive people garnering the most attention. This results in the phenomenon of upward social comparison, which leads to the lowering of self-esteem. Social media and the internet also enable the spread of information and ideologies, which has resulted in the propagation of pessimistic and misogynistic world views in communities that make up the Manosphere. One popular topic on the manosphere is mewing. Mewing is a concept that claims that people can improve their facial structure by holding their tongue in the proper position on the roof of the mouth, breathing only through their nose, swallowing and chewing properly, and maintaining good posture. While mewing has the potential to make a positive impact on society, its association with the perceptions encompassed in the manosphere and the resistance from institutional systems of orthodontics to engage in scientific review have hampered its growth to become a staple of western health care.

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Precursor

This paper is a study on the phenomenon of adolescent men looking to the internet for guidance on their constructions of masculinity and finding their answer in a specific technique for improving how attractive their faces are, known as mewing. I discuss how this usage of the internet as a developmental crutch leads many such men to fall victim to negative conceptions of reality. They develop low self-esteem and unhealthy frames of mind towards themselves and others. Mewing went viral on the internet early in 2019 primarily among men looking for ways to improve their jawlines and quickly became associated with the negative connotations of the most extremely desperate and misogynistic groups of men on the internet who convene in the Manosphere. The growth in popularity of mewing online is due, in part, to the absence of effective systemic health care focused on prevention and the decline of traditional wisdom that informs healthy lifestyle practices. The story I share of a young man navigating through mewing on the internet is based on an exaggeration of my personal experience and the online behavior and interactions I have witnessed through my research. I provide context and information, both from what I have learned through my investigation of mewing and from academic sources that offer useful insight. During this research process, I have come to see mewing and many of tangential practices to be beneficial. I have become disheartened by how mewing and related practices are communicated in uncouth and disreputable ways and become ignominious due to their association with negative sentiments. I have also become frustrated with the response to mewing by the orthodontic establishment, which has essentially neglected to do due diligence to the orthotropic theory that encompasses mewing, going so far as to revoke the practicing license of the concept's founder.

Chapter 1

Portrait of an Insecure Young Man

It was the lowest point in my life: I had been sent back from my first year of college due to the Covid-19 pandemic to get stuck in a house on an island my parents had just moved to. Isolated, bored, stripped of virtually all social connection, and living in a dark unfamiliar place with no view of the horizon. I felt hopeless. It was a cave world of pessimism. I tried to strike out on my own and find a way to be with my friends, but I found myself drifting away from them. When I didn't reach out I wouldn't hear from them for weeks. Then when I stopped I didn't hear from them at all. One sided. I had stopped taking classes at school because it felt pointless. I became obsessed with a girl and we would talk on the phone for hours. I met up with her a few times as friends and then when the moment came to tell her how I felt I ran away, feeling like I was never going to be enough for her. She stopped calling too. I didn't know at the time but I found out a few months later that she had begun dating an actor with a side job as a business consultant and creative director. Meanwhile I was busy moping around my parents' house trying to avoid them. I subsequently pursued a series of relationships with girls I didn't feel anything for, fueled by a narcissistic desire to be loved: I needed to have my value confirmed, but instead arrived at a feeling of inadequacy.

I did try to branch out, but every attempt I made to grow was thwarted: either by my own self-loathing or the universe. I applied to study abroad in Budapest and the program was canceled. I then applied to study abroad in South Africa, and again the

program was canceled. I looked for jobs despite a deep-seated sense of incompetence and lack of motivation. I applied to be a camp counselor at the parks department and was rejected in favor of someone who, ‘was famous for running field game camps on the island’. Who the hell is famous for running field game day camps? I gave up pretty quickly. None of the jobs I could find seemed that interesting anyway.

Externally, all I saw was chaos: senseless brutality and murders, protest and little change, political frustration, global economic crisis. So I looked internally instead. There, all I found was that I hated myself – and not in the way that leads to the destruction of ego, but in an egocentric narcissistic way; All the problems in the world were my fault and I was an unlovable, unmotivated, directionless boy who failed to become a man. When you look in the mirror with that mindset you are bound to dislike what you see. I stopped venturing out. I gave up trying to connect with people. I began spending more and more time on the internet. Often up to sixteen hours a day scrolling, trying to find the answers to my self-loathing and self-imposed feeling of suffering.

Modern Social Phenomenon – Isolation, Social Media, and Upward Comparison

When people become isolated it is easy for them to lose a sense of purpose and meaning, especially in the lack of a strong sense of self identity. Men who are pulled away from their peers and pushed into stagnant isolation as they come to the end of adolescence face severe obstacles to the achievement of self-actualization. Then throw in an easily accessible, socially acceptable vice that grants an endless supply of

entertainment and instant gratification in the form of easily digestible content on social media and you have the scenario faced by many young men during the 2020 pandemic: Alone and vulnerable to the vices of social media. But for many of them, the scenario before the pandemic wasn't much better.

Western culture is in a time of reckoning with the racial, patriarchal, and even class-based hierarchies, reinforced by pressure from people to conform to one opinion or another on the internet. In the case of the patriarchy, much scholarship on the matter holds that the hegemonic powers are not actually being diminished, but rather disguised and embedded in increasingly undetectable ways (Messner, 2007) (Demetriou, 2001). Even accepting that the repressive and dominating powers are being re-encoded under a different guise, the change in appearance of these powers has manifested as the creation of a hybrid masculinity. Gender studies scholars describe this hybrid masculinity as a shift from conventional masculine traits toward the inclusion of characteristics previously seen as other, such as homosexual traits and cultural identifiers of racial groups that are discriminated against, in the constitution of the masculine ideal (Bridges, 2014). As the privileges afforded to men by the patriarchal order become taboo in the eye of the public scrutiny enabled by the internet, the means the most privileged men (young, white, cisgender, heterosexual) use are recodified in order to disguise said privilege while still maintaining the power that comes with said privilege. All this to say, currently we are seeing the explosion of the once culturally apparent masculine ideal of visibly dominance and stoic macho man into a combination of previously incongruent traits. This shaking of cultural ideals that has not clearly defined a masculine ideal leaves young men searching for confirmation of their identities in an uncertain state. Many young men then turn to the

cultural lexicon of social media, where the most popular figures on any platform stand as examples of what the public desires of them.

The way that the social media public has critical influence on the definition of acceptable virtues of masculinity is especially visible in the case of public figures and celebrities: when people act in a way that is deemed unacceptable by a public audience they are reprimanded and shamed for their stance in a public manner. While this method of social reinforcement can serve to hold people accountable for their actions, it can become challenging when the moral implications of those actions are more subjective. Regardless, while this type of fall out may be of a large concern to public figures, for average people it is more like a sign of the importance of proper signification of your positions on various social attitudes. In addition, now that everyone has the power to put anything on social media at any given time, individuals must grapple with an awareness that if anything they say elicits the ire of someone else it may be put online and create unforeseen consequences for them. The ability for everything to be easily and quickly shared online through social media then creates a pressure to avoid making any mistakes of consequence. This pressure has the capacity to carry over into all lived scenarios, both virtual and corporeal, creating an expectation to act perfectly and live in perfect congruence with all of the highest moral values. The more time a person spends online, the more they will be subjected to the opinions of others, and thus the more likely they will be to feel the pressure from the nameless hordes of anonymous, but demonstrably influential and powerful voices of the internet. The pressure then begets a further feeling of isolation by creating a hyper awareness of the ways in which people fail to live up to the lofty expectations they are affronted by.

People are faced with all of this pressure on the internet in terms of virtue signaling: they must be generous, anti-racist, feminist, fighting for the greater good of all mankind, while simultaneously leading an exciting life, connecting with friends, and pursuing their passion. When considered through Stuart Hall's discursive framework of representation, people convey their desired self-image using symbols that signify positive traits. By doing this they engage in a process of encoding and decoding a representation that communicates their desired self-image (Hall, 1997). Every medium of social media constitutes its own discursive code on what is acceptable to post, which is influenced in turn by external societal and cultural pressures (Dijck, 2013). In practice, the societal and cultural pressures are ones that incentivize the production of self-identities online that are desirable, popular, successful, accomplished, and beautiful.

Engaging with a virtual world where everyone is at their best results in upward social comparison, which is a sociological phenomenon Festinger coined to describe how people tend to view themselves in a negative light in comparison to people similar to them (in say age, or career) that they evaluate as doing better than themselves (Festinger, 1954) (Warrender, 2020). The greater the gap in perceived status, popularity, beauty, or any other metric to measure success, the more potential negative affect the upward comparison can have on the self-esteem of the individual. As people are exposed to increasing numbers of constructed representations of others on social media they are subject to increasingly extreme forces of upward comparison, resulting in negative views of themselves. While showing women images of other attractive women has been proven to have a negative effect on satisfaction with their own appearance, Anna Blond found that young men experience a similar negative response when exposed to images of

attractive muscular men (Blond, 2008). Additionally, in the presence of an increasing exposure to social media, studies have shown that men are growing increasingly more concerned with their appearance over time (Fox, 2016).

Never before in history has our physical appearance been so readily broadcasted for the whole world to see with the advent of social media. This new networking system also increases the number of attractive people a given person will see in a day exponentially higher than what they might have seen in person. This is especially true due to the way social media algorithms promote influencers, the vast majority of whom are more attractive than the average person. With the increase in opportunity for visibility, the most attractive people are able to capitalize on their looks by objectifying themselves for monetary gain, magnifying the socioeconomic benefits that come along with beauty. But beyond the overt benefits received upfront by Instagram models and beauty influencers, there lies the less obvious but more insidious benefits received by people who fill other niches while simultaneously benefitting from their beauty and attractiveness. Simply put, there are few negatives to being attractive, but many benefits, both obvious and undefinable. These benefits are known colloquially as pretty privilege, and formally as the halo effect. The halo effect describes how people subconsciously assume attractive people have positive attributes due to a biological bias towards beauty upon first impression. These initial positive assumptions then carry over into further interaction, as people's impressions influence their perceptions of the actions of the attractive people. Even though it is culturally taboo, nearly all scientific studies into the idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder reveal that there is a high level of agreement across all people and cultures of what is beautiful: beauty is not subjective, but rather

objective (Little, 2014) (Langlois, 2000). Furthermore, studies widely agree that beautiful people benefit from the halo effect socially in forming relationships, but also monetarily. Two of the most cited studies to investigate this are Hamermesh's 1994 economic study that showed an increase in wages of more attractive employees as well as a wage penalty for below average looking employees and Salter's study of Real Estate wages being higher for more attractive agents, despite not necessarily being more skilled, knowledgeable, or organized (Hamermesh, 1994) (Salter, 2012). The increase in use of social media amongst young people in the last decade is resulting in an increase in upward social comparison and awareness of the benefit of good looks combined with the reconstitution of masculine ideals for the younger generations has left many young men searching for new methods of self-fashioning their identities. These young men, who may have been guided by the cultural productions of their direct community or centralized production centers such as Hollywood in past generations are now granted access to the all-consuming void of social media for a starting point for their identity formation.

Chapter 2

The Revelation of a Solution:

The internet, to me, consisted primarily of YouTube, with Instagram as a close second, and TikTok right after that. I used them to distract myself from an internal malaise and the feeling that I wasn't doing anything with my life. On YouTube, I first started watching sports highlights, mostly UFC fights and boxing, and then clips from

talk shows. I also started watching podcast videos, letting them play in the background while I made food and then observing through my screen the easy flowing and funny conversations between the guys over my meals. When I watched these videos I felt like I was supplementing the social interactions I was missing. I wondered if I was there whether I would be able to keep up with the comedic banter.

I watched prank videos where guys would go and try and pick up girls. These felt worlds apart from how I was living. Then I started getting recommended videos on how to be more charismatic. I began studying them, thinking that I could learn to overcome whatever it was that made me push everyone away by learning to be more likable. I was recommended videos that addressed more and more of my insecurities: Upgrade your Style with These 5 Essentials, Why you can't Lose Weight, What I wish I knew before my first HGH Cycle, Can you grow your penis? How to get Taller! Why you NEED to do No Fap. At first I felt it was all bullshit but I watched anyway, hoping something would make sense to me. This is when I found mewing – a male model (literally named Brett Maverick, damnit) mentioned that most people don't have their tongue on their mouth correctly and that this leads to improper facial development over time. The guy referred to the proper positioning as Mewing. I was ashamed to admit to myself that my interest was piqued.

I searched the term and found videos from a few different accounts that outlined the concept in more depth and they all referred back to two men, Professor John and Mike Mew, as the authority on the matter. Eventually I found their channel: Orthotropics. The videos consisted of lecture style tidbits on various topics related to the face, jaws, and teeth, and how habits impact our looks over time. Some of the videos feature an old

man with a drooping face, wispy white hair, and a British accent that could have been that of an actor in a Victorian period piece. This is Professor John Mew, the originator of Orthotropics. In his videos he usually addresses concepts relating to his past work and the results of his implementations on the development of younger patients. The rest of the videos feature Professor John Mew's son, Dr. Mike Mew; a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, a distinctly upright posture, and a massive jaw. Dr. Mike Mew seemed odd to me. When he talks he punctuates each sentence with pause followed by a short, sharp sucking sound, as though he is trying to convince himself that he isn't breathing through his mouth by making each breath as quick as possible. Dr. Mike Mew's videos focus more on how to do the things that will lead to better facial development. I approached each video telling myself that I was watching out of a sense of cynicism towards orthotropics, but that cynicism quickly faded and was replaced by a sense of hope: perhaps the problems in my life were just the culmination of my bad habits overtime, and if I were to change my looks through the implementation of new one I could break free. With beauty I could escape pain, and now beauty was within my control. In the back of my mind I couldn't help but noticing the way the message of these videos was preying on my poor mental state: I had to either believe it was at once my fault that I was ugly and that I had the potential to change, or that I was this way randomly and there was no hope for anything better. Neither seems like a good option but better to believe than to lose hope.

I commented on a video about how to improve your cheekbones, "I am 19, I have had two wisdom teeth removed and had braces. I realized I have been mouth breathing

for most of my life. Is it too late for me to get any changes with mewing?”. I knew the response I would get, but I needed to have it confirmed anyway.

Craigsterio, a user with a profile picture of a llama in a party hat, responded, “Its [sic] better late than never. At the very laest [sic] you can prevent your face from gettign [sic] worse, and at the best maybe you will see improvements.” This is exactly the response I was hoping for. I liked his post.

Another user named Smk33D also replied, “yeah, just make it a habit. If you don’t have proper posture all the time you will not see any change.” As long as there was hope. I redirected my time on the internet toward improving my face.

What is mewing

The very essence of optimizing your aesthetic potential (which is heavily correlated with your potential in all other areas of life) lies in between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. This is the most emphasis anyone could put on the concept of mewing, an element of Dr. John and Mike Mew's orthodontic theory: orthotropics.

This is also an outlook you may find in corners of the internet where isolated young men who struggle to interact with girls congregate to discuss their challenges.

Mewing, according to the accepted definition of the authoritative health websites of the internet, is the oral posture wherein the tongue, especially the back third, is placed firmly against the upper palate in such a way that it applies a subtle pressure forwards and upwards. John Mew originally conceived the concept in 1958 as part of the Tropic premise (Mew, “Introduction to John Mew”). The concept is that applying this subtle upward and forward pressure against the palate will lead to its expansion and elevation

overtime. Subtle pressure overtime can change the structure of bones. This is Wolff's law of bone restructuring and can be observed in the increased density and changes in form of bones among people, like bodybuilders, who subject their bones to load (Rowe, 2023). This change will then lead to the natural straightening of the teeth, the elevation of the maxilla (the bones that make up your midface structure), a stronger jawline and prominent chin and brow line, an improvement in your head positioning and overall posture, and the opening of your airways. This is a lot of phenomena to be attributed to a practice so seemingly simple as proper tongue positioning. Nonetheless, any among the myriad of followers of the practice on the internet will swear by its effectiveness. Mewing, then, is the primary concept of the more all-encompassing principle of orthotropics, which broken down to its Greek roots ortho and tropic (tropikós) means straight and proper in regards to a turn or change in figure.

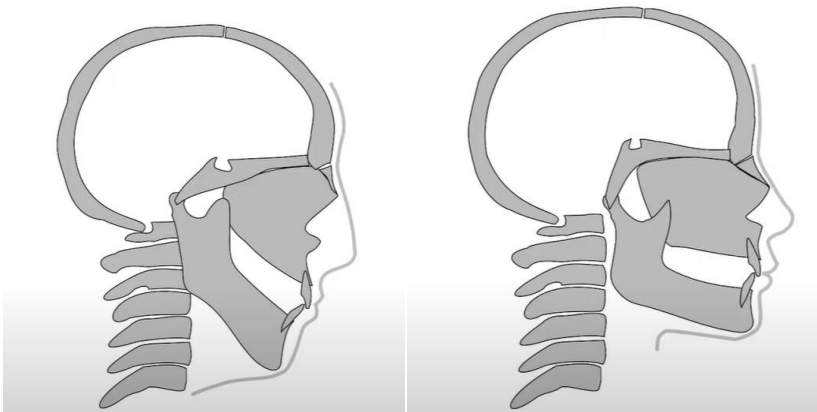


Diagram on the effect of mewing taken from “How to improve cheek bones,” on the Orthotropics, YouTube channel.

There are many outlets that spread the mewing gospel, from the founders’ YouTube channel, Orthotropics, to online influencers, to investigative authors, to

orofacial myofunctional therapists and airway specialists. Each of these sources combine to propagate the ideas of mewing with varying scruples about the practice's potential to create change. The main area of disagreement among the pro-mewing preachers lies in how young you have to be for mewing to effectively create change. While Dr. John Mew originally held that mewing alone is only really effective for creating change from a very young age (pre-teen) and was more of a supplement to orthotropic treatment with appliances, Dr. Mike Mew has evolved the theory over time on his YouTube channel towards believing the practice can create change in people of increasing ages. Perhaps the most optimistic on the potential of mewing to create change are many of the male commenters on videos that cover mewing; it is common for most of the comment sections to have upwards of five comments from users who present as male with multiple hundreds of likes that follow the basic formula of, 'I'm [age between 25 & 45] and I started mewing [time between one and six] months ago and have seen amazing improvements.

The un-pinnable status mewing holds as the gateway, the bridge, and the final destination for denizens of the web is a case study on how ideas that exist outside of structured institutions gain followings on the internet. Mewing bridges the gap between many different spheres of influence thriving on social media: red pillers mew, incels and lookmaxxers mew, eastern medicine and alternative health nuts mew, gym bros and male fitness influencers mew, male model youtubers mew. Mewing seems to be a concept that anyone with an open mind can find their way to if they go deep enough in any given online echo chamber based on self-improvement at any level. But while

anyone can find their way to Mewing, the primary audience associated with mewing is certainly young men who feel a sense of lacking in their lives.

Chapter 3

Dedication to the Process

Having been convinced by the logic of the concept from my initial discovery on YouTube, I began to consume information on mewing and all that it encompasses. I learned about how as people's diets have shifted from tough natural foods to the soft processed foods of the industrial revolution the lengths of their skulls have increased, their palates have narrowed, and their teeth have become crowded. I learned how an attractive young boy's face grew ugly and slovenly after he began breathing through his mouth because he was sleeping with a hamster he was allergic to. I learned how one identical twin brother's face became flat after traditional orthodontic treatment while the other's grew handsome and well-shaped after orthotropic treatment. I became convinced not only of the logic, but of the ability of mewing to create change! Dr. Mike Mew's videos on how to place your tongue on your palate, how to swallow, how to chew, how to bring food to your face, and how to place your head consumed me. I began taping my mouth closed at night, practiced swallowing in the mirror, and any other advice I learned in a given day.

I wanted everything Dr. Mike Mew said to be true so badly. I had taken to reading the comments under each video. There I found people who seemed to share all of my

thoughts in a way that felt impossible with anyone in my life. I tried to explain how I had become fascinated with this stuff to my parents once and was met with a disgusted response. They were incredulous that I would believe such garbage on the internet, “Next thing you’re going to be going on about Qanon and the baby eating thing”. Thanks mom.

The people commenting seemed so much more open minded. They wrote about how of course mewing and orthotropics is being repressed by orthodontics because it threatens their business model and reputation. “There’s no money in prevention, and if the problems ARE prevented, then there is no money to be made diagnosing and fixing them!” Some people still wrote things saying that it is all bullshit but they were obviously closed minded. Or just unwilling to understand. One comment from a user named Gecko Credo read, “I told my parents about how nose breathing changes your face and they scoffed at me, but I have [sic] been taping my mouth closed at night and switch to breathing throughmy [sic] nose for only a month and I have already noticed a huge difference!”. Him and all the 348 people who liked the comment were proof that it would work for me.

Finding mewing on YouTube felt like a revelation: the internet had brought me hope for salvation. My days consisted of waking up, stretching, going to the bathroom, taking a shower, brushing my teeth, looking in the mirror to see all the areas I needed to improve, eating, then scouring the internet for more sources of self-improvement. My only direction was internal, and I was never content.

From the Orthotropics channel I moved on to videos analyzing the facial aesthetics of celebrities, how to videos from male models, instructional videos from bodybuilders and fitness gurus. My TikTok feed became saturated with videos of before-

and-after pictures showing amazing results, and men with pronounced jawlines and sculpted cheeks – they must naturally have had the correct habits since childhood. I was immersed in content defining the ideal masculine form as being a ‘Chad’: a tall, muscular, charismatic man with a sharp jawline, pronounced brows, hollow cheeks, and fierce piercing eyes. This was my aspiration. I poured over video after video, and held on to each image and concept for just enough time to finish a video before jumping to the next one, more consumed with the amplitude of ways I could be better than implementing any specific actions. Truthfully, the only concept I was able to stick with was mewing. It didn’t require any extra time, it didn’t cost any money, and it promised the most benefits. So days turned to weeks turned to months, and the most frequent thought I had became, “raise your tongue up”. I hoped my bathroom selfies would eventually be an awe inspiring before-and-after showcase like so many I had devoted my time to witnessing.

Complementary Practices

Many influencers who endorse mewing also develop and push related practices that aren’t sponsored by orthotropics that are targeted at men looking to improve their appearances. Most of these techniques that branch off of mewing are more extreme in nature, with more focus placed on appearance than health. Some such techniques are bone smashing, hard chewing, thumb pulling, and face pulling. The goal of these techniques is especially geared to making the face look more developed and masculine. Bone smashing, perhaps the most radical of these techniques, is based on Wolff’s law of bone formation and works by increasing the load on the bones that make up the face by applying external force as opposed to internal force from the pressure applied by muscles. In practice, this looks like gently hitting the cheekbones, browline,

and chin with a hard implement, often the knuckles or a hammer, to increase bone mass in those localized areas. Hard chewing is the concept of exercising the main chewing muscles, the masseters, in order to increase the definition of the jawline. Influencers who endorse hard chewing usually also recommend special rubber chewing devices or mastic gum. Mastic gum is a type of hard natural gum derived from tree resin found on mastic trees in the Greek island of Chios, but some of the most fervent promoters of hard chewing who don't endorse rubber chewing trainers make their own varieties of hard gum that they sell instead. Either way, hard chewing is one branch off of the tree looksmaxxing, which is a term that encompasses all of the practices that aim to improve appearances employed by men on the internet, which is explored in more depth in the next section. Another tangential technique in the looksmaxxing lexicon is thumb pulling, and the more involved face pulling. Thumb pulling is the act of using the thumbs to actively widen and raise the palate by placing them in the mouth and applying larger forces over shorter periods of time than can be achieved by the tongue in mewing. The goal of thumb pulling is to raise and widen the maxilla, just like the goal of mewing. Face pulling is very similar to thumb pulling except that it encompasses a wider variety of hand positions and force is applied in various matrices with the same goals. Face pulling is heavily informed by the manipulations used in osteopathic medicine, an alternative holistic medical practice.

Where chewing is monetized online through the sale of products, face pulling is monetized through the sale of informational courses. Influencers in the looksmaxxing sphere usually offer some type of monetizable commodity or service in the form of exercise guides and consultations on mewing. Target audiences for these services are people who believe they can improve their looks and want to do so. People who are exposed to these types of solutions are also often exposed to orthognathic surgery, which has a lot larger expenses, making the online resources look like good deals in comparison.

Up to this point the paper has discussed mewing in regards to its gendered appeal to masculine audiences, but it also has a moderate following among feminine audiences.

Looksmaxxing techniques are also not restricted to men, and there are other practices that are much more oriented towards women that also associate with mewing such as face yoga, and to a lesser extent, Gua Sha. Face yoga encompasses a variety of movements and poses of the face with the goal of making the face look younger and fresher. Gua Sha is an ancient Chinese face massaging technique that uses a stone (often jade) scraping implement to massage the face. Gua sha is less directly connected to mewing, but is linked under the umbrella of looksmaxxing. Like a feminine counterpart to hard chewing, Gua sha is commodified by the sale of the Gua sha stones and spread online as a method to improve appearance, although only skin deep.

Chapter 4

Diving in Deeper:

I ventured off of YouTube and Tiktok onto Instagram: a place based on pictures must be full of people showing off their mewing process right? So how come my feed in instagram hadn't become diluted with mewing like all of my other streams of information? I searched mewing on my Explore Page. I was shocked by how few accounts I found, but I began pouring over them. One account in particular fascinated me. The account, called Mewing.world, seemed to actually have little focus on mewing as I had come to understand it up until this point. Instead, the posts were ten part slide shows that addressed how different issues of facial and bodily symmetry and function were connected, and how those problems could be addressed with very vaguely described techniques. Most of the posts referred to the idea of face pulling,

Dear friends! You can join the course at any time, it's pre-recorded, and you can learn at your own pace. The access is 1 year from the date of payment.

Included with your course purchase is daily feedback with me, Lilia, a co-author of this course, the author of a popular blog about cranial biomechanics and connection between our occlusion and posture. I consult you individually and answer all your questions with the help of my assistants, Svetlana and Amir.

What will you find on this course?

- The first part of the course focuses specifically on mewing. First, we will restore the correct function of the body, and then you will learn manual osteopathic techniques for remodeling the position of the bones of the facial skull and techniques of cranial gymnastics to relax the dura mater so that the process goes more efficiently and faster.
- ! All the techniques on the course were approved by many osteopaths, two orthocraniodontists, and a gnathologist-posturologist.
- ! Contraindications to using the techniques: neuralgia of any kind, including intercostal neuralgia, any type of inflammatory process in the acute phase, postoperative period, screws in the bones of the face and skull after surgery, difference in the length of rami more than 7mm, severe cases of TMD, mental illness. *"In the case of mild TMD, your mouth should be able to open at least 2 fingers. If, at the same time, you feel tension in the occipital area or the suboccipital muscles, this would indicate a contraindication."* Another contraindication would be a combination of deep bite + a very narrow palate + strong teeth crowding on the lower arch (*it's very common in cases of undiagnosed TMD*). If you have crowded teeth, you should get them fixed by a doctor. Our techniques can help with fixing the position of the jaws (*by improving the bite*) but not with teeth alignment. In this case, interoral face pulling can be done during such treatment. The same situation is with missing teeth - you should consider getting dental implants as soon as possible. Please refer to the two posts I wrote on my Instagram page @mewing.world about missing and crowded teeth, including pictures and examples. You can also consult with us about your particular situation in DMs.
- ! Note: in some cases of deep bite and cranial torsion with twisting of the lower jaw, an additional step of adjusting the occlusal height pads is necessary. * If you have severe torsion you will need an individual program of interoral face pulling techniques (*presented in one of lessons on the course*) + the use of polymorphic pads from the very beginning. You can find information about polymorphic pads in the Highlights under the bio of my Instagram page @mewing.world.

Results **Starecta** **Review**

- In addition to working with bones and cranial sutures, we present the most effective techniques for soft tissue, which can also help to speed up the process of harmonizing the face.
- There are 19 lessons on the course plus a lot of bonuses, including the complete mewing guide with all the tips. More than 25 videos with English subtitles. The content looks like this (*skip the screenshots*):

Lesson 8: Learning to swallow properly
Proper swallowing with the correct position of the tongue on the palate

Lesson 9: How the biomechanics of changes works + visualisation with intention
How to get better results while interoral face pulling

Lesson 10: Manual modelling of the facial skull's bones: work with the central palatine suture

Lesson 11: Expanding the palate and raising the cheekbones

After payment, you will get the link to the course on your email.
If you will have any questions - please send me a message @mewing.world

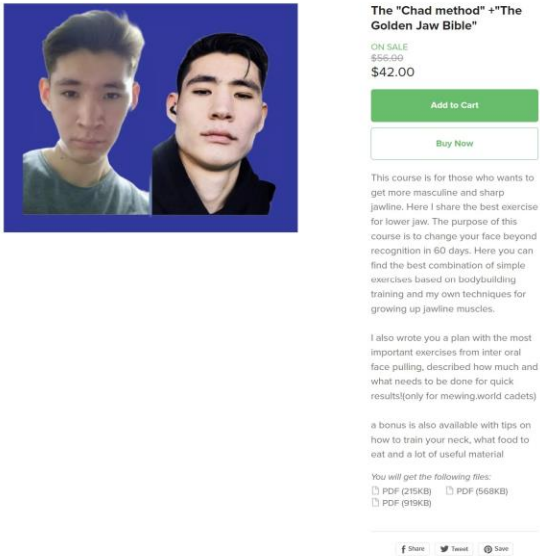
Pay for the course

which I hadn't seen referenced anywhere else. I kept going through each post, hoping eventually one of them would describe some of these techniques explicitly but didn't come to much of an understanding besides that it seemed like it was very effective.

The account is run by a lady named Lilia who frequently posts screenshots of direct messages and pictures from clients sharing their excitement about the results they have achieved. Mewing.world also frequently posted links to posts by another account called Chad_from_Mewing.world_. The Chad_from_Mewing.world_ page is run by a Russian man named Amir who describes how to develop an ideal masculine form through more active exercises than face pulling. Mewing.world often posted about Amir and how he had achieved such great results from her program and how he had developed his own methods following, but just like

Lilia's page,

Chad_from_Mewing.world_ was devoid of descriptions of the concrete exercises that it praised as the key to improvement. Both of the pages had hyperlinks to their courses that described everything they would find inside. 72 and 42 Euros respectively.



The "Chad method" + "The Golden Jaw Bible"

ON SALE
\$66.00
\$42.00

Add to Cart

Buy Now

This course is for those who wants to get more masculine and sharp jawline. Here I share the best exercise for lower jaw. The purpose of this course is to change your face beyond recognition in 60 days. Here you can find the best combination of simple exercises based on bodybuilding training and my own techniques for growing up jawline muscles.

I also wrote you a plan with the most important exercises from inter oral face pulling, described how much and what needs to be done for quick results(only for mewing.world cadets)

a bonus is also available with tips on how to train your neck, what food to eat and a lot of useful material

You will get the following files:

- PDF (215KB)
- PDF (568KB)
- PDF (919KB)

Share Tweet Save

Their payment sites set off the alarm bells in my head. Was I really going down the rabbit hole here? I had already been convinced Western Medicine was failing, was I on the way to climate denial and Lizard people? This is what a scam looks like, yet the

content on their instagram pages had convinced me... maybe it was just because they were so amateurly made. I decided I would hold off, at least for a little while and redirect my attention to other streams of info on the internet.

How it is Taught

Any investigation into mewing is incomplete without consideration of its spread online. The founders of the technique first began posting videos that are still freely available on the internet in August of 2012 on the Orthotropics channel on YouTube. The first videos on the channel to directly reference tongue posture in the title came two years later with “Normal Tongue Posture by Prof John Mew”. This was followed by “Tips and Exercises to Correct the position of Tongue by Prof John Mew,” in which Professor John Mew provides a guide on the tongue posture that would become mewing. This early tutorial would prove to be important in the spread of the concept as it is the only video from the initial two years of the channel to gross more than half a million views. The comments on the video, the majority of which were posted between 2022 and 2017, come from viewers both singing their praises to Mew and airing their laments at their perception of being let down by the dominant healthcare institutions currently in place. One comment from user Adam North, posted in 2020, reads, “Why the hell did nobody tell me this as a kid”. This sense of regret is often stirred into comments made by people who seem to want to believe they can still make changes for the better but have realized for themselves that it would have been a lot easier earlier on. The comment at the time of this writing has over 2,500 likes and fifty-four replies with varying responses. Another common sentiment being shared in the replies are from people asking whether it works at

various ages, such as user ADMIR, who asked, “does this work at 16?” to which user haydn holbrook responded, “@ADMIR it works at any age. Earlier the better. You can choose to improve for the rest of your life or slowly degrade”. User ADMIR responded back that they had been doing it (mewing) for a week and already “got amazing results”. These types of interactions on the first video are a great example of the type of dialogue that is typical across the most popular of the videos on the Orthotropics channel that address tongue posture. One response from user J A S M I N E LikeTheRice reads: “Pharma makes money off of you not being healthy why would they teach you how to be healthy instead lets [sic] learn calculus and about parallelograms”. This expression of skepticism and frustration aimed at the Western healthcare system offers insight into the mindset of the online community. Here are people, the majority of which present as young men in high school and earlier, as evidenced in this commenter’s reference to calculus and geometry, who feel they have been let down in life by what has been branded as progress in society. The institutions that provide education seem irrelevant, the institutions that are responsible for helping with their health are useless, and their hope for meaning is reduced to objects for larger corporate monopolies to profit off of. Now, they have found themselves on the internet, searching for the secret hidden key to life like the beautiful influencers, models, and celebrities whose images they are constantly bombarded with, and what they are finding is Mewing and comment sections full of people like themselves.

Up until this point this paper has focused on the works of the original creators of Mewing, but the first sources that come up when looking up mewing on a search engine are not Mike and John, but Health.com, WebMD, Everyday Health, Healthline, Byte, and

a slew of articles from a bevy of other news and health outlets that all share almost all of the same information and all come to similar conclusions: Mewing: Does it work? Conclusion: unlikely/no. Like the article by Byte (a company that sells teeth aligners), many go as far as to say that surgery and orthodontic appliances (like braces or teeth aligners) are usually required for facial restructuring. The Byte article states, “It’s not possible to replacing [sic] these conventional treatments with tongue posture exercises by any stretch of imagination” (“Mewing[...]”). Most cite their reason why mewing will not work as a lack of evidence to support the theory’s claims, and they certainly aren’t contributing to a push to conduct the type of large-scale scientific study that they claim is necessary to constitute supporting evidence. Why is this? John Mew, now stripped of his orthodontic license due to his insistence on the validity of his theory, says in his video, “John Mew on orthodontic research” from February 2023, that this is because the type of study required to make a compelling argument against would require a prospective study, which is where the orthodontist takes patients and collects results all the way through treatment, then compares the results of all of their patients with the patients of others. The reason Mew says this type of study is not often done is because it very effectively points out discrepancies in treatment among different universities, which is the point, but the universities are too afraid of being exposed as publicly getting bad results and so they often do not agree to conduct collaborative prospective studies. Mew claims he has run prospective trials, from which he often shares pictures, that indicate the results of his orthotropic process outperform those of standard orthodontics. The problem is the only comparison for the tongue posturing exercise alone is poor tongue posture over a long period, and running an experiment with those parameters is difficult to control

confounding variables, so what is left is primarily anecdotal evidence from individuals on the internet.

These online individuals are often also some of the most predominant purveyors of mewing. If you search ‘mewing’ on YouTube, the initial platform where mewing was disseminated to the general public, you will find a selection of videos from various youtubers, the majority of which can be considered classically attractive, offering their explanations of mewing to their respective audiences. While videos of mewing have been available online since 2014, it didn’t really garner any public attention until early 2019, and even since it has not been widely studied in a scientifically rigorous study or academically based analysis by anyone outside of the Mew’s themselves. There is still only one scholarly article published in a scientific journal and it was written by orthognathic surgeons to refute the viability of mewing as a replacement for jaw surgery called, “Mewing: Social Media’s Alternative to Orthognathic Surgery?”. The popularity of these videos over the videos from the Orthotropics channel get closer to the larger issue of mewing: the way it is propagated online. The main narrator behind QOVES Studio, a prominent facial aesthetics analysis account on YouTube, addresses this in an interview with Mike Mew on their channel quite succinctly. He describes the way mewing is spread online as a telephone game amongst influencers, who, while potentially well intentioned, inspire false hope and establish trustworthiness by attaching themselves to mewing, which in turn enables them to build their own brand (“Does Mewing Actually Work?” QOVES Studio). Often, when information is passed along this way the result is that it becomes simplified to solely refer to the tongue posture while its potential to change your face is exaggerated.

Herein lies another problem with the propagation of mewing on the internet: mewing was never supposed to be the stand-alone practice of proper tongue posture, but rather one piece of a larger lifestyle change. In fact, Mike and John's original premise only claimed to help people with still developing skulls over many years, stating that practice should be started as young as six years old, and following puberty the potential for positive change is minimal. Mike even states he believes there is likely a hard cap on the potential for improvements past the age of twenty-five despite the numerous claims of people in his comment section sharing statements that they have rapidly achieved great results despite starting much later in life. In one of John Mew's most popular videos to date, *Doing Mewing*, he explains how along with tongue posture, the meal time exercise, tongue chewing, and the abs walk are the best recommendations he can make for improvement, which he lumps together under the concept of mewing; according to Mike, mewing is more of a lifestyle change involving the implementation of many conjoined habits than it is a single technique ("Doing mewing," 2018). Most secondary sources minimize or even totally neglect this fact, and then evaluate mewing to be ineffective based on incomplete information. This further leads people who look to Mew and his concepts as their only hope to improve their facial structure, and to see those in opposition as incredible, closed minded, profit focused maintainers of the status quo that has failed them. One thing that these believers in Mew neglect is that Mew says in order to do the exercises that comprise mewing in the first place, and by extension mewing in general, you need enough space on your palate to start with. If you have too little space in the beginning you will not be able to see any results because you need to be able to achieve the initial tongue posture to hold it over time. He concedes that you may need an

orthotropic device to help you make the initial expansion before what is generally considered to be mewing comes into play in the first place. This admission, however, is often dismissed or breezed over, whether it is because the barrier that interaction with a healthcare practitioner represents or the firm belief of mewing hopefuls in their power over their destinies as individuals. The idea of a simple, practical, and to many, logical solution to facial structure is as simple as a demonstrable postural change makes it perfect to spread on platforms that emphasize short form media.

The two platforms that have resulted in the most wide-reaching dissemination of Mewing are TikTok and YouTube Shorts, and the “telephone game” of mewing is most exaggerated in these short form videos. These platforms are popular amongst young people and consist of less-than-a-minute videos that a customized algorithm feeds to users in order to appeal to the interests of each individual. These platforms are capable of creating massive virality because of the combination of the short length of videos and the effectiveness of their algorithms. It is common for short videos showing a brief animated diagram of the tongue raising to the palate followed by a few before and after pictures to get millions of views on both platforms, with the “#mewing” thread sitting at 2.4 billion views on TikTok as of April 2023. The spread of mewing on these platforms is a double-edged sword: on one edge you have the fact that the practice of mewing is reaching more people, and particularly younger people who have greater potential to influence the development of their facial structure for the better. On the other edge you have the potentially negative effect that mewing becomes branded as nothing more than a social media trend, cheapening its value and potential and conflating it with other scams pushed by influencers online.

Chapter 5

Engrossed in the Community:

Reddit: a website I had little familiarity with besides looking for illegal streaming links for UFC fights. Now I found that it hosted a concentration of mewers. I was consulting the comments of a video about swallow properly and someone mentioned a thread on Reddit that was useful so I went and searched for it. No guy wants to admit that they feel they are not as attractive as they believe they need to be to their friends and peers. Or that they are so insecure about their appearance that they are looking to people on the internet who are branded as conspiracy theorists by mainstream media. On Reddit it seemed much easier to open up and talk about it; everyone on the r/mewing and r/Orthotropics subreddit is there for the same reason, so everyone is empathetic to trying to improve your looks via mewing. I posted some pictures of myself on r/Mewing and asked what people thought I needed to improve. They were very direct:

“Your jaw is recessed and you probably have malocclusion as evidenced by your low cheeks. Vertical growth. Vertical Jaw.”

“Your lower jaw is recessed. And your palate is narrow. Depending on how narrow you may need MSE or MMA surgery in order to improve.”

“Your nose is exacerbating your chin position”

“You look fine”

“Did you mouth breath as a kid? Do you snore? Are you sick frequently? DO your [sic] eat a lot of sugary, fried, and processed foods? All these may have

contributed to your current face shape. How old are you? Because it may not be too late to reverse your situation with mewing.”

“Have you been mewing? You could start there.”

“You will need an expander and most likely jaw surgery to align your lower jaw.”

“Your face has vertical growth and you have some crowding. Have you had any extractions or orthodontic work? If you can, seek an orthotropist and avoid any further extractions. Then maybe you can reverse the vertical and start forward growth and expansion.”

These comments were not what I was expecting. I thought I was a little suboptimal, but not a desperate case. I definitely didn't think I had such obvious problems or that I might need an appliance, let alone surgery. I started spiraling downwards in confusion and despair. I looked in the mirror and tried to tell myself I was fine. Remember the one guy said “You look fine,” right? My lower jaw did look kind of recessed though. And my jaw angle was somewhat obtuse. I definitely wasn't going to an orthotropist though because I would have to convince my parents, nor was I excited by the prospect of surgery: that felt antithetical to everything that drew me into mewing in the first place.

I started looking through pictures other people had posted. Some of them looked a lot worse off than me. I offered my opinions on one guy's post who asked if he had a narrow palate. “Your palate is very narrow. You will probably need expansion or MDSO surgery to improve your situation.” That felt good. Maybe he will be able to get the operation and will get good results even if I wasn't able to. Either way at least I'm not the only ugly fish.

Many of the posts on these subreddits are made by younger guys between 15 and 18 showing before and after photos to outstanding receptions. They often include descriptions of how they used to get teased and girls didn't want to talk with them, but since they started mewing (and usually lifting weights as well) they get much more positive attention. It was generally accepted that until you make an effort and become more attractive your life would suck. This seemed to confirm why I couldn't connect with any friends and girls weren't into me.

Gendered Nature and the Manosphere

Many people, especially men, struggle to discuss their insecurities based on appearance and beliefs in concepts branded as conspiracy theories by mainstream media. To avoid feelings of shame and self-belittling, they may resort to discussing their darkest feelings in the way that feels safest: anonymously online.

Many subgroups of sexually frustrated young men have cropped up on the internet, making up what academics describe as the manosphere. The manosphere consists of involuntarily celibate young heterosexual men who feel their inability to get with women is due to the deterioration of traditional masculinity at the hands of the feminist agenda (Ging, 2017). Various subgroups, such as the red pill and black pill groups, that make up the manosphere differ on many of the finer points, but they all seem to agree that women and feminism are at the root of their problem. These involuntarily celibate men refer to themselves as "incels" in online anonymous groups dedicated to issues of men's rights. Many use these online spaces to find community among others and express misogynistic views which they are restricted from saying in public by the

power of social stigma. Message boards and online communities of men who are sexually unsuccessful then become united by their similarities in sexual isolation and philosophical outlooks, coalescing in the conclusion that they have been rejected by society. They see a society where their rightful place as breadwinners has been diminished by the ability for women to be independent, leading many to feel obsolete.

The ideologies of the communities in the manosphere come to differ subtly in their outlook on how to rebel against the perpetrators of their condition, namely, women and other men they view as more successful than themselves. Of these different groups, perhaps the most pervasive outlook is that of the red pill community. As described by Ging, the red pill philosophy gets its name from the scene in the 1999 film, *The Matrix*, where the main character Neo has to choose between taking a blue pill that will allow him to continue living life in a delusion, or the red pill, which will enable Neo to see the ugly reality of life. For the red pill movement, to take the red pill is to wake up from the delusion that feminist ideals will progress society and realize that they lead to the repression of men and the deterioration of the natural order that places men on top of the hierarchy (Ging, 2017). Part of this red pill awakening is the realization that women oppress unattractive beta male men by using them for their resources while having sex with attractive alphas, and the men espousing these views primarily look to alphas with envy, and betas with disdain, and view themselves solely as incels – “too unattractive to achieve sexual success” (Vallerga, 2022). In order to cope with their understanding that being attractive is the main determiner for their sense of meaning in life, many turn to looksmaxxing. Looksmaxxing, a term derived from video game language, describes the practice of attempting to improve appearance by any means, often going as far as

cosmetic surgery. Mewing is a cornerstone method incels practicing looksmaxxing employ in their attempt to improve their aesthetics. This is due to its low barrier to entry, minimal intrusiveness, and promised benefits of an improved facial structure and jawline.

To gain more insight into mewing and how it overlaps with incel culture, I interviewed a young man named Patrick who runs a small page on instagram called `mewing_journal` where he posts about his progress with mewing and a website where he sells mewing related products and consultations. In our conversation I asked about his views on the various sub communities that he has come in contact with through his participation in mewing content creation online. The main groups he mentioned were the blue pill, red pill, and black pill groups. He wasn't as certain about what the blue pill group stood for, but described it as people who have the perspective that looks don't matter. His impression of the red pill was that it describes the outlook that, to find happiness in life as a man, you have to become an, "alpha male, hyper masculine man. Like people who look up to Andrew Tate" [Tate is an influencer who grew famous online for his regressive views on female psychology and strict gender roles who was later arrested on sex trafficking claims]. Patrick seemed most aware of the black pill movement, although his understanding of it was somewhat at odds with prominent academic sources. He described the black pill outlook as, "only looks matter: in life, if you're not good looking you are never gonna get a girlfriend: if you're not a seven out of ten. It's very toxic. People who believe in it are very influenced". This is very similar to the general consensus of what the red pill community believes, but academics identify the black pill view as distinctly nihilistic: adherents have given up on life and accepted that they will never find happiness as a result of their looks (Daly, 2022) (Ging, 2017)

(Vallerga, 2022). Much to his dismay, due to his online presence, Patrick is frequently associated with people who are practicing looksmaxxing, which he described as the process to achieve being black pill. He expressed that it frustrates him to be associated with looksmaxxing and incel culture in general because he feels that looksmaxxing is only a small part of mewing. I asked him about his views on the gendered nature of looksmaxxing and he explained how he felt it was a male phenomenon because the dynamics of the world have changed: traditional roles of men are being replaced by weaker and softer ideals. “We are not experiencing the same things our parents did, and are becoming less resilient, but in these hypersexualized times men want to be with women more while women simultaneously have more options and selective power than ever”. The prevalence of mewing in incel culture reveals how many men feel they must justify their pursuit to improve their appearance with the belief that they will be incapable of acquiring the privilege owed them otherwise, otherwise, focus on appearance is unmanly.

Compared to the whole of believers in mewing, those who share the most radical views of incels are only a small vocal minority, yet mewing has become associated due to their online presence. The association of mewing to incels makes mewing look bad to those looking at the phenomenon from the outside. This is truly unfortunate because mewing has a lot of potential to positively impact many people’s lives. Dr. Mike Mew dedicates his life to providing an alternative method for facial development so people are not subject to the type of treatment offered by traditional orthodontics that resulted in the destruction of his own father’s face. The work he does is largely positive, yet because it

has become associated with the negative connotation of incel-dom it has come under social criticism in addition to resistance from the institutions he is working to change.

Chapter 6

Backtrack to Instagram and Commodification:

After a few months I got tired of Reddit. Everything on there seemed so out of reach. I had also stopped allocating so much of my internet time to videos on Orthotropics, replaced instead by MMA videos and comedy podcasts that I would listen to while eating or going on walks. I scrolled through Instagram a lot looking at memes, sports, and Instagram model thirst traps. After my morning routine I felt like I had accomplished something and then I would start up on my phone, sometimes interrupted by going on walks or half-assing workouts. Regardless I felt I couldn't escape the pull of the instant satisfaction it afforded me. What was the point of all this if I was just alone anyway? I looked in the mirror a lot and tried to convince myself that once school started up I would make lots of real friends who wouldn't abandon me. I would be well liked and people would want me around, and if they didn't I would find new people. Everything would be fine.

But I struggled to convince myself this was true. I was existing in a void that echoed back everything I voiced in a sarcastic tone. I started taking an interest in the Chad mewing Instagram page again. He posted a story saying his course was going on sale and I clicked on his link. The website was still shit but at this point I figured I had

nothing to lose – after all, it wouldn't hurt to look better and I definitely wasn't going to get surgery at this point. I had to make a Paypal to pay for the course because, as the payment instructions explained, many US banks were banned from doing transactions through Russia where he was based. Of course they were. I cringed at the description of what I was about to buy like an addict trying to quit smoking cringes in disappointment before indulging in a second cigarette, then I put in my information, held my breath, and clicked the button to confirm my purchase of The “Chad method”+ The “Golden Jaw Bible”. Long exhale.

Upon purchasing the course I was given access to download three pdf documents. The first document, Golden Jaw Bible, is a 12 page pdf made in a word processor that starts with a white title page with the following preface:

The exact and simple guide every man can use to get a more robust,
masculine and attractive face that makes 98% of girl's heads turn while
making other guys deeply envious ofyour [sic] look, without spending hundred of
dollars on surgery...

Which is pretty blunt, but I suppose that's more or less what I'm going for. I was just going to have to let go of my pride that I was better than all this. The rest of the program consists of four chewing exercises and a few brief excerpts about how dedication and consistency to them will change your life. Then it concludes by recommending to also do facepulling and mewing. While I got a towel (I didn't have the type of rubber strip it recommended) and started trying out the Pitbull exercise like it was described in the program. My jaw quickly started to hurt. I pulled the towel out and moved my jaw around and felt a bunch of popping sensations.

The next document is “BONUS Hacks and Secrets of the Chads,” which I was surprised to find is 47 pages long. How come the bonus is so much longer than the main document? I skimmed through. It covered everything from neck training and posture to ‘How to eat like a Chad’ and the HALO effect. It was essentially a conglomeration of habits and recommendations for how to live your attractive life. It felt like I had a long way to go to become beautiful. The further along I got the more frustrated I became – if I’d just been raised to have had more healthy patterns ingrained in me from the jump then I wouldn’t have to worry about all of this stuff. He signed the end of the document Amir Chad.

The third document is just a three-page document with recommendations for different lessons from Mewing world’s “Natural Harmonization of Face Proportions” that are important to pay special attention to for the Chad method to have the greatest benefit. It doesn’t include how to do any of these exercises though – you have to buy that course to get access to them. I guess I should have bought that course instead. In the meantime I was just going to stick to mewing.

Self Prescriptions for Prevention

People who turn to mewing are often initially interested due to the purported benefits to facial appearance, but many stay because they begin to learn about the other health-related benefits of mewing and they realize that they have been let down by their Western health care providers. The more broad lifestyle practices that Mike Mew incorporates in mewing, such as postural exercises, chewing, and perhaps most

importantly, nose breathing, are generally accepted by health care to be beneficial, or at the very least, not detrimental. They are also all ideas that are emphasized in various traditional cultural practices: ‘sit up at the table,’ ‘chew your food,’ ‘close your mouth, you’re going to catch flies,’ ‘stand up straight’. These commonplace adages address best practices paramount to the efficacy of mewing, but as our culture progresses, just as with the shift in the conception of masculinity, the role of tradition as the main influencer of lifestyle is being lost” with “tradition’s prominent influence on lifestyle must compete with capitalism. People at every point along the political spectrum can find some common ground in the belief that global capitalism has had a negative effect on cultural diversity and traditional ways of living (Miller, 2021). While capitalism has proven to be the most effective economic system for spreading innovation that increases efficiency, it’s driven by profit over all else- it fails to take human costs into account of its function, leading to loss of traditional knowledge and cultural degradation. Time tested ways of life are bulldozed over by innovation. While this leads to many benefits in terms of economic development and the spread of useful technology, it subjects all of humanity to cultural losses with consequences we are constantly discovering after the fact.

One such loss in tradition is the lessening of physical movement required by laypeople, replaced by a sedentary lifestyle of long distance seated commutes to work long desk jobs, followed by a return to a home where, fatigued from their day, people are encouraged to decompress by sitting down and watching television, playing video games, or going on the internet. Another loss of tradition caused by capitalism is the homogenization and hyper-processing of our foods. This change in food has led to a drastic increase in sugar intake in the last century, with some studies showing the average

American now eats over 750% more sugar than we did a century ago (“45 Alarming [...]”, TheDiabetesCouncil.com). Mike Mew argues that these shifts, especially in our diet, have led to the hidden pandemic of crowded teeth, malocclusion, and underdevelopment of the jaws and craniofacial structures (Mew, “Wise Traditions,” 2018). The paleoanthropological record of human skulls since the industrial revolution, where processed foods first became prominent, supports the theory that changes in our diet that require less chewing are at least partially responsible for underdeveloped craniofacial structures (Nestor, 2021). Anthropological evidence gathered from the effect of modern diets versus traditional diets on the craniofacial development of indigenous peoples also support the theory that diet plays a major role in our craniofacial development. Dr. Weston Price visited indigenous tribes around the world in the 1920s and 30s and found that indigenous peoples who followed their traditional high fat, high fiber diets had better developed faces and dental arches and fewer cavities and other such dental conditions. He concluded that the facial structure followed the same basis for development as the rest of the human body: use it or lose it (“Does Mewing Actually Work?” QOVES Studio).

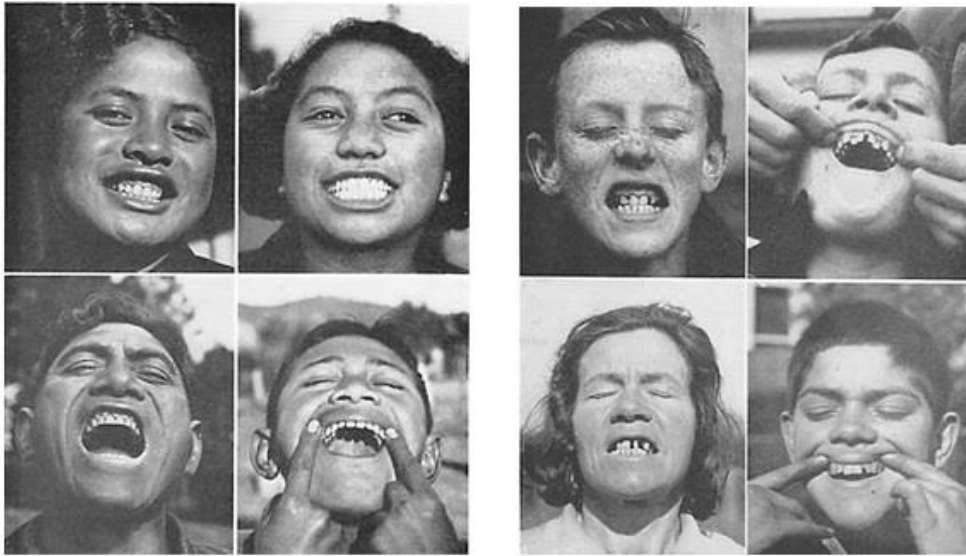


Image from Price, Weston A. [Nutrition and Physical Degeneration: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern Diets and Their Effects](#) Benediction Classics, 2010.

Western healthcare institutions offer little guidance in response to the evidence that people's health and developmental issues come as a result of environmental and habitual factors and not solely genetic causes. This is because Western healthcare is based on a model of diagnosing problems and then treating their symptoms, not in identifying factors and trends that put people at risk of developing problems in the future (Musalek, 2013). Doctors are trained to identify the cause of symptoms and then prescribe a treatment, often in the form of drugs or surgical operations. This is an important job and function of healthcare. However, doctors often only see the affected people once their symptoms have developed to the point that they are bad enough that the person requires medical intervention from a doctor in the first place.

Problems arise when people come to believe that these institutions labeled as health care will look out for their continued health – this is a misnomer. Accepting the

definitions of the root words of the compound noun, health, meaning the state of being free from illness or injury, and care, meaning to feel interest or concern, then health care should mean the concern for being free from poor health. In other words it would mean to take action to sustain good health, not to treat people after they have already fallen ill. Most of the institutions considered to be health care would be more appropriately described as 'sick care' or 'crisis care'. This extends to orthodontia, which is arguably one of the more preventative branches within the tree of Western health care: if a person has a heart attack they will be rushed to the doctors office where a doctor will give the person, now a patient, oxygen, a series of drugs to regulate blood flow and relieve pain, and then they will be operated on by placing a stent or by open heart surgery. But who was checking in on the person's lifestyle and dietary habits that led them to this catastrophic failure of health in the first place? Their physician that most insured people in America are only covered to see for maybe 30 minutes once a year? Heart surgery is much more difficult for the hospital and requires more infrastructure, and once that infrastructure is in place hospitals are incentivized to perform expensive and lucrative operations, to recoup losses and generate income in a for-profit health care system.

Orthotropists and mewers are concerned with the limitations of traditional orthodontics. Even some traditional orthodontists who set out to research benefits of orthodontic treatment, such as Peter Vig, Marc Ackerman, and Alexander Spassov, find there is not sufficient scientific evidence supporting the health benefits it claims (Whitcomb, 2020). In fact, the principles of traditional orthodontics are founded on the diagnostic standards proposed by Edward Angle in 1898. Angle, inturn, was inspired by his mentor, Freemason Dr William Gibson Arlington Bonwill. Bonwill used his theory of

the geometrically ideal dental arch as proof of the existence of a divine creator who fashioned the complex structures of the universe like a clockmaker designs the gears of a clock, rejecting the Darwinian theory of evolution (Ackerman, 2007). Over a hundred years later, when a child with crowded teeth consults an orthodontist, it is standard practice for the orthodontist to diagnose the way their jaw sits (their class of occlusion) based on Angle's classifications. They then often extract some teeth to make room for the others, and install retractive appliances like braces. These retractive appliances combined with extracting teeth have a tendency to shorten the dental arch, narrow the palate, and negatively impact patients' silhouettes and airway health. According to Dr. Mew, modern traditional orthodontics doesn't even have a unified explanation for why teeth become crooked in the first place (Mew, "Orthotropics: [...]", 2018). The field's foundational belief is that our dental structure is predetermined, but now it attributes the determination to genetics as opposed to the intricate handiwork of a divine creator. Many orthodontic treatments that don't seek to address the root causes of the problems they treat, like tooth extractions and restrictive appliances, can then exacerbate other related problems. Underdeveloped maxillas are large contributors to sleep apnea and airway disorders (Heit, 2022) (Lee, 2020). When treatments like extractions and restrictive appliances move the maxilla down and back the treatment will often leave patients with straight teeth, but recessed chins, lengthened faces, and small airways. People unsatisfied with their appearances or suffering from health problems related to poorly craniofacial structure, may seek alternative means and research solutions online.

In our current society, the fitness industry and online influencers fill the gap left by the diminished role of traditions and healthcare to guide and inform people's habits

that lead to long term health and beauty. This gap enables the spread of orthotropics through social media, which otherwise could have been confined to obscurity due to active repression from the traditional orthodontic governing bodies. However, it has also made an online landscape ripe with the spread of misinformation and radicalization that we see in cultural facets like with incel culture. When institutions neglect to acknowledge promising solutions to health issues that conflict with their means of profit and authority, it can engender further radicalization and polarization. Individuals who question Western medicine feel they must fend for themselves in determining the actions necessary for their own health, as the doctors they have access to in person become adversaries to alternative health practices they have come to accept as the truth. The contentious argument between Western and alternative health care forces people to choose between trusting their own ability to sift through the behemoth of unregulated information and its subsequent pitfalls on the internet and self-prescribe solutions, or following the narrow genomic and disease oriented diagnostic approach of institutionalized medicine.

Chapter 7

Real Life:

My focus on mewing and doing the jaw exercises waxed and waned as I resumed classes online. I would watch an orthotropics video from now and again when they popped up on Youtube, or see a post from Amir Chad explaining why some chisel-jawed

white celebrity was so attractive and get re-inspired, but for the most part my mind became more occupied with keeping up with online classwork and looking and trying to talk to my classmates – mostly girls. I also started playing this video game called Rocket League with some people online, and that started to fill a lot of my free time. I tried to bring mewing up with some of my online friends and all of the younger guys had heard of it. Some felt like mewing had potential but none of them believed strongly enough in it to devote much thought or intention to it. It hadn't changed any of their lives drastically. Most of my online friends that were older than twenty-four or so didn't seem to be aware of mewing at all.

I started thinking about whether or not I thought mewing had helped me. When I was most focused on maintaining good posture and constantly mewing I would often look in the mirror and feel as though my looks were improving. I took a lot of pictures in the mirror and put them in a folder on my phone called "haircut," because I was embarrassed by the idea of trying to track my facial growth when I didn't even know if it was possible. Or the fact that I was putting so much energy into it in the first place. Going through all of the pictures I am not sure whether I really made much change.

I got up to stand in front of a mirror and evaluate myself. It doesn't help that I have grown a beard which hides my lower face to some extent since when I first started mewing. I think back to some pictures of myself from before we got sent home two years ago and feel as though I have gotten uglier since then. Or maybe like my appearance has been on a bell curve. I'm not sure if mewing has improved my looks or not. Then I started to think about the other purported benefits: improved breathing, better posture, deeper sleep – the stuff that I would always lead with when I tried to talk about it with

other people. I suppose ever since I began attempting to mew I have been breathing more through my nose and less through my mouth. And when I look at myself I see I can hold a better posture when I really try after a few chin tucks even though my posture looks horrible when I relax and stop paying attention. I never really noticed any problems with my sleep so I can't really say whether it improved or not.

I stand up straight, tuck my chin and suck my tongue to the roof of my mouth. I guess breathing more through my nose and less through my mouth and being able to have a more attractive posture is pretty good and it doesn't cost me anything. If my face gets more attractive overtime that would be a welcomed bonus, and if it's just a placebo at least maybe I'll feel more confident. I don't really lose anything either way so I might as well stick with it and hope for the best.

Conclusion

When people are isolated they look to the internet to provide a supplement for the lack of interconnectedness they feel in their analog existence. The internet takes on the tenuous role as the purveyor of healthy lifestyle practices in response to the narrow diagnostic role played by Western medicine. Healthcare was never designed to be preventative: it is and has always been about treating the sick, not teaching the healthy to stay healthy. The truth is, science is still catching up to human culture when it comes to understanding the micro habits that go into living a healthy life. The nature of science, and thus modern health care, is to test one variable against another, which works great for drawing conclusions about cause and effects. The problem therein lies in the fact that

some of the most impactful and beneficial practices are small habits that build on each other overtime to create larger positive impact: any one habit showing minimal impact in the absence of others, but combined with other practices over years results in large positive effects.

Mewing is a concept that champions habits that will lead to positive change overtime. Our bodies are capable of great change when subjected to physical exertion. Bodybuilders increase the size of their frame with weightlifting. People who suffer from a stroke often develop half of a face that sags as a result of loss of muscle control. Mewing operates on the understanding that, with proper functioning of the muscles in the face and healthy posture, people can develop favorable facial structures over time.

Mewing went viral in early 2019 and spread from a small orthodontic Youtube channel to the rest of social media. The idea that you can change your facial structure to become more attractive without surgery by mewing is popular amongst young heterosexual men who have grown frustrated about their inability to attract and engage with women. The most radical of these men who characterize themselves as having taken the red or black pill hold that women are biologically determined to have sex with the most attractive alpha men and then take advantage of average beta men for their money, leaving them, the incels, without their right of sexual activity.

Despite its promising benefits, mewing is disparaged as a social taboo because of its association with this misogynistic outlook combined with traditional masculinity's rejection of cosmetic practices and lack of support from traditional orthodontics.

In conclusion, mewing needs more support from the medical and scientific authorities in order to reach its potential to help make people's lives better. With

institutional support to teach people good oral posture, nose breathing, and proper swallowing and chewing techniques at very young ages, could greatly improve the lives of countless individuals. It could lead to a reduction of corrective orthodontic treatment, surgery, sleep apnea treatments, joint issues, back problems, and countless other health problems. Unfortunately, mewing is receiving the opposite attention from institutional powers, as traditional orthodontic organizations are threatened by its accusations of the errors with their dogmas. Dr. Mike Mew has been requesting to have a debate with the governing orthodontic institutions about the cause of crooked teeth and malocclusion since 2009, but they refused. In 2018 the British Orthodontic Society expelled Dr. Mike Mew and sued him on the accusation that the theories he operates with and spreads online are not firmly based in scientific studies. The exact wording of their ruling against him in their initial hearing is as follows:

Having listened to what you have to say and having considered the matter in full, the unanimous decision of the board is that in our opinion your conduct is contrary to the interests of the society. It is the board's opinion that your social media campaign has made a number of statements which have misled or have the potential to mislead patients and the public. The Board considers that your actions through your social media campaign constitute a potential risk to patients, both physical and psychological, that are inconsistent with the society's aims of maintaining and improving professional standards to improve the quality of patient care (Orthotropics, Mike Mew Expelled, 2018).

And they felt that the social media campaign Dr. Mike Mew runs, “seems to demonstrate an unhealthy obsession with publicity to the detriment of patients”. Instead of conducting

a scientific debate to determine the validity of the environment versus the genetic frameworks for dental development, Dr. Mew is being forced to debate the genetic theory of orthodontics as the accused party in the court of law. The lawsuit, which, at the time of writing, has been going on for five years, is a sad reflection of not only the state of orthodontics, but also the functioning of evidence-based health care in general.

However, there is hope in the way that many who claim to have improved their lives with mewing are rallying behind Dr. Mike Mew to defend him and the concepts he champions. Even in the unfortunate possibility that Dr. Mew becomes a martyr for the cause of mewing, the legacy of his work will live on thanks to its propagation on the internet. Many influencers who have helped to spread mewing online have made videos in support of his case and he has joined forces with thirty relevant health organizations to spread education of mewing concepts. Specialists in other fields of medicine that deal with the face and breathing, especially orofacial myofunctional therapists, airway specialists, and integrative orthodontists, are implementing concepts Mew popularized and may one day form a stop gap in the necessity for education on oral posture and the related habits championed by mewing.

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