Understanding Lookism

وجدان بن عبيد(*)

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Saudi Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission, the Saudi Centre of Philosophy and Ethics and the Saudi Association of Philosophy.

Abstract

This paper explores the concept of 'Lookism', a form of discrimination based on a person's physical appearance. Several approaches have been proposed to combat lookism. These approaches have been categorised into redistributive and revisionary strategies. Redistributive approaches suggest altering the current distribution of beauty by broadening the current beauty standards, giving individuals more options to improve their appearance, or creating policies and implementing affirmative measures against appearance-based discrimination. The revisionary approaches propose that we abandon our current conception of human beauty and adopt a new notion that aligns better with social justice goals. The latter set of approaches has been subject to criticism. This paper asserts that both approaches are predominantly focused on beauty rather than addressing the core issues of lookism. It highlights the importance of redefining lookism and thoroughly understanding lookism as a crucial step towards its effective combat and making the redistributive approaches more practical. By understanding the defining traits of lookism, the behaviour of individuals identified as 'lookists,' and the environments that foster lookism-related behaviours, we can develop more precise and effective policies. This, in turn, enables us to allocate resources more effectively in the ongoing efforts to combat lookism.

Keywords: Lookism, Aesthetic Bias, Beauty Standards, Medicalised Beauty.

I | Introduction

The way one looks is increasingly vital in today's global culture as visualisation and image gain substantial influence on our daily lives. Lookism, which refers to the discriminatory treatment of individuals based on their physical appearance, can, like other "-isms," serve as an oppressive social construct, potentially leading to the marginalisation of certain social groups, ultimately leading to the establishment of hierarchies predicated on physical attractiveness. Therefore, Lookism has posed

(*) أستاذة وكاتبة.

many challenges and has put us before vital questions about our responsibilities towards our bodies and the treatment of “others”.

The existing approaches suggested to address lookism and mitigate its consequences have primarily centred around beauty, beauty standards, and the re-evaluation of our prevailing definitions of beauty as a means to combat lookism. These approaches emphasise the importance of redefining and broadening our understanding of beauty standards to tackle the issue of lookism. Mateo Ravasio has recently introduced a distinctive overview of the current strategies and approaches proposed to combat lookism, namely the i) (re)distributive strategies and the ii) revisionary strategies [Ravasio 2022]. To Ravasio, these strategies are the current approaches to tackle lookism [2022,4]. According to Ravasio, the redistributive approach is considered the most common proposal that calls for expanding our current beauty standards and focuses on redistributing resources, opportunities and social power by challenging beauty standards [Ibid.]. A way to achieve this goal can be done by creating policies that offer free or financially covered aesthetic procedures and cosmetic surgeries, which facilitates the inclusion of the unattractive to the beauty standards, or creating policies with affirmative measures that target combating the harms of lookism, such as banning lookism in work in employment [Minerva, 2017, Ravasio, 2022]. Another approach focuses on societal dynamics that can be altered by changing the current beauty standards by promoting certain “beauty” features [Ibid.]. He further argues that the redistributive approach is more favourable than the revisionary approach due to problems stemming from the tension between value and justice, a common feature in revisionist strategies.

This paper argues that Ravasio’s redistributive approach is impractical. To combat lookism, we must redefine and understand this bias to make redistributive strategies more practical.

II | Lookism as a moral bias

This section examines scholarly literature to understand how lookism has been defined and studied. Various aspects of life, such as employment, social interactions, and judicial outcomes, are explored to show how lookism manifests positively and negatively. With this, the reader can understand the need to combat this form of discrimination.

Lookism is identified as appearance discriminatory or prejudiced treatment of people based on aesthetic reasons and physical attractiveness in various settings, either consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively [Spiegel. 2023, 47, Minerva, 2017, 181]. Positive lookism refers to discriminatory treatment based on physical beauty where people who are considered and perceived as physically

attractive receive preferential treatment [Spiegel. 2023, 48]. Negative lookism, on the other hand, is the discriminatory treatment of people because of their perceived unattractive physical appearances, in which people who are considered unattractive or ugly are denied opportunities in various aspects of their lives, such as work and romance [Ibid.; 48]. Lookism has been receiving scholarly attention, and it is recently becoming a global concern because it is shaping beauty ethical ideals and standards, where it can perpetuate harmful beauty standards and reinforce societal norms that favour certain physical traits and looks over others, which all play roles in causing aesthetic injustice [Spiegel. 2023, 47, Minerva, 2017, 181, Widdows, 2018, 149]. Additionally, it can result in significant differences in outcomes of different aspects of one's life because of the discrimination and injustice caused by behaviours of lookism [Ibid.].

The act of lookism is not a recent phenomenon but has been present throughout human history [Etcoff, 1999, 23-24]. The history of beauty bias is seen as part of the human experience as an innate evolutionary drive to survive and reproduce [Ibid.]. However, the insight about and impact of lookism have been amplified recently with increased knowledge and awareness about this issue [Spiegel 2023, Minerva, 2017, 182]. Thus, lookism may have had ancient roots since the beginning of the history of human beings. Yet, its impact and prevalence became noticeably warranted, and it created a toxic environment that induced more anxieties and worries about physical appearances, further stimulating more lookism [Widdows, 2018, 147]. The reason why "lookism" has gotten more attention recently than earlier in the history of human beings is attributed to contemporary factors such as the rise of media in general and social media in particular, together with the rise in technology, the widespread of celebrity culture, globalisation and cross-cultural exchange [Widdows, 2018, 112, 139, Berry, 2008, 7]. Additionally, technological advances have made it easier to measure lookism's positive and negative effects on individuals. For example, its impact can be quantified to an extent through the metrics of "likes," "dislikes," comments, and views. These data can reveal, albeit limited, how physical appearance might influence social engagement or the reception of a message.

Philosophically speaking, the term lookism has not been featured enough in philosophical debate, and it has been wildly neglected, even within the topic of "Epistemic injustice" [Minerva 2017,1, Spiegel, 2023, 47]. This is likely because lookism is a relatively new term and has only recently begun to be recognised as a form of discrimination [Ibid.]. Another reason might be that lookism is seen as a less severe form of discrimination than sexism and racism [Spiegel, 2023, 48]. Additionally, it can be difficult to prove discrimination based on looks [Tietje & Cresap, 2005]. Contemporary philosophers such as Heather Widdows, William D'Alessandro, Francesca Minerva, Louis Tietje and Steven Cresap have addressed and discussed "Lookism" from different angles. For example, Minerva argues that lookism is a severe problem that should be addressed. She highlights the tension between societal and individual interests in dealing with lookism. She argues that while altering societal norms and beauty standards may be beneficial on the societal

level, it could also burden those currently affected individuals, making aesthetic procedures a justifiable solution. Yet, she acknowledged the potential ineffectiveness of aesthetic procedures, as they might merely shift discrimination without resolving the underlying issue [Minerva 2017, 188-189]. Widdow focuses on the effects of Medicalized beauty in perpetuating lookism and shaping our global beauty and ethical ideals. She argues that medicalising beauty reinforces traditional beauty standards, such as whiteness, thinness, and youth. This can lead to discrimination against people who do not fit these standards, such as people of colour, people with disabilities, and older people [Widdow, 2018]. William D'Allessandro takes the topic from an ethical perspective and claims that lookism is ethically wrong. He argues that the almost universal preference for attractive romantic and sexual partners is a form of unfair and harmful discrimination. He argues that we should challenge the idea that attractiveness is the most critical factor in choosing a partner. He suggests we should focus on other qualities, such as kindness, intelligence, and humour, which are more likely to lead to happy and fulfilling relationships [D'Alessandro, 2023, 8]. Louis Tietje and Steven Cresap claim that lookism can be legitimately described as unjust. They argue that while the essential characteristics of beauty might be universally recognised, what is considered attractive can vary widely and is more subjective than discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, age, or disability. Even discrimination based on these factors can be hard to prove, and beauty discrimination is even more challenging to substantiate [Tietje & Cresap, 2005, p.48]. Finally, Naomi Wolf argued in her book "The Beauty Myth" that the beauty myth is a form of sexism that oppresses women and harms both men and women, creating unrealistic expectations about appearance [Wolf, 2002, 94]. She argues that lookism is often overlooked, yet it can significantly impact individuals' lives. Women should be free to define their beauty and resist the pressure to conform to unrealistic ideals. [Ibid.].

The majority of Philosophers addressing lookism share some patterns in their discussions. Mainly, they focus on the negative consequences of lookism on one's life and how it can lead to discrimination and contribute to low self-esteem and mental health problems [Widdow, 2018, 60,145]. They often challenge the idea that beauty is objective and varies across cultures and time. They argue that lookism is often justified based on aesthetic or moral considerations, yet these justifications are flawed.

The effects of "Lookism" have been established in empirical social and psychological research and different domains of human life [Minerva, 2017, 181; Widdows, 2018, 41]. It is associated with the gain of certain social advantages and the loss of certain social disadvantages, which function similarly to racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination [Ibid.]. The penalties accompanying lookism can cause oppression, exclusion and even damage [Wolf, 2002, 106; Tietje & Cresap, 2005, 37]. For example, evidence showed that unattractive or ugly individuals are less likely to be hired, promoted or favoured in interpersonal interactions, even if they are less qualified than their more attractive counterparts [Minerva, 2017, 182].

Attractiveness ratings hold statistical significance and yield substantial positive impacts. If workers receive a one-point increase in attractiveness scale, their average monthly income rises by roughly 3% [Pfeifer, 2014, p.506]. It can even affect juridical judgement, as evidence showed that ugly individuals receive heavier penalties than attractive individuals [Tietje & Cresap, 2005, 31, [Ravasio, 2022, 3]. For instance, a study explored the relationship between a criminal's attractiveness and the corresponding sentencing outcomes. Participants, including police officers and students, rated over 2,000 criminals' attractiveness on a 1-5 scale, and these ratings were then correlated with sentencing for misdemeanours and felonies. The main finding revealed that unattractive criminals were fined significantly more than their attractive counterparts, with the fines increasing proportionally as attractiveness decreased, ranging from +174.78% to +304.88% based on the severity of the misdemeanours [Downs,1991, p.545].

Moreover, lookism negatively impacts an individual's self-esteem, mental health and overall well-being [Spiegel, 2023, 55, Davis, 2013]. A study reported that more excellent facial attractiveness is associated with higher psychological well-being, where a 1 SD increase in attractiveness leads to an increase in the psychological well-being of .069 and .055 SDs after demographic and ability adjustments. Conversely, a 1 SD increase in adolescent BMI implies a .074 SD fall in well-being and a .057 SD rise in depression, adjusted for controls. Interestingly, these physical factors show a significant correlation with mental health, and the effect of facial attractiveness on psychological well-being is even comparable to socioeconomic influences, such as moving up one quartile in the distribution of family income or equivalent to about one-third of the gender difference in well-being [Gupta, 2016, 1318-1319].

Conversely, beautiful and attractive individuals have more positive opportunities and receive better treatment and even lighter juridical judgement; therefore, it is very crucial here to understand that lookism is a source of injustice [Tietje & Cresap, 2005, 31, Ravasio, 2022, 11]. Bonnie Berry addressed the “alienating effect” of beauty looks-bias, which involves feelings such as isolation, medicated anxiety and invisibility [Berry, 2008, 3, 117, 120]. This alienation results from not meeting beauty ideals and standards [Ibid.]. Berry claims that the alienating effect does not spare the attractive because of the presence of the unattractive ones [Ibid.]. Even the beautiful are subject to lookism if they are “not attractive enough” [Ibid.].

Understanding the reasons behind lookism remains challenging due to the complex interplay of evolutionary, psychological, social and cultural factors [8]. Some research suggests that certain aspects of lookism, such as the preference for symmetrical faces and clear skin, might have evolutionary roots and are universal across cultures all over the globe [Etcoff, 1999, 161]. It has been argued that the reasoning behind evolutionary causes is that beauty is a form of biological adaptation, where “beauty is a universal part of human experience, and it can provoke pleasures, rivets attention, and impels actions that help ensure the survival of our genes' [Etcoff, 1999, 23]. Therefore, humans tend to prefer certain physical

features such as symmetrical faces, heights, and bodily features that can be useful in identifying healthy and viable mating partners with good genetic fitness to reproduce [Etcoff, 1999, 161]. Moreover, some evolutionary theories and social-psychological studies propose that there should be a positive relationship between the level of attractiveness and overall intelligence [Etcoff, 1999; Hansen,2006]. Research suggests that people often associate physical attractiveness with other positive qualities such as intelligence, trustworthiness, and competence. This is explained by what is called the “halo effect”, a cognitive bias that leads people to assume that if an individual is good at one thing (e.g., looking attractive), they must be good at others (e.g., job performance) [Gupta et al. 2016]].

Additionally, Brain image studies show that reward circuits in the brain are activated when viewing the faces of attractive individuals [Aharon et al. 2001]. Even newborns, as early as two months, prefer beautiful faces, as evaluated by adult assessors [Salter et al. 1998]. Altogether, it makes it hard to resist lookism because this process is governed by the mechanisms of natural selection [Etcoff, 1999, 23, 116].

Cultural studies confirmed the link between human behaviour and beauty [Etcoff, 1999,20]. These studies argue that culture does not spring out of nowhere and results from evolutionary mechanisms influenced by environmental interactions. The result of these interactions is culture [Ibid.]. This can also be seen in the previous example about how people from different classes react to the standards introduced by the “global economic elite” [Berry, 2008, VII]. Here, it is essential to remember that even though universal, global, and cultural factors are integral players in shaping beauty standards, they are not “fixed” standards, meaning they can change over time and from culture to culture. As an illustration, what was deemed attractive during the Victorian era may not align with modern Western ideals. For instance, having pale skin was once highly regarded as a symbol of nobility but is now less emphasised in many cultures.

Furthermore, diverse cultures possess distinct beauty standards. For instance, a fuller physique is seen as more appealing in African cultures, whereas some East Asian cultures place a premium on lighter skin tones. However, the prevailing preference for symmetrical facial features supports the assertion that beauty standards are universal/global.

These cultural variations might influence the preferences of human beauty; however, the general tendency towards symmetrical facial features supports the claim that beauty standards are universal [Etcoff, 1999, 23]. Humans have long been judged by or discriminated against based on their physical appearances and looks, whether through universal beauty standards or cultural practices such as foot binding [Wolf, 2002, 243]. Philosophers claim that beauty is cultural and argue that some cultures regard some bodily features as beautiful and attractive, whereas other cultures dislike them [Etcoff, 1999; Wolf, 2002, 243; Berry, 2008, 10]. Here, cultural beauty standards are shaped by, among other factors, ethnicity and class [Bordo, 2003]. Philosophers who claim that beauty is universal, on the other hand, argue that even though there is cultural variation in labelling some bodily features as

beautiful and attractive, there are universal agreements about which faces are beautiful [Etcoff, 1999, 22-23, Berry, 2008, 10]. There is even a mathematical formula that describes the measurement of what is considered a "beautiful face", where symmetry is a primary variable in this formula [Etcoff, 1999, 141]. Here, the impact of individual and minority opinions is insignificant. Additionally, the effect of universal beauty standards has shifted cultural views and perspectives about beauty. Beauty standards can be cultural and universal since some versatile features are considered beautiful across cultures, as mentioned earlier; however, cultural variations remain crucial in shaping and refining beauty and look preferences.

The media is a critical player that shaped and expanded lookism and its effects". Media plays a crucial role in shaping our current ideas about beauty, starting from fashion magazines and ending with social media platforms. For example, magazines and social network apps often promote and advertise certain bodily features, such as models with thin and skinny bodies and faces with flawless skins, either natural or modified by photoshops and filters [Widdows, 2018]. Heather Widdows argues that the media often portrays unrealistic and unattainable beauty standards that make people believe that only particular looks are considered beautiful, which leads to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem [Widdows, 2018]. Additionally, it often reinforces negative stereotypes about people who do not conform to beauty ideals [Widdows, 2018]. For example, disabled or fat people are often portrayed negatively in the media, making people perceive and treat them differently [Widdows, 2018].

In conclusion, lookism is a pervasive and insidious form of discrimination that intersects with various dimensions of life, from personal well-being to economic opportunity. Its historical roots may be traced to evolutionary mechanisms, yet its contemporary exacerbation is closely linked with media, technology, and globalising cultural norms. The dilemma of lookism presents a complex challenge for philosophy, medicine, psychology, and ethics, as it embodies a confluence of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors. Although late to the debate, philosophers have started scrutinising lookism through various ethical lenses, posing questions about societal norms, individual interests, and the nature of justice. Medicalised beauty, technological advances, and media have perpetuated and complicated the phenomena, making any simplistic solution untenable.

Despite the clarity of empirical data showing the adverse outcomes for those deemed 'unattractive' and the less-discussed but still significant implications for those considered 'attractive,' the ethical and philosophical discussions still need to be more mature. Yet, they are critical for untangling the deeply rooted prejudices and navigating a path toward a more equitable society. As researchers continue to explore this complex issue, interdisciplinary approaches need to take centre stage, combining empirical research with ethical and philosophical analyses. Only then can we hope to fully comprehend and address this form of discrimination that, despite its prevalence, needs to be more adequately understood and often minimised in its significance. The following section will present some proposed strategies and approaches to tackle lookism.

III | Current proposed strategies to combat lookism

Even though "Lookism" has been discussed from different perspectives for many decades, the problem remains "what to do about it". Lookism is a philosophical issue that raises many philosophical questions, starting from questions about the justification of the acts that cause lookism and ending with questions about the right way to deal with it. Several strategies have been proposed to address this issue, yet lookism remains an acceptable discriminatory prejudice [Widdows, 2018, 149; Berry, 2008, 3]. To combat lookism, it is essential to understand the current strategies that deal with lookism and try to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies. In the paper "Engineering Human Beauty", Matteo Ravasio identifies two main proposed anti-lookism strategies: i) the Redistributive strategy and the Revisionary strategy [Ravasio,2022]. This section highlights the current proposed strategies as categorised by Ravasio, together with his criticism of the revisionary strategies [Ravasio, 2022].

The Redistributive strategies aim to combat lookism by redistributing beauty to those disadvantaged by their appearances [Ibid.]. This can be done by i) expanding our current narrow beauty standards and, ii) providing options to those who suffer from acts of Lookism to improve their appearances, iii) creating policies and implementing affirmative measures against appearance-based discrimination [Ibid.]. Ravasio described this strategy as "Redistributive" because it apprehends physical beauty as a "good" from an evolutionary perspective that we can distribute to overcome injustices, inequalities and the systemic biases that accompany physical attractiveness [Minerva, 2017, 185, Ravasio, 2022, 4]. Francesca Minerva is one of the leading philosophers who addressed the "redistributive" approach [Ibid.]. Minerva distinguishes between the "evolutionary-essentialist" and the "constructionist-social" in the lookism debate. The evolutionary-essentialists hold a biological account in the form of evolutionary adaptation that contributes to one's survival and reproduction [Minerva, 2017, 184]. They argue that the instinct to recognise beauty is hard-wired in human nature, and individuals who do not possess evolutionarily attractive traits are subject to appearance-based discrimination. The constructionist-social holds that beauty is a form of cultural and social construction that shapes our societies to perpetuate disparities and unfair treatment against specific communities [Minerva, 2017, 185]. Etcoff argues that beauty is not a matter of personal preference but a powerful driver in human society that provokes emotions and actions [1999, 233]. Bonnie Berry claims that Lookism is as functional as sexism and racism that serves social stratification and social construct through discrimination [Berry, 2008, 84, 116]. Lookism here shares similar purposes as sexism and racism and can be fought the same way we stood against them [Ibid.]. The discriminating function of lookism helps to serve the power held by the attractive that they do not share with the unattractive [Ibid.]. To Minerva, both approaches are essential, and we need to dissect the elements of attractiveness and beauty according to these approaches to come up with helpful solutions to combat lookism [Minerva, 2017, 186]. She argues that juridical

measures are hard to apply due to the difficulty in identifying lookism; instead, accessible aesthetic interventions should be provided to combat lookism and improve the well-being of the afflicted ones [Minerva, 2017, 187].

The Revisionary strategies aim to combat lookism by redefining our conception of "human beauty" by dropping our current conception to favour a more socially just one [Ibid.]. Ravasio claims that revisionary strategies are less prominent than redistributive ones [Ravasio, 2022, 4]. Naomi Wolf, one of the earliest philosophers, suggested that beauty should encompass a rejection of standards encouraging evaluative and comparative judgments, and it should embrace and value one's independent decisions regarding one's physical appearance [Wolf, 2002; Ravasio, 2022]. Wolf argues that beauty is an economic system made to be used as an oppressive tool, and we need to eliminate this system [Wolf, 2002]. She argues that whatever we see through that media and perceive as beautiful is a fictional myth driven by forces of capitalism and patriarchy [Ibid.].

Ravasio contends that this strategy involves a trade-off between value and justice, which makes him favour the redistributive one, supporting his claim with arguments from the distributive justice debate [Ravasio, 2022]. His argument suggests that instead of having an unequal distribution of conventional beauty, there should be an equitable distribution of a revised notion of beauty. However, it's crucial to note that these revisionary strategies do not redistribute beauty as we know it; they replace it with a new, more equally accessible concept [Ibid.]. This shift means that the traditional ideas of beauty cease to exist in this ideal world, making revisionary proposals subject to critique [Ibid.]. Ravasio argues that since beauty is a positional good, redistributive methods might enhance the beauty of those less aesthetically advantaged while diminishing it for those already aesthetically privileged. However, this doesn't alter the central argument that redistributive approaches don't necessitate giving up the valuable practice of "beauty" [Ravasio, 2022]. He argues that one might note that revisionary proposals bring in new valuable practices, so they shouldn't be criticised for eliminating older ones. For example, he argues that advocates of aesthetic exploration aren't asking people to abandon the valuable experience of aesthetic appreciation; instead, they're suggesting a new approach in this area. However, this counter-argument encounters two issues: i) the claim that revisionary proposals introduce valuable new practices is debatable, and ii) even if one agrees that some value is added through broadening practices like aesthetic exploration, it could be argued that it's not the best solution for addressing injustices if it requires people to abandon existing valuable practices. If there are alternatives that don't demand such a trade-off, they should be considered more favourable.

Ravasio further discusses Irvin's proposal, arguing that lookism inherently differs from other forms of discrimination like racism or sexism. Irvin believes that judgments of beauty are partly based on the pleasure they evoke, making it difficult to eliminate this bias. He further argues that while terms like "ugly" and "beautiful" reflect different degrees of a certain value, race-related words do not have a parallel. The crux of

the argument is that efforts to remove bias from beauty judgments may create a more equitable society but will involve a trade-off as they also remove a valuable dimension of human experience. He asserts that human beauty holds intrinsic value beyond just being socially appreciated. This contrasts racism, which may have practical use for addressing discrimination but is not inherently valuable in the same way beauty is. He further suggests that if beauty is widely accepted as inherently valuable, those who propose changing our perceptions or evaluations of beauty bear the burden of proof. To justify revisionary strategies, they must demonstrate why human beauty shouldn't be considered intrinsically valuable.

Redistributive and revisionary strategies are necessary to address lookism effectively, where the redistributive strategy can mitigate the negative consequences of lookism. In contrast, the revisionary approach can help to challenge the beauty standards that perpetuate lookism in the first place. It is essential first to know that Ravasio's account is based on the assumptions that beauty has three main features: i) beauty is aesthetic, ii) comparative, and iii) beauty is valuable, not only instrumental. He notes that redistributive strategies do not question the three core aspects of beauty outlined earlier. According to him, this distinction helps differentiate between redistributive approaches, which merely alter the existing criteria in practice, and revisionary approaches, which call for replacing the course entirely. He points out that the dilemma of sacrificing something valuable for the sake of justice is unique to strong revisionary proposals. He argues that such revisionary proposals seem to rely on a normative principle that would necessitate changing the practice surrounding human beauty and several other human practices. Implementing such widespread change would be difficult, and the benefits of well-being would be minimal, making it questionable whether the loss of multiple valuable practices would be justified. The following section will address the flaws in the redistributive approach.

IV | The problems with the Redistributive Strategies

Ravasio's distinction gives an excellent overview and outlines lookism as contemporarily seen and tackled. He favoured the redistributive approach over the revisionary approach because the latter entails an unwarranted trade-off between value and justice. In this section, we address our critique of redistributive strategies together with a brief overview of where the account of this paper stems from.

The first strategy in the redistributive approach is to broaden and expand our current narrow physical beauty standards. This can be achieved by diversifying the portrayal of beauty in advertising and celebrating physical variations. Although it is part of human nature to appreciate the value of beauty; however, "beauty standards" are not innate, and education about that can make a change. Societal structures have supported racism and sexism, and it was claimed that women cannot participate in the scientific progress of humanity; however, this has changed after movements spread knowledge about that. Moreover, it is not wrong to appreciate beauty as value; what is wrong is how we react to its presence. Beauty ideals and standards remain socially constructed, and we should separate the standards from the "value" of beauty. Justice is as intrinsically valuable as beauty is, both elements of well-being. However, it should not be acceptable to justify injustice caused by lookism in favour of beauty. The

problem remains that expanding beauty standards to include more groups of disadvantaged people is hard to achieve in the shorter term, as also argued by Minerva [Minerva, 2017, 18-19]. Expanding beauty standards will not stop the pursuit of perfection. Redistribution of beauty through inclusion supports engagement in the pleasurable; as Etcoff argues, "We treat appearance not just as a source of pleasure or shame but as a source of information" [Etcoff, 1999, 39].

The second strategy in the redistributive approach is to provide more options to those who suffer from lookism to improve their appearances by making policies that provide financial coverage for aesthetic procedures. The problem with this suggestion is that providing aesthetic procedures to combat beauty standards reinforces new ones. Moreover, providing financial coverage for aesthetic procedures to combat lookism entails aesthetic harm and microaggression. For example, giving appearance enhancement options would narrow the beauty standards and broadening beauty standards should reject that to include more variations. The former approach encourages the medicalisation of beauty and the pathologizing of ugliness by redistributing "goods".

The societal pressures and expectations emerging from lookism or medicalised beauty can contribute to a broader environment of microaggressions, a hallmark of subtle discrimination [Jones, 2013, 4]. Microaggression has four forms: microassault, microinsult, microinvalidation and environmental microaggressions. Such microaggressions manifest through suggestions that an individual should consider undergoing aesthetic procedures to conform to prevailing beauty standards. For instance, a comment like "You would be so pretty if you just had a nose job" serves as microaggression that subtly erodes self-esteem because it is a harmful implication that the person is not currently attractive because they do not conform to particular beauty standards. Although subtle, such acts reinforce lookism through pervasive societal messages and proposed strategies suggesting that certain features (e.g., smaller noses, larger eyes, specific body proportions) are more attractive. This may encourage individuals to pursue aesthetic procedures to conform to these imposed standards. Here, the willingness of affected individuals to resort to invasive aesthetic procedures for improved self-esteem and societal acceptance attests to the gravity of this issue. Moreover, the proposal to utilise medicalised beauty as a strategy to combat lookism may appear to offer a pragmatic solution by providing the opportunity to alter unattractive physical features; regardless of the reason, it may subject the affected individual to discrimination and essentially normalises the very discrimination it aims to eradicate, which raises ethical concerns and warrants critical scrutiny.

Firstly, by encouraging individuals to conform to prevailing beauty norms through medical intervention, society implicitly validates the standards that underpin lookism in the first place. Rather than challenging the deeply ingrained societal biases that give rise to lookism, this approach risks normalising these prejudices by embedding them within the framework of medicalised beauty and perpetuating them [Widdows,2018]. By suggesting that aesthetic procedures are a viable solution for those affected by lookism, the proposal subtly validates existing discriminatory beauty standards, implying that the onus is on individuals to change themselves rather than on society to change these standards.

Secondly, the medicalisation of beauty risks pathologizing normally functioning physical features that deviate in their appearances from the current beauty standards and ideals, which leads to converting variations and differences into “deficiencies” and “pathologies" that require medical correction and intervention [Aquino, 2022]). This pathologizing not only stigmatises those who do not fall under beauty standards, but it is also a form of microaggression that essentially shifts the burden onto the targeted individuals, implying that their “variations” are “flaws” to be medically corrected. Consequently, this outlook might encourage a culture that pathologizes natural variations in appearance, casting them as deficiencies that require intervention. Such a stance not only perpetuates lookism but also risks exacerbating the psychological distress of those already marginalised based on their appearance or opt not to undergo aesthetic procedures. For example, if someone is assumingly considered for the sake of argument as attractive at a young adult age because of possessing firm and clear skin that shines and glows and receives special treatment from others because of their attractiveness. This person might assign her value here to her beauty and attractive skin. As this person ages, the facial skin will inevitably age as the physiological integrity of the skin will change in both form and function (from the molecular level to the organ level); the skin will become thinner, and pigmented spots might start to occur. Consequently, this attractive person will start losing the privileges she used to have as being perceived attractive, which might extend to losing the sense of (inner) value. As a result, this person will start to look for solutions to get these privileges back instead of accepting reality and separating her value from her looks. This person might consider undergoing an aesthetic procedure to tighten the facial skin to repossess the skin characteristics that gave her previously attained privileges. If this step is acceptable according to the redistributive approach, many concerns and questions will arise. For instance, should we consider “ageing” a disease instead of a normal living process? How often will such a person undergo aesthetic procedures to retain firm, youthful-looking skin? And what are the costs of these procedures? And the list goes on.

Thirdly, while ostensibly contributing to individuals' well-being by enhancing self-esteem and societal acceptance, the prevalent phenomenon of medicalised beauty may paradoxically be seen as lookism that undermines well-being by fostering unrealistic beauty standards, exacerbating mental health issues and neglecting the holistic aspects of well-being. Indeed, the choice to undergo aesthetic procedures can be motivated by factors beyond societal pressures or conventional beauty standards. For instance, some individuals may opt for these interventions for medical reasons, such as reconstructive surgery following an accident or medical condition. Others may pursue aesthetic changes for psychological well-being, as a form of self-expression, or simply as a personal preference independent of societal norms. For example, one might undergo invasive procedures to look like someone they admire or to “fix” a deformity because it affects a specific function, which both have nothing to do with lookism or beauty standards. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between individual choices made in a vacuum and those made within a society that upholds certain beauty ideals. While

personal motivations can be multifaceted, they are often consciously or unconsciously shaped by prevailing social expectations [Widdows,2018]. Even when the decision to undergo an aesthetic procedure appears to be a personal preference, it is worth examining the extent to which societal pressures and lookism may have subtly influenced that choice. Individual autonomy and the freedom to make personal choices about one's body, including the decision to undergo aesthetic procedures, are critical values that should be respected. However, these values can co-exist with critically examining societal pressures and biases concerning physical attractiveness. Respecting individual choices does not negate the need to interrogate the societal structures and attitudes that may shape those choices. The aim is not to criticise individuals who opt for aesthetic procedures but to scrutinise the broader social conditions that often establish the context within which such personal decisions are made. By understanding how societal pressures can influence individual choices, we can work towards creating a more inclusive society that validates diverse forms of beauty. We acknowledge that beauty is valuable and remains essential, and this is not something we argue against. The problem is lookism and not beauty, and opting to undergo aesthetic procedures because of lookism is what should be investigated.

The third redistributive approach strategy is creating policies and implementing affirmative measures against appearance-based discrimination. This can be done by, for example, creating policies that prevent employment based on looks or fine those who discriminate against others based on their looks.

The first two suggestions of the redistributive approach could be more practical and would not combat lookism in the short term. Creating policies with affirmative measures is the most appealing strategy in the redistributive approach; however, it is also hard to apply. This is because lookism is a subtle and interpersonal form of discrimination because it is covert rather than obvious and hard to recognise, either by the eye of the afflicted or the observer. This is because it is concealed within the fabric of global society, embedded in human nature, the existence of both “positive lookism” and “negative lookism”, making it more challenging to spot it. Subtle discrimination is often overlooked and normalised, and it is characterised by encompassing actions that are ambiguous in their intentions to cause harm, are challenging to identify, display low intensity, and are frequently unintentional [Rowe, 1990; Cortina, 2008; Jones, 2013]. Despite these characteristics, such actions can still exert a deleterious effect on targeted individuals and cannot be overlooked.

Knowing this particular characteristic of lookism motivates us to address “redefining” lookism instead of beauty, which is the key measure to take. It is when we redefine the problem that we better understand it and eventually build better strategies to combat it.

In this section, we have addressed our criticism of the redistributive approach, especially its impracticality. We agree with the argument that broadening the current beauty standards needs time and will not help the currently afflicted individuals. We disagree with providing options to improve one’s appearance as this way entails accepting this bias, and the suggestion involves a form of microaggression. Finally, we think the third strategy is the most appealing; however, it is hard to apply without a clear understanding of what lookism and not beauty means.

V |Dissecting Lookism, not Beauty

The research about lookism is mainly focused on describing this phenomenon's scope, including its socioeconomic impact. This is important on the social level and has essential additions to the scientific inquiry; however, little is said about how the affected people recognise this discrimination. In this section, we will argue that lookism is a subtle form of discrimination that must be dissected, redefined and recognised to combat its adverse effects. One can achieve this by delineating the traits associated with lookism and those of an individual who exhibits such bias. By emphasising these attributes, one can create a framework for understanding what it entails to be a "lookist" and what it entails to be discriminated against based on one's look. When people recognise the problematic nature of lookism, it will become more feasible to address it directly rather than expend effort on coping strategies. Here, we claim that redefining Lookism rather than beauty is essential because beauty can be subject to debate.

Lookism is not only thinking that one is attractive and the other is unattractive; it entails actions taken by the "lookist" in favour of the beautiful or against the unattractive individuals. It is not a problem caused by people's physical appearance but rather a problem caused by actions towards individuals based on their looks. While the term is often broad, it can encapsulate several more specific "-isms" based on physical features, and therefore, it can consequently be considered an umbrella term for the look-based -isms. Scholars have identified more forms and subclasses of lookism based on physical appearances, such as ableism, ageism, sizeism, heightism and even racism and sexism [Irvin, 2016]. These "-isms" are based only on physical bodily features. Additionally, it is essential to note that lookism can intersect with other forms of discrimination. For instance, one might be discriminated against for being overweight (sizeism), being a woman (sexism), and being older (ageism) all at the same time. Altogether, they are based on physical bodily features and thus part of lookism.

Bias based on the level of attractiveness is the most common type of lookism that affects nearly all individuals to some degree, and this is why maybe the whole debate about lookism is focused on attractiveness bias. Ageism is the second most prevalent form of bias, which targets individuals based on age, becoming more prevalent with time [Kang, 2022]. This mainly affects older individuals, especially women, making it a pervasive issue for those growing older. For instance, older adults may experience workplace discrimination or social exclusion because of their ageing appearance. Coping with or anticipating age-related discrimination and the associated exclusion can increase stress levels, potentially leading to psychological distress and health-related problems. Another type is sizeism, which often leads to bias in both social and professional settings, and it can also recognise its effect when observing individuals undergoing gastric bypass to change their looks due to their size rather than "facial" features. Discrimination related to hair, often referred to as "hairism," whether based on texture, colour, or style, might be perceived as less prevalent compared to other forms of lookism, such as attractiveness bias or

ageism; however, it is still a noticeable form of bias. While we have discussed the most and least common manifestations of lookism, it's essential to note that there hasn't been a comprehensive study consolidating the prevalence of various forms of lookism in a single dataset. Most research focuses on specific aspects or a limited subset of lookism, often examining only one or two records simultaneously. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding a holistic analysis of the different forms of lookism and their relative prevalence. This point is essential in knowing where our resources must be invested.

It was mentioned that lookism is categorised into positive and negative lookism. Most of the literature and approaches focus on combatting negative lookism, a bias against the unattractive; however, positive lookism should be noticed. This is because it has implications for social justice and can affect our understanding of meritocracy. While attractive individuals may benefit from this form of lookism, others are at a disadvantage. This undermines the principles of equality, as opportunities and rewards may not be distributed based on merit but on arbitrary factors like physical appearance. Many individuals may not even be aware that they are giving preferential treatment to people based on attractiveness, a behaviour commonly referred to as the halo effect. The halo effect manifests when attractive individuals are automatically assumed to possess other positive traits, such as intelligence and kindness, even without evidence to support such conclusions. Therefore, acknowledging "positive lookism" is essential to counter these unconscious biases. Additionally, attractive individuals should also be aware of this type because beneficiaries of "positive lookism" might develop a warped sense of self, believing their successes are entirely merit-based while neglecting the role that societal biases may have played. It can also be one of the reasons contributing to a societal obsession with appearance, encouraging people, including the attractive individuals themselves, to invest disproportionate time and resources in maintaining their looks at the expense of other essential aspects of life.

Recognising the various forms of lookism and discerning between the most prevalent and less frequent types can serve as a valuable roadmap for knowing where and how to address this issue. Individuals and organisations can develop targeted interventions by understanding the different forms of lookism and their prevalence. For instance, if they identify that ageism is a particularly pervasive issue, they can focus on promoting age-inclusive workplace policies and practices. This targeted approach is more likely to yield practical results than a generic anti-bias strategy. Moreover, recognising the prevalence of specific forms of lookism helps allocate resources effectively. If, for instance, a particular type of lookism is relatively rare but highly damaging, resources can be concentrated on combating that specific form to maximise impact. Identifying the various forms of lookism and their prevalence can also be a valuable educational tool. It helps raise awareness about the breadth of the issue, making it more likely that people will recognise and challenge these biases in their own lives. It provides a practical starting point for individuals to address lookism within themselves and their communities. Collectively, this approach can also enhance the practicality of the redistributive strategy proposed

by Ravasio, directing it toward the active combat and eradication of lookism rather than merely mitigating its effects by expanding beauty standards or offering aesthetic procedures to those affected.

Lookism manifests in various ways, from subtle to severe, each with different implications and consequences. It remains hard to identify a critical degree or a threshold of lookism where one can say that lookism becomes significantly harmful or problematic at a specific or quantifiable point, either for individuals or for society at large. While it may be difficult to quantify such a critical degree universally, given that lookism intersects with various socio-cultural and individual factors, there are specific contexts where a crucial degree of lookism can become evident. For example, when lookism becomes institutionalised in workplaces, educational institutions, or healthcare settings, it has reached a critical degree that necessitates urgent intervention. Here, lookism can be significantly harmful when some workplaces prefer to hire or promote employees based solely on their physical appearance rather than their qualifications and skills, such as only hiring conventionally attractive individuals for client-facing roles. This is because such actions can perpetuate lookism and hamper diversity and inclusion. This institutionalised lookism can result in discrimination against others and negatively impact their careers.

Exploring the degree of severity of lookism remains relatively under-examined in the existing literature. While research in lookism has made significant strides in shedding light on the broader issue of appearance-based biases, there needs to be a more comprehensive analysis of the spectrum of lookism severity. This can especially seen in examining the potential consequences of positive lookism, which could be equally significant in shaping societal attitudes and behaviours as negative lookism does. Identifying the degree of severity of lookism, in any form, can help us understand how lookism operates on a spectrum, allow us to recognise its different manifestations, and heighten awareness and promote meaningful discourse on the subject. This could lead to a more nuanced understanding of how lookism affects various aspects of life, from personal interactions to professional opportunities. A nuanced understanding helps in discussing the ethical implications of lookism, such as questions about social justice and the equitable distribution of opportunities.

Additionally, by identifying the severity of lookism, lawmakers and organisations can establish policies proportional to the level of harm involved. This could include penalties for workplace discrimination or guidelines for equitable treatment in healthcare, for example. Moreover, understanding the severity can help tailor specific interventions, and it helps in understanding how it intersects with other forms of discrimination, like sexism or racism, thereby affecting marginalised groups disproportionately. Mild conditions may be best tackled through education and awareness, whereas severe forms may require regulatory action.

The susceptibility to lookism varies widely due to cultural norms, social expectations, and individual circumstances. However, certain groups are more negatively or positively affected than others. For instance, individuals with visible physical disabilities or disfigurements often face appearance-based discrimination, specifically ableism, especially in social and employment settings. For example, data from eight different global regions suggests that 36%

of working-age individuals with disabilities have jobs, while the employment rate for their non-disabled counterparts is 60% [Alajlan, 2022]. On the other hand, individuals who fit the societal standards of beauty often benefit from the halo effect, receiving advantages in social and professional settings [Langlois, 2000]. For example, a study found that attractive individuals are often judged more intelligent, capable, and qualified than less attractive individuals. [Langlois, 2000]. This can be beneficial to some extent; however, it can cause harm and stress to this group of individuals due to not meeting the job's actual requirements or the high expectations generated by their attractiveness.

While ableism has been a frequent topic of discussion in the literature, the practicality of implementing a redistributive approach to address this issue remains to be determined. A similar challenge is encountered when dealing with positive lookism. For instance, it needs to answer critical questions such as: how can a redistributive approach efficiently tackle the justice concerns of these groups? In what ways can individuals with disabilities benefit from such an approach? What strategies can be implemented to help mitigate the adverse consequences of lookism on individuals who are considered attractive?

Identifying the groups most susceptible to lookism plays a pivotal role in combatting this type of discrimination. This knowledge enables targeted interventions and the development of more effective educational initiatives geared towards employers, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and the broader public. Greater awareness can foster increased sensitivity and, ideally, behavioural changes. For instance, if older adults are particularly susceptible to negative lookism, tailored employment programs and policies can be designed to address age-based appearance discrimination. Furthermore, in cases where lookism intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or ableism, there's the potential to establish or amend legal frameworks to provide protection. These examples underscore the importance of answering this question and how it can serve as a more practical guide for addressing this issue, making the redistributive approaches more practical.

Another crucial aspect that warrants attention is the impact of lookism on the individuals who are its targets: the victims of lookism. The consequences of lookism on its victims can be extensive and profoundly harmful, encompassing various aspects of life. These repercussions range from psychological harm, such as diminished self-esteem and body image concerns, to social consequences that lead to isolation, stigmatisation, or bullying, which can strain the victim's social connections and interpersonal relationships. Lookism can also carry economic implications, including hiring discrimination, promotion bias, and wage disparities, which can impact long-term financial security. Additionally, it can affect educational aspects, potentially influencing future employment opportunities. While pinpointing the single most harmful effect of lookism can be challenging and is often contingent on individual circumstances and vulnerabilities, it's reasonable to assume that the mental health impacts, like depression, anxiety and eating disorders, can be especially destructive. These mental health issues can be underlying causes of other problems, including poor physical health, social isolation, and economic instability. For instance,

a study revealed that people who experienced lookism were more prone to have suicidal thoughts and make suicide attempts compared to those who did not face such discrimination [Yong, 2021].

Additionally, this study identified correlations between lookism and lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and heightened social anxiety. Understanding the specific harms caused by lookism can serve as a practical blueprint for early interventions. By recognising the victims and the adversities they endure, it becomes feasible to offer psychological support to cultivate resilience to lookism. Consequently, if individuals possess psychological immunity to discrimination, they would be better equipped to withstand the negative emotional, mental, and social consequences typically associated with lookism. Redirecting efforts toward such interventions could better mitigate lookism's effects than offering aesthetic solutions. This approach is especially valuable when lookism intersects with other forms of "-isms," such as racism and sexism, which are not easily changed.

Another essential element we should shed light on is the “lookist”, the person who practices lookism. Identifying the individuals and groups most likely to practice lookism is a complex task, as this form of discrimination is often subtle, is hard to recognise, intersects with other forms of bias, is deeply ingrained in societal norms and can be unconscious.

Lookism based on sex and race, sexism and racism, are the most noticed and recognised forms; however, other subtle forms are hard to see and recognise. Some research suggests that certain factors may make some individuals more prone to practising lookism, such as age, level of attractiveness and socioeconomic status. For example, studies have shown that the gender of the evaluator in educational settings and workplaces does not significantly influence physical attractiveness discrimination. These studies involved participants of various genders, including undergraduates and professionals, and consistently found that attractive individuals were preferred over unattractive ones, regardless of the gender of the evaluator. This suggests that physical attractiveness bias likely extends to the workforce, irrespective of the evaluator's gender [O’Grady, 1991; Luxen, 2006]. These studies have shown that both men and women engage in lookism, but the criteria for judgment may differ between genders, an element that could be investigated. For example, men might focus more on physical attributes, such as body shape or facial features, when engaging in lookism.

Conversely, women may emphasise grooming, style, and overall presentation when engaging in lookism. These studies demonstrate that the gender of the individual engaging in lookism is not always a significant factor. Still, it becomes relevant when identifying the gender-specific criteria by which lookism is employed [Eagly, 1991].

Nonetheless, research has also indicated that in competitive contexts, women may face more stringent judgments regarding their appearance from other women [Fiske, 2002]. This attribute should be given significant consideration when devising strategies to combat lookism. For instance, female-dominated communities or workplaces should receive increased education, attention, and training.

Another important factor in practising lookism is socioeconomic status. Individuals with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in lookism because they have the resources to conform to beauty standards and may expect others to do the same. This specific group becomes noteworthy when considering the redistributive strategy, particularly in offering aesthetic procedures to those affected. This is because such a solution validates the lookism perpetuated by this group and highlights the impracticality of one of the proposed approaches.

Recently, lookism has become more prevalent amongst the younger generation, especially against older individuals, due to the influence of societal beauty standards propagated through social media, celebrity culture, and peer pressure, increasing their propensity to engage in such behaviour [Chae, 2019]. Additionally, the prevalence of selfie culture can push individuals who were once distant from lookism to accept discrimination in favour of attractive individuals [Ibid.].The strategies proposed in the redistributive approach can overlook this group if the young generation does not understand what lookism is and why it's essential not to be a "lookist".

The question of "who is the lookist?" has been discussed in the literature; however, little is said about strategies targeting these specific groups, especially under the scope of the redistributive strategies. Knowing who practices lookism allows for more targeted approaches, educational programs and training rather than broad strategies targeting the afflicted individuals. For example, if lookism is prevalent in a specific industry, workshops can be tailored to tackle the unique challenges of that field. Moreover, publicly identifying and addressing the issue makes it less socially acceptable to engage in lookism, reducing the social stigma for victims and increasing the social cost of being a lookist. Additionally, if individuals know that lookism is actively being monitored and addressed, they may be less likely to engage due to social pressure. In short, resources for combating discrimination are often limited; therefore, identifying the most likely perpetrators helps allocate these resources more efficiently.

Individuals who practise lookism can also face various adverse consequences, such as psychological, social, professional, and ethical ramifications. For instance, individuals practising lookism might feel guilt and shame regarding their biases. Moreover, persistent engagement in lookism, such as constantly comparing people's appearances, can harm self-esteem and mental well-being.

While it might seem counterintuitive, engaging in discrimination based on physical appearance can be harmful to the perpetrator in different ways. Understanding these impacts can be crucial for framing lookism as a societal issue that affects not just its victims but also its perpetrators. For instance, engaging in lookism may diminish the depth and richness of relationships, as superficial judgments can hinder the development of meaningful social connections [Qi Y, 2022]. Moreover, lookism may create an internal moral dissonance or ethical conflict, particularly if the individual is committed to fairness and equality [Festinger, 1957].

The existing literature predominantly centres on individuals impacted by lookism, with limited exploration of how lookism affects those practising it. Raising this question is not intended to shift focus away from the affected individuals or portray the lookists as

victims. Instead, it serves as a means to engage lookists in recognising their biases and engaging in self-reflection to challenge their discriminatory tendencies. Understanding the impact of lookism on both sides of the equation can foster greater awareness and promote faster change. This concern aligns with Menirva's argument favouring the use of aesthetic procedures to combat lookism, particularly in the context of the slow progress in broader societal changes related to beauty standards, making the re-distributive approach more efficient [Menirva, 2017].

Our knowledge about the role of the environment in nurturing our behaviour and the characteristics of such an environment can guide us in radically eliminating looks bias by changing these behaviours [Etcoff, 1999]. Environments characterised by lookism tend to emphasise physical appearances, be highly competitive, and host a significant presence of privileged individuals. For example, lookism tends to be most prominent in environments where physical appearance holds substantial value, as evident in industries like fashion and marketing, which emphasise physical attractiveness and actively promote it [Hosoda et al., 2003; Jones, 2010]. These environments thrive on appearances, contributing to this bias's increased prevalence. Unfortunately, since these environments often wield significant control over the media and people are consistently exposed to them, the effects of lookism become more pervasive and influential.

Additionally, competitive environments often motivate individuals to leverage any available advantage, including physical appearance, to pursue success. This attribute can elucidate the elevated importance placed on physical appearance due to the associated benefits it can bring. Nevertheless, it's important to note that lookism only manifests in competitive environments if individuals within them prioritise looks as a criterion for judgment or individuals benefiting from their attractiveness who wish to preserve this privilege.

Literature has highlighted in several studies about lookism in specific environments where lookism is prevalent; however, the focus is always on the prevalence of lookism in such environments rather than on how these environments nurture lookism. Identifying the characteristics of these environments can guide us to combat lookism. This was something we missed when examining the strategies combating lookism, and we believe they should be highlighted.

Understanding the environmental factors perpetuating lookism is critical to combating it more effectively. This nuanced approach goes beyond identifying where lookism exists; it delves into understanding why it thrives in those settings. For example, in an environment with a high emphasis on physical appearance, implicit or explicit policies, cultural norms, or operational practices may encourage evaluating individuals based on their appearance. Similarly, social hierarchies often perpetuate lookism because they offer a systematic way to enforce discriminatory views. By recognising and isolating these characteristics, interventions targeting the root causes rather than just the symptoms can be designed.

In this section, we have thoroughly explored the fundamental characteristics of lookism, distinguishing it from mere beauty standards and highlighting its most prevalent forms. Our

examination has delved into lookism rather than beauty, shedding light on the lookist individual, and we have scrutinised the environments where lookism tends to thrive. This comprehensive understanding of lookism forms the bedrock for enhancing the feasibility of a redistributive approach. We have demonstrated how lookism can manifest in a manner where neither expanding societal beauty standards nor allocating funds for aesthetic alterations can adequately address it, particularly when it intersects with other forms of discrimination. Effectively tackling the root cause of the problem, which is discriminatory behaviour, can be more efficient than merely mitigating its effects. The latter approach would only fall short of eliminating lookism if we first acknowledge its existence and regulate the behaviours that cause and perpetuate it.

Conclusion

In recognising the conceptual and practical limitations of the redistributive and revisionary strategies classified by Ravasio, this paper has proposed an alternative framework to combat lookism by grasping the key characteristics of lookism, the actions of people who exhibit lookist tendencies, and the settings that encourage such prejudiced behaviours, we can create more targeted strategies and rules. Doing so allows us to distribute resources more wisely and efficiently in the battle against lookism. By highlighting the complexity of lookism, we can foster a more nuanced understanding of discrimination, promote empathy for a broader range of experiences, and advocate for more comprehensive social change.

References

Aharon, I., Etcoff, N., Ariely, D., Chabris, C. F., O'Connor, E., & Breiter, H. C. (2001). Beautiful faces have variable reward value: fmri and behavioral evidence. Neuron, 32(3), 537–51.

Ayto, John. 1999. Twentieth Century Words. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

B.Berry 2008, The Power of Looks: Social stratification of physical appearance.

Bordo, S. (2003). Unbearable weight: feminism, western culture, and the body (10th anniversary, Ser. Acls humanities e-book (series). University of California Press.

Chae, J. (2019). What makes us accept lookism in the selfie era? a three-way interaction among the present, the constant, and the past. Computers in Human Behavior, 97, 75–83.

Cooper, Brittney (2016). "Intersectionality". In Disch, Lisa; Hawkesworth, Mary (eds.). The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory. Oxford University Press. pp. 385–406.

Cortina, L. M. 2008. Unseen injustice: Incivility as modern discrimination in organizations. Academy of Management Review, 33: 55-75.

D. Hamermesh. 2013. Beauty Pays: why Attractive People are more Successful, Princeton University Press.

D'Alessandro, William. 2023. "Is It Bad to Prefer Attractive Partners?" Journal of the American Philosophical Association 9 (2): 335-354. doi:10.1017/apa.2022.3.

Datta Gupta, N., Etcoff, N. L., & Jaeger, M. M. (2016). Beauty in mind: the effects of physical attractiveness on psychological well-being and distress. Journal of Happiness Studies : An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being, 17(3), 1313–1325.

Downs, A. C., & Lyons, P. M. (1991). Natural observations of the links between attractiveness and initial legal judgments. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17(5), 541–547.

Eagly, A. H., Ashmore, R. D., Makhijani, M. G., & Longo, L. C. (1991). What is beautiful is good but...: A meta-analytic review of research on the physical attractiveness stereotype. Psychological Bulletin, 110, 109–128.
Etcoff, Nancy L. 1999. Survival of the Prettiest : The Science of Beauty. New York: Doubleday.
Fricker, Miranda. 2007. Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Hansen Thomas F. Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics. 2006. The evolution of genetic architecture; pp. 123–157
Irvin, S. (Ed.). (2016). Body aesthetics (First). Oxford University Press.
Jan-Christoph Heilinger, Introduction In: Moral Progress. Edited by: Jan-Christoph Heilinger, Oxford University Press. © Oxford University Press 2021.
Jones, K. P., King, E. B., Peddie, C. I., Gilrane, V. L., & Gray, A. L. (2016). Not so subtle: a meta-analytic investigation of the correlates of subtle and overt discrimination. Journal of Management, 42(6), 1588–1613.
K. Davis. 2013. Reshaping the female body: The dilemma of cosmetic surgery. Abingdon UK: Routledge.
Minerva, F. (2017). The invisible discrimination before our eyes: a bioethical analysis. Bioethics, 31(3), 180–189.
Musschenga, A. W., & Meynen, G. (2017). Moral progress: an introduction. Ethical Theory and Moral Practice : An International Forum, 20(1), 3–15. 5
Pfeifer, C. (2014). Base salaries, bonus payments, and work absence among managers in a german company. Scottish Journal of Political Economy, 61(5), 523–536.
Qi Y, Ying J. Gender Biases in the Accuracy of Facial Judgments: Facial Attractiveness and Perceived Socioeconomic Status. Front Psychol. 2022 May 31;13:884888.
Ravasio, Matteo. 2022. "Engineering Human Beauty." Australasian Journal of Philosophy 1–14: 1–14.
Rowe, M. P. 1990. Barriers to equality: The power of subtle discrimination to maintain unequal opportunity. Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal, 3: 153–163.
Slater, A., Von der Schulenburg, C., Brown, E., Badenoch, M., Butterworth, G., Parsons, S., & Samuels, C. (1998). Newborn infants prefer attractive faces. Infant Behavior and Development, 21(2), 345–354.
Spiegel. (2023). Lookism as epistemic injustice. Social Epistemology, 37(1), 47–61.
Widdows, Heather. 2018. Perfect Me : Beauty As an Ethical Ideal. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Yong CE, Kim YB, Lyu J. Body mass index, subjective body shape, and suicidal ideation among community-dwelling Korean adults. Arch Public Health. 2021 Jun 8;79(1):96.