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"Looking Good" and "Good Looking" in School: Beauty Ideals, Appearance and Enskilled Vision among Girls in a London Secondary School.
Anthropology & Education Quarterly 2017, 48(3), 284-300.

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Date deposited:

18/08/2017

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Introduction

Entering Collingson School past the original 1920s building, and into the complex of squat, modern buildings, the "It Girls" were hard to miss. They sat arranged like a tableau on the elevated platform that skirts the main school building. This friendship group territory, where they spent all their lunch-times and break-times (recess), reflected their highly visible position within the Year. As the highest status girl group in Year 11 (aged 15 – 16), the girls were described by their peers as the most "good looking" and as such the most "seen and known". But the girls were also looking; their position was a good one for observing pupils walking past, and comments were often evaluations of other girls' appearance. These critiques could be highly specific, concerning details such as eyebrow shape ("look at her eye brows today, they look like McDonald's arches"); make-up choice ("she's quite pretty actually, she wears red lip-liner though"), or evaluations of body shape ("she's so skinny") and attractiveness ("I think she's really pretty"). In this London secondary school in which I did my fieldwork, an intensity of looking and seeing was a pervasive feature of peer relations and facilitated the frequent evaluations between peers. For girls particularly, these evaluations often concerned physical appearance and body shape.

Bodily dissatisfaction and negative body image among teenage girls are causes of great concern in contemporary Euro-America, and increasingly globally (Anderson-Fye 2012; Becker 2004; Holmqvist and Frisén 2010). The proliferation of media images of thin fashion models or celebrities in contemporary society is frequently identified as a key cause of this dissatisfaction (Coleman 2009; Liimakka 2008). Reading straight from these cultural forms, it is clear to see a pervasive body ideal at work. As Susan Bordo (1993) influentially

argued, while encompassing a certain variety of body shapes – athletic, curvy or boyishly thin – all represent a "slenderness ideal" of taut, toned, smooth and contained bodies with no loose, flabby or uncontrolled flesh. As such, much research takes these cultural forms as the starting point from which to examine the effect they have on girls: "[A] particularly important source of data concerning media effects is controlled experimentation that exposes participants to images of slender beauty in order to gauge the immediate psychological impact" (Groesz, Levin and Murnen 2002:3).

In this article, I argue that the conventional academic mode of studying girls' bodily dissatisfaction is underpinned by the mind-orientated understanding of vision as objectifying. As I will demonstrate, an ethnographic focus on everyday life in school enables a different perspective on vision, one focused on intersubjective learning in a specific context. In this task, I bring different strands of anthropological literature into conversation with each other. In anthropological debates about the senses, some scholars have argued for a "rehabilitation of vision" (Grasseni 2007a; Ingold 2000; Grasseni 2007b; Willersv 2007), challenging previous characterizations of vision as inherently objectifying. In these arguments, they draw upon research on situated learning and the development of skill, highlighting that "[w]*hat* we see is inseparable from *how* we see" (Ingold 2000:260, original emphasis), and these "skilled visions" develop in particular material and peopled environments. As I will discuss, these insights can be usefully applied to anthropological work on human beauty, which has highlighted the cross-cultural variability of beauty ideals but also the self-evidence by which these different forms of beauty are recognized as such by their participants. Bringing these two bodies of literature together, I argue, enables us to explore the way different ways of seeing are trained to different ideal of body and beauty.

In the context of everyday life in Collingson School, this perspective enables us to recognize the particular ways pupils were "learning to see" in relation to local, as well as global, aesthetic ideals and regimes of value. The perceptual activities of looking and seeing were interwoven in their discourses of visibility, as part of which "being seen" was evidence of status. From this perspective, "good looking" and "looking good" were two aspects of the same processes of peer evaluation, which emerged as part of co-participation in peer communities of practice, which also included shared (although disputed) gendered notions of appropriateness and acceptability. For the girls, evaluations of looking good were often expressed through the idiom of physical appearance. Through compliments and bitching (talking badly about someone behind their back), girls made each other aware they were being seen. Both success ("looking good") and failure ("looking bad") were often crystallized in terms of physical appearance. These processes were structured according to dominant ideals of slenderness, body and beauty (Bordo 2003), but cannot be reduced to them. I conclude by highlighting the critique this approach represents to conventional mind-orientated explanations of bodily dissatisfaction.

Challenging mind-dependent accounts of subjective formation and learning

Recognizing the pervasiveness of representations of slender bodies in "the media", there is much literature that seeks to examine the relationship between these and girls' experiences of their bodies. However, as Coleman (2009) argues, while this research is diverse and cross-disciplinary there is a common tendency to posit a relatively straightforward, one-way, and linear relationship between "media images" and their negative effect on girls. As Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook (1998) have similarly argued, the dominant focus on representation amounts to an ingestion model of subjective formation. The individual swallows the media images of thin women to adverse effect. Subjectivity is negatively

formed by this unhealthy diet of images, and is the privileged cause of emotions such as unhappiness and discomfort, and practices, such as dieting and disordered eating. In these linear accounts, women, particularly young women, appear as "pathologically susceptible" to media images (Probyn 1987:203). Ultimately, Bray and Colebrook argue, to view bodily experience as fundamentally structured by the internalization of external images is to give a "highly mind-dependent account of the body" (1998:55).

As these critiques highlight, much research on body image displays the broader tendency to theorize knowledge in terms of representation (Lave 1988; Ingold 2000). As Ingold argues, this depends "on a fundamental distinction between physical and cultural dimensions of perception, the former having to do with the registration of sensations by the body and brain, the latter with the construction of representations of the mind" (Ingold 2000:282 – 283). Vision in this model is reduced to "a faculty of pure, disinterested reflection, whose role is merely to deliver up "things" to a transcendent consciousness" (2000:253).

In contrast, anthropological explorations of skill, perception and the senses, and, more broadly, situated learning eschew the separation between mind, body and culture and instead focus on the "whole body-person" (Ingold 2000:162) as a "singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships" (Ingold 2000:4-5; Gowlland 2009; Grasseni 2004, 2007a, 2007b; Harris 2007; Ingold 2000; Marchand 2010).

In their seminal work, Lave and Wenger (1991) shifted the focus, from learning as decontextualized and individualized acquisition or internalization of knowledge, to learning as the developing engagement of the whole person in communities of practice. Relatedly (and drawing from Lave's earlier work), Tim Ingold proposes a perspective on learning, not as a transmission of information but rather an "education of attention", through which specific

skills of perception and cognition develop in material and relational contexts. These earlier works have since been built on (as one strand in the vast literature they have inspired) in research which focuses on the development of particular sensory and perceptual skills in specific contexts.

The particular focus of this article is on "enskillment of vision" within school, through which pupils' come to see each other and themselves in particular ways. Highlighting the embodied, situated and active nature of vision, Cristina Grasseni defines enskilled vision as:

"Capacities and capabilities that only some people own (while other people own others), to highlight the fact that we all use our eyes skillfully, i.e. in an educated way…Far from being the exercise of "neutral" or "disembodied" observation, then, skilled visions can be analysed in terms of practical routines, and of social and aesthetic belonging. Different *practices of looking* yield *different ways of knowing…*" (2007:216a, original emphasis).

While vision has been characterized as objectifying and distancing – "the most reifying of all our perceptual modalities" (Levin in Ingold 2000:287), these scholars have argued for a "rehabilitation vision" and an exploration of it as a "ductile, situated, contested and politically fraught means of situating oneself in a community of practice" (Grasseni 2007b:1-2).

In this article I build on these insights to offer an alternative account of the way girls learn to see their bodies in particular ways, in relation to, but not determined by, globalized regimes of body and beauty ideals and its attendant politics of value. In this way, I also contribute to a growing body of literature that takes as its starting point the empirical study of girls' everyday lives in research on bodily dissatisfaction. By exploring the dynamic complexity of embodiment in relation to experiences, interactions and relationships, these works are able to offers a more nuanced account of the relationship between bodies and

images in everyday life (e.g. Anderson- Fye 2004; Budgeon 2003; Coleman 2009; Nichter 2000; Liimakka 2008).

Enskilled vision and the self-evidence of beauty

As I will explore in this section, the notion of enskilled vision can contribute to the anthropological literature on human beauty. The relativity of beauty and body ideals has long been established within anthropology. More recently, bodily ideals have been explored anthropologically in relation to the structuring effects of globalization and modernity (Sault 1994; Edmonds and van der Geest 2009; Anderson-Fye 2012). As Edmonds writes, "images of the female body are the frequent medium of exchange for capitalism's astonishing range of material and symbolic production" (Edmonds 2010: 28). The slender body is notable in these globalized flow, a "conception of the desirable" (Kluckhohn in Graeber 2001: 3) that signifies a constellation of meanings including beauty, work on the body and the possibilities of consumer capitalism (Aizura 2009; Edmonds 2010; Anderson-Fye 2012; Swami 2015). As such the slenderness ideal can be conceptualized in terms of a globalized "regime of value" (Appadurai 1986, Graeber 2001).

However, while research on the beauty industry, beauty pageants or women's beauty practices has been used to illuminate other phenomena - for example gender, race, sexuality, globalization, consumerism - scholars have argued that beauty should not be treated as an "empty category". Instead it is equally important to attend to the affective and aesthetic dimensions of beauty (Felski 2006; Edmonds 2008; Edmonds and van der Geest 2009). The challenge therefore, is to balance a critique of the political, gendered, racialized and profit-driven dimensions of beauty and body ideals, with a recognition that human beauty is often of great interest to our participants (and us), and has significant emotional and social effects (Edmonds 2008). Thus as Rebecca Popenoe notes, while beauty and body ideals are often

framed as "the result of media pressure and male fantasies" that should be "rooted out and abandoned" this fails to acknowledge the presence of beauty ideals across space and time (2004:1). Drawing on her research with Azawagh Arabs, Popenoe argues that their ideals of extreme feminine fatness can be understood in terms of their Islamic practice, economic activities, kinship expectations and bodily symbolism. However, while interpreting the density of meanings around fatness and how it relates to ideals in other spheres of life, Popenoe also notes that her participants saw feminine fatness as self-evidently more beautiful. "The aesthetic, like beauty aesthetics everywhere, seemed so obvious and natural to its adherents that they had little incentive, indeed little cause, to reflect upon it" (2004:7).

My contention is that the notion of enskillment of vision can help explain human beauty as both cross-culturally variable and self-evident within specific contexts, encouraging the examination of the situated ways by which our vision is trained to particular ideals. This builds on the recognition that "beauty is neither (only) a social construction, nor always a reflection of other forms of inequality" (Edmonds 2008:153), but, indissolubly, cultural, biological and historical.

Cristina Grasseni exemplifies similar insights through her research among expert cattle breeders in the Alps and her experience of "learning to see" the beauty of prize cattle (2004). As she describes, through activities such as the daily care of the herds, visits to neighbor's farms or cattle fairs, the perceptions of the cattle breeders (and subsequently her own) were structured "towards specific ideals of animal beauty" (2007a:42). Similarly, Geoffrey Gowlland (2009) explores the enskillment of his vision necessary to tell hand-molded *zisha* pots apart from plaster-molded ones made by artisans in the Chinese province of Jiangsu. Linking anthropological theories of value with scholarship on learning and the senses, he asks, "[i]n regimes of value (Appadurai 1986), how might the senses play a role in

the valuation of things – and people?" (2009:232). Similarly, pupils in Collingson School were learning to see bodies and selves in particular ways, informed by both local notions of status and global beauty ideals. In turn, these notions played a role in the different ways pupils became valued by their peers.

Furthermore, a focus on enskillment of vision enables us to go beyond beauty to highlight different ways of viewing bodies. Conducting research in Fiji, Anne Becker (1995) recounts the puzzlement her questions about self-image and body shape provoked in her participants, "[t]hey were not, they politely clarified, especially attuned to body shape" (1995:1). While they were interested in each other's bodies, including weight gain or loss and shape, they did not extend the same attention to their own. Her participants were relatively unconcerned about slimness and undertaking bodily work in order to attain a specific shape, in a context in which bodies were understood in terms of social relations rather than as expressions of individual identity[i]. Becker's Fijian participants' comments on "attunement" suggest it is not only perceptions of beauty that differ but ways of viewing bodies. As I will go on to discuss, for the girls in my study paying attention to separate parts (thighs, stomachs, toes etc.) appeared as a self-evident way to "see" their own and others bodies, while for Becker's participants, it seems attention was trained more on other bodies, and these bodies were not divided in parts in the same way. Moving beyond the individual definition of body image as "a person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings about his or her body" (Grogan 2007:3), body image in this framework becomes intrinsically intersubjective. Understood "in terms of a more visual sense of the image others have of oneself, based upon a person's appearance: the "look" one has for others" (Featherstone 2010:194).

Research context, methods and reflection

Collingson School is non-selective and mixed-sex, located in a relatively affluent area of London, between the suburbs and the inner city. During my fieldwork period, the school had 1,200 pupils aged 11 to 18. The "social make-up" of pupils was described by the national school inspectorate body as "average", with about 20% of pupils receiving free school meals - a "rough proxy of poverty" (Gillborn 2001:108). The school was racially and ethnically diverse, "mixed"-up roots and global routes" co-existing with a simplified process of racial classification (Pollock 2004:35) in terms of black, white and Asian[ii]. In these simplified terms, approximately 35% of pupils identified as white, 20% as black and 20% as Asian.

In the initial phase of the 14-month period of research, I observed a range of classes throughout the school, including a range of different "ability" groups across the years[iii], took part in other school activities such as school plays, field trips and assemblies and spent time in the "Sixth form" common room[iv]. The main phase of the research consisted of participant observation among the 230 15-16 year-old pupils in the Year 11 group throughout their final year of compulsory education[v]. In order to mirror the pupils' experiences, I followed the same timetable every week. This allowed me to get to know the classes well, although limited the range of classes I was observing. During the latter period of fieldwork, I also conducted unstructured interviews with teachers and students in a range of year groups.

When I "joined" Year 11, the head of Year 11 offered to introduce me to pupils who represented particular "types" (high achievers, "problem kids") however I decided instead to build relationships organically through the pupils' existing networks. I followed-up connections made within the classroom and met their friends who were not in the same classes, in this way I got to know different peer groups of differing status. There were advantages and disadvantages to this approach. I was able to gauge who might be willing

participants, and was welcomed in to adult-free, friendship group spaces. This approach also mirrored pupils' own ways of making friends. However, by building relations through inter-group networks, I did not spend time with some of the more isolated peer groups (e.g. the 'Blonde Barbies' I discuss later). Post-fieldwork, I came to realise these groups were utilised in other peer groups' positioning practices and while important to include, I did not have their side of the story.

While writing this article, I have also had cause to reflect on how my own appearance might have shaped my engagement and reception in the field. I was mid-twenties, slim, had long hair and wore make-up. Although I did not change my appearance or way of dressing, I dressed similarly to the pupils and also looked younger than my years. In other words, I fitted comfortably within the norms of beauty, body and gender discussed in this article. Would I have had a different (and harder) experience if I had not? Furthermore, as the work of those scholars discussed above highlights, researchers are implicated in processes of seeing. Both Grasseni and Gowlland "learned to see" beauty or value in a similar way to their expert participants. Popenoe admits that while she tried, it was hard for her to "train her eye" to see fatness as beautiful in the way her participants did (2004:188). I have also reflected on my own practices of seeing in the field. I am not proud to admit that I evaluated my research participants in terms of their physical appearance, and that this represents a more general preoccupation on my part with the physical appearance of myself and others. Like my participants, it seemed self-evident to me that some pupils were "better looking" than others, and that these looks were important to status in the peer hierarchy (although not straightforwardly so). Reflecting on my experiences in the field in relation to this work, I can now understand my vision was enskilled in a similar community of practice to the girls in my study. We are all products of our lived history (Toren 1999), and a dimension of this is that

we have learnt to see beauty and bodies in particular ways. I shared my participants' ideals of beauty, as well as an education of attention to the minutiae of my own body and that of others – stomachs, thighs, even toes.

Everyday life at school and the organization of the informal realm

As Vered Amit-Talai writes, the institutional management of young people has specific effects: school "compresses and hence intensifies peer interaction" resulting in a "zone of the informal" that is both formed by, and in tension with, its formal institutional organization (Amit-Talai 1995:153). Drawing from various strands of "the practice turn" (Cetina, Schatzki, and von Savigny 2001), a rich vein of work has attended in detail to situated activities between peers in school as generative of learning, subjective formation and social distinction (e.g. Bucholtz 1999; Evaldsson 2007: Evans 2006; Goodwin 2006).

Similarly, in Collingson School, pupils put huge amounts of time, effort and energy into making and sustaining their relationships, and analyzing and evaluating their peers and social structure. Through their constant flow of interactions - chatting, gossiping, bitching, hugging, evaluating, joking, arguing, reprimanding and mocking – they created and maintained friendships, peer groups and hierarchical relations within and between groups. As part of this "informal realm", the Year group, and peer groups within these years, can be understood as communities of practice. Participation in these groups represented "kinds of action" as well as "forms of belonging", as pupils engaged in shared learning, and developed shared (although contested) competencies (Wenger 1998)[vi]. Within the year, different peer groups valued different forms of participation, and defined themselves in both positive and negative ways in relation to other peer groups (Bucholtz 1999, Evans 2006). However, the saliency of these boundaries could shift: at different points, pupils emphasized "our year"

(e.g. "our year is a really nice year compared to Year 10"), and, at other times, they emphasized peer group boundaries within the year ("we're the crazy, smart ones").

While this article focuses on the 'informal realm' and peer relations, the aim is not to reinforce the long-running distinction between formal/ informal learning and education (Froerer and Portisch 2012; Lave 2011). Although there is not sufficient space to explore the relations between curricula, formal pedagogic modes and peer relations, school can be understood as a specific and complex site where educative practices related to embodiment take place (Evans, Davies and Rich 2009). For example, Evans, Rich and Holroyd (2008) insightfully explore the codes of bodily perfection and academic performance that pervade the curriculum and pedagogy within contemporary UK schooling, as part of a density of meanings that inform and shape the experiences of young women with anorexia.

Visibility and status in the informal realm

As Tim Ingold argues, discourses on vision are not separate from the practices of vision, but rather can be considered "a narrative interweaving of experience born of practical, perceptual activity" (2000:286). From this perspective, it is instructive that in the informal realm, pupils often described status in terms of visibility; "popularity" was about being "seen" and "known" - "the ones with presence, the ones who have the attention on them, they're loud, people look at them" (Leah, aged 15, Year 11). It was also associated with fame, for example, Jerome (aged 18, Year 13) described his experience in these terms:

> It's like being Michael Jackson or something. You can be at the top of the mountain and everyone is trying to get you off that mountain and climb up the mountain themselves. It puts you under a lot of pressure sometimes, because you don't want to be popular, you don't want to be known, you just want to get on with your life.

Being "famous" and highly visible entailed increased scrutiny and intensified the importance of always "looking good". Shola (aged 18, Year 13) explained:

> You're more of a target because everyone knows you, everyone talks about you...You always have to have the latest fashion, how your hair is, how your tie is…always being on top of your game – like always looking good, always making sure that you look your best.

Viewing status in terms of fame - the extension of "virtual" recognition and influence over space and time (Munn 1986) - highlights the relationship between vision, influence, and sociality. Like fame, status was a one-way system of visibility. Being high-status meant being seen and known (but not seeing and knowing), while being low-status meant seeing and knowing (but not being seen and known). For example, reflecting on her high-status, Shola said she felt bad because until recently she did not know that "some people even existed".

The creation and maintenance of a hierarchy, understood in terms of visibility, necessitates learning structured practices of looking, and making yourself seen. Not knowing "that some people even exist" suggests different practices of looking for those of higher status then those of lower status. These processes were exemplified in the following example, in which Leah and James schooled Dominic in how *not* to become visible. Dominic (aged 15, Year 11) often got a hard time from high-status boys, because rather than deferring (or appearing to defer) to them, as expected, he talked back. One lunch-time, tucked away safely in their peer group territory at the borders of the school grounds, his friends started to coach him on how to avoid trouble. Leah started, "Dominic, you complain things are bad, and they are bad, but you make things worse. Telling Peter [a high-status boy] to come out of the closet, it's just drawing attention to yourself, people were laughing at you, not with you". James agrees, "Yeah, there's a difference between not giving a fuck and shooting yourself in

the foot". Joking at someone else's expense was typical behavior for high-status boys, a good example of visibility-producing behavior, particularly in front of the class, a captive audience. But, for Dominic, it was evaluated as illegitimate because it broke conventions of status. As James and Leah argued, Dominic could reduce the difficulties he was having at school by "not drawing attention to himself" – by becoming less visible.

Within school, visibility was contingent and risky. The right kind of visibility, evaluated as legitimate by peers training each other to see in particular ways, increased already high-status. Certain kinds of actions produced visibility, and visibility further legitimized other kinds of actions. The right kind of visibility represented fame, and the potential to exert influence over others. In contrast, the wrong kind of visibility – "making a show" of yourself – resulted in being "seen in the wrong way" and was evaluated as illegitimate by peers, decreasing an already low-status.

The tacit orchestration by which status was recognized and legitimized by all peers, regardless of their own position in the Year group hierarchy, was one of the most intriguing aspects of my fieldwork. All peers agreed on who was highest-status in the year, even though, privately, lower-status pupils were often critical of their higher-status peers, and did not want to be like them (see also Bucholtz 1999). The understanding that "seeing" (vision) is reciprocal with "being seen" (visibility), and are part of an "education of attention" within a community of practice, offers insight into how pupils were developing a shared (although contestable) "criteria of action, perception and evaluation (both moral and aesthetic)" (Grasseni 2007a:206), through which part of the relational development of "skilled vision" was the ability to see "socially". Pupils were "learning to see" in relation to local hierarchies of value, as well as wider regimes of value in terms of slenderness, perfection and gender.

Although visibility and "fame" indicated status for both boys and girls, the processes by which status was achieved and bestowed was gendered and spoke of the differing conventions of masculinity and femininity within school. High-status boys typically produced visibility through sporting competency, physical bravado, the explicit extension of intersubjective influence (telling people what to do) and competitive exchange (Evans 2006, 2010). However, for girls, similar behavior was regarded as illegitimate: "acting big" was an inverse of appropriate femininity (Hey 1997). High-status girls often gained visibility through their physical appearance, "their looks". In Year 11, while the high-status boys were viewed by their peers as "intimidating", the It Girls engaged with, rather than dominated their classmates. The self-evidence of their beauty was considered the source of value in itself.

> Lexy: Natasha and that lot have been popular since Year 7; because of their looks basically…that instantly gives them status.

Furthermore, this status was also dependent on their ability to act right; friendly, flirty and nice, without going too far and appearing "desperate" or "slaggy"[vii]. This combination led to their designation as "the most attractive" by the high-status boys:

> Leah: The reason those girls are popular is that they've been deemed attractive by the popular boys.
>
> Author: So they're the most attractive girls in the Year?
>
> Leah: Not necessarily, they're just the ones who are seen as most attractive by those boys, and that's what matters.

For the It Girls, their looks were an important dimension of their status, but not the only salient dimension. As well as acting appropriately and their subsequent designation by the high-status boys as desirable, other dimensions such as their "cool" clothes and out-of-school networks also contributed to their visibility. From my own "enskilled" perspective, while the

It Girls were "very pretty", there were other "very pretty" girls who were not designated as desirable in the same way and were much less visible[viii].

David Graeber notes a widespread distinction in the literature on power, between the power to act directly on others (a potential that can only be realized in the future), and the power to move others to action by displaying evidence of actions from the past. Both frequently find expression in metaphors of vision - "the first represented as something hidden, the second realized through forms of visual display" - and influence the way value is perceived (2001:114). This "politics of vision" is often gendered, for example women's clothing in contemporary Euro-America "not only reveals more of the body (or at least hints at revealing it), it transforms what is revealed into one of a collection of objects of adornment – body parts becoming equivalent, as such, to clothing, make up, and jewelry – that together define the wearer as a sight, and by extension as relatively concrete and material" (2001:96). As Gowlland (2009) notes, while Graeber places vision, through notions of visibility and invisibility at the center of his theory of value, he does not explore vision as a sense and its role in the relationship between value, concealment, and display. Learning to see is both an enskillment of the senses, and associated with judgments of value. In the context of Collingson School, status was a visible form of power, high-status pupils become visible, and, this fame represented a "persuasive display" – calling others to treat them in the same way. The boys' status was primarily understood in terms of their capacity for action (sporting success, overt domination over other pupils). While the girls' status was understood primarily in terms of their appearance – they were a sight, and valued for their looks.

Evaluations of appearance

So far, I have argued that the creation and maintenance of a hierarchy, understood in terms of visibility, necessitated pupils schooling each other in practices of looking and being (un)seen.

A central dimension of these processes was peer evaluation, seeing and judging. Practices of evaluation were pervasive in school. The shared space and time provided continuous opportunities for peers to observe, monitor, assess and classify the actions and appearance of others. As we have seen, breaking the conventions of visibility led to negative evaluation, "making yourself look bad". For those at the top, being seen and known entailed the intense scrutiny of others and increased the pressure to "always look good". Conversely, while lower-status pupils were expected to be invisible to those of higher-status, they were visible to their friends and status peers, and also subject to scrutiny.

For girls, evaluations of each other's bodies and appearance formed a significant component of these more encompassing evaluation practices, shaped by a wider regime of beauty and body value. "Being looked up and down" was a common experience for girls:

> Shola: "I've just got a new job in the menswear department, all the guys are really friendly and laidback but the girls are like [imitates a suspicious up and down look], they're in their clique and they hardly talk to me, it's really style-conscious and they all size-up what you're wearing".

Girls were not only aware of these practices because they were subjected to them, but also because they themselves took part in them. Discussing their classmates, Elisabeth, Ella, and Lily (aged 14, Year 10) illustrate the subtle degrees by which girls assess the bodies of other girls:

> Lily: Helen and Molly, I think they're a bit fat but…
>
> Elisabeth: I'd say Natalie was as well.
>
> Lily: I don't know…
>
> Ella: I think they're just plump…Molly's not that fat.
>
> Lily: No, 'cos Natalie's just kind of broad.

> Elisabeth: Scarlett is very curvy, but it's good curvy, she has the most amazing figure.
>
> Ella: It suits her, I couldn't imagine her like, really skinny.
>
> Lilly: She's not like fat, she's curvy.
>
> Elisabeth: She's like wide, but it's good wide, it's not bad wide. But I think she feels it's not, I don't think she likes it, she's not comfortable with it.

I asked them if they thought they were critical of other girls, "yeah" they replied, unequivocally. Elisabeth explained, "Some things just don't suit girls and you just think, "they shouldn't wear that"...if we thought that, we wouldn't say it to everyone, we'd just say it to each other".

As Elisabeth's final comments indicate, evaluations of appearance were often expressed behind a person's back, becoming examples of bitching. Bitching was understood by pupils as a "natural quality" of girls and a normal part of friendship. It could thus be a most intimate negative evaluation from a most intimate person and a verbalization of mutual surveillance (Author 2016). Another way in which the girls came to know they were being seen was through compliments. The girls in my study complimented each other often, frequently about their appearance, and during my time at Collingson School, I received many of these kinds of compliments, including about my body shape and weight. Compliments represented a friendly exchange, which showed "niceness" (important for appropriate femininity), friendliness and inclusion. But they also illustrated the importance of appearance. Receiving a compliment indicated success, being recognized and valued for your looks. At the same time, compliments were a constant reminder that you were being looked at and evaluated, and of the ever-present potential for failure. When I received compliments from girls, I experienced the gratification of knowing I was "getting it right" in their eyes. At the

same time, I could be under no illusion that I was not being closely observed, and became (especially) conscious of my appearance, ensuring I "made an effort" every day at school.

Not all girls were equally invested in either the practices of appearance or interactions of complimenting. Leah found these practices and interactional conventions of girls both silly and trying, and did not engage in them herself. However, it did not stop other girls from attempting to engage her in them. For example, one science lesson, Georgia and Leah were in the middle of a conversation, when Ling, sitting nearby started to call Leah's name insistently until the others stopped their conversation and looked up. "Your hair looks nice today, Leah". Leah replied flatly, "it looks the same as always". "You should try a side-parting", Georgia suggested. "What's a side-parting?" Leah asked. "Like this", said Georgia touching her hair, "when you have it on one side, like mine, I always have a side-parting". Even as she chose not to engage in them, Leah recognised the centrality of appearance to girls' peer relations. She told me about a school disco the year before to which she wore a skirt and make-up when everyone went "crazy" about her appearance and she received lots of attention and compliments. She reflected "if I'd carried on dressing that way I'd be a lot more central in the Year, a lot more accepted".

As these examples illustrate, bitching and compliments indicated evaluation, and encompassed a structuring of perception to both local regimes of status and acceptability, and broader ideals of body and beauty. Learning to see in this context involved attention to, and evaluation of, the specific parts of the body. This education of attention was visible in compliments; "nice eyes", "good hair", "flat stomach", "big boobs", and criticisms; "flabby stomach", "big thighs", "greasy hair", "dull eyes". Unsurprisingly, evaluation practices acted as a powerful incentive to comprehensively, and continuously, self-scrutinize in order to pre-empt the scrutiny of others. As Eleanor explained, "[with girls] I compare myself 'her hair is

nicer than mine, she's thinner than me, blah blah blah' but when I see a guy normally I'm like 'he's fit[ix]'". With the recognition that your appearance would be evaluated and critiqued by others in minute detail, no aspect of the body could be taken for granted:

> Elisabeth (14): There are parts of me that aren't so…my stomach can sometimes, like it's not a fat stomach but it can just get really bloated and stuff. I also have really fat fingers so, it's my hands and my toes that are like the worst part of me, but that's understandable, look at them (laughing)…and like I feel like I have quite chubby cheeks, and my eyes are a bit dull.

As they co-participated in peer communities of practice at school, girls were training each other in what to look for and how to see. From joining the school aged 11, pupils were engaged in these mutual, but contestable, learning processes. Georgia, a new member of the It Girls, reflected on the differences between them and her when they first joined the school:

> "Like in Year 7 we were all really youthful and they were all – did their hair, did their make-up. So they seemed like they were being older, even if they weren't really…they seemed really grown-up because they wore make-up and stuff".

Here Georgia's comments suggest the education of attention that comes with changing schools, and encountering girls who are already engaging in the practices of femininity, as well as the interconnections between appearance and perceptions of maturity. Similarly, participants in Rebecca Coleman's research highlighted the developing focus on their own and others' looks as a feature of growing up. One participant explained that whereas in her past, "happiness was unconnected from her body and appearance, a condition of being happy in her present necessarily involves what she looks like" (Coleman and Figueroa 2010:362).

As bitching became less intense in older years, the critical education of attention to others bodies did not necessarily disappear. While the examples above are of verbalized

evaluations, from the perspective of the "enskillment of vision", evaluation of others is not

limited to what is spoken. There are many kinds of "knowing" that are not verbalized (Harris

2007). Jane (aged 17, Year 13) recounted engaging in this kind of critical looking

"subconsciously", before consciously noting her perception and feeling bad:

> The other day I was at work and there was a girl there, and I wasn't even trying to be
>
> bitchy or anything, but I just thought subconsciously "she must *think* her hair looks
>
> nice" and then I realized what I did and I was just like "oh no".

Distinctions of vision

So far, I have argued that the enskillment of vision in school was a gendered (and gendering)

process – girls' visions became enskilled in different ways to boys through particular kinds of

interactions. This perspective also enables us to consider the racialized and racializing

dimensions of these processes. In this racially and ethnically mixed school, these aspects of

social distinction were of great interest to pupils, and a frequent topic of conversation.

Perceptions of "non-whiteness" were understood by pupils as centrally important to the "way

they were seen" and subsequently evaluated by others[x] (Author 2015). For example, on a

number of occasions different pupils engaged me in guessing games, "where do you think

I'm from? Nobody ever guesses right!" This game exemplified pupils' attunement to the

details of embodied features by which people might be classified in particular ways, at the

same time as it acknowledged the complexity and variability of these processes (see also

Pollock 2004).

In relation to body and beauty ideals, some pupils highlighted the different ideals of

beauty in circulation "where they are from". For example, after talking about the literature on

body image and eating disorders with an A-Level[xi] psychology class, I asked if these issues

sounded familiar to them. Many in the class nodded but Kessie (aged 17) said, "in Nigeria,

where I'm from, being thin isn't seen as that important, so you don't really feel any pressure". This perspective chimes with research on ethnically specific differences in body ideals. For example, the black and Latina women in Rubin, Fitts and Becker's study (2003) emphasized an ethic of care and presentation of the body, and thus a more multifaceted body ideal, rather than focusing on body aesthetics such as thinness (see also Sobo 1994; Nichter 2000; Anderson-Fye 2004). However, later in the discussion with the psychology class, I described 'fat talk' as the almost ritualized form of speech that expresses bodily unhappiness or desire to lose weight or diet (even if it does not necessarily correspond to actual dieting practices) (Nichter 2000). One of Kessie's friends nodded in recognition and, addressing Kessie, said, "You're always talking like that, saying you're going to go on a diet or you've eaten too much and you feel fat".

As I observed more generally in school, at times pupils mobilized notions of racial-ethnic differences in talking about body ideals and pressures, as well as in evaluations of appearance, while at other times, the same students would evaluate themselves and each other based on a narrow slenderness ideal. Pupils' lived experiences, of course, included not only school and home, but involvement in a range of other communities of practice which may educate attention to bodies in subtly or distinctly different ways. The recognition that there is a dynamic interplay between different regimes of value, and subtle degrees by which attention is educated, enables an appreciation of the racialized dimensions of these processes without, in this case, presuming a "group-ness" (Brubaker 2002) from which distinctly different bodily values and ethics straightforwardly emerge.

Thus the focus on the everyday highlights the complex interaction between local and broader regimes of value by which pupils came to see and be seen in particular ways. This was further exemplified by the contingent nature in which fatness was discussed. Paige (aged

15, Year 11), one of the Blonde Barbies, was considered fat, and, with her back-combed hair dyed bright blonde, thick black eyeliner and short skirts, and surrounded by a coterie of similarly bleached blonde friends, she was unapologetically visible. For other peers, she was the image of what it meant to look bad:

> Marina (aged 16, Year 11): They [Paige and her friends] have these parties, they all just get really drunk and really high, and they get naked as well. I saw this video and they were all in their underwear.
>
> Samiya (aged 15, Year 11): Urggh [said with disgust] Paige is so fat; she would not look good in her underwear.
>
> Marina: I know, it's like she's got all these rolls of fat, and have you seen the way she walks, she's got to carry all her weight around like this [mimes a labored waddle].

Conventions in school placed additional restrictions on the appropriate appearance of fat pupils. Acceptability was dependent on maintaining low visibility and not overtly engaging in heterosexual exchange. When these conventions were conformed to, weight, while often mentioned, was not usually transformed into powerful insults. In the excerpt below, Elisabeth, Ella and Lily make a distinction between "nice" and "horrible" fat people, and the different ways they were treated in their year:

> *Author*: And do you think that fat people in your year have a hard time?
>
> Ella: No, I really like…
>
> Elisabeth: But there are some fat people…
>
> Lily: I can only think about Milly but she brings it on herself…so, like, everyone does call her fat because she is really mean.

 Paige broke both conventions of femininity, and the additional conventions of weight. She (supposedly) engaged in sex acts with more than one boy (making her in the pupils' terms "a

slag"), "acted big" (overtly extended her influence over others), and contravened other conventions of appropriate feminine behavior in school. Paige's positioning as a slag stood for a number of transgressions, in terms of the conventions of femininity as well as sexuality. In the same way, the disgust expressed about her weight also came to stand for transgression of these conventions. Paige's sexual activity was evaluated as more inappropriate because she was fat, and her fatness was evaluated as more transgressive because she dressed "provocatively" and refused to conform to notions of appropriateness that put additional restrictions on the appearance of overweight pupils (Author 2014).

For the girls in my study, fatness was central to how other girls were viewed, and being seen in this way changed the criteria by which they were judged. To transgress the conventions of femininity, sexuality and visibility was to justify "being called fat" or to have this expressed in the form of disgust; this insult was mobilized and effective in a broader regime of value in which fatness is frequently morally coded (Bordo 2003). "Looking bad" like "looking good" represented more than physical appearance, and, at the same time, was often expressed in this idiom.

Anthropology, beauty ideals and bodily dissatisfaction

Megan: Over the past few years I had a real problem with [my body] but I'm beginning to feel a bit better about myself…I wasn't comfortable with myself, I mean I don't think I'm ugly or anything, obviously but…I'd be happier if I was thinner.

Eleanor: I think I'd be happier if I was thinner too

…

Megan: I don't believe in any of that [media influence]. That stuff really pisses me off. When I see beautiful people I don't think I should starve myself to look like

that…I don't think of it in a negative way. I just think "those people are beautiful". I don't think it comes from the media.

…

Megan: It's important for me [to look good]...I want to make the best possible impression when I meet someone. I think when you meet someone new...whenever I meet someone I think "attractive or not?" I find it easier to talk to people if I know... Eleanor...They don't think I'm ugly.

In this conversation with Megan and Eleanor (both aged 17, Year 13), the complex ways by which bodily experience and appearance were discussed and analyzed by girls, in relation to everyday life and the media, is exemplified. Both Megan and Eleanor thought they would be "happier if they were thinner", a way of not just seeing bodies (own and others) but experiencing them. However, Megan's rejection of media influence is also instructive. She "just thinks those people are beautiful", suggesting that while the enskillment of vision trains perception towards particular beauty ideals both in real life and media forms, there is not a straightforward relationship between this and action to change the body. This comment also highlights the self-evidence of beauty as well as its aesthetic and affective dimensions. Furthermore, the girls' understood their concern about their appearance not in relation to the media, but in relation to their everyday lives, "the look they have for others".

As I have illustrated, pupils were learning to see bodies and selves in particular gendered and racialized ways, shaped by local and global regimes of value. Gendered conventions of status in the school meant that in Year 11, the boys gained year-wide value and visibility from their actions, while the girls gained value and visibility from their appearance. Transgressions of appropriate action were crystallized in terms of physical appearance for the girls, in a way not applied to boys, and it was the girls who showed each

other they were being seen through the idiom of compliments and bitching, analyzing and comparing the minutiae of body parts. These interactions continually bought girls back to their bodies; in this politics of vision (Graeber 2001), girls were made more surface than boys. As such, we can appreciate why the girls were so concerned about their appearance, and desired to be "seen" in the right way. Girls were constantly reminded their appearance was under scrutiny, and self-scrutinized as part of the self-other nature of these processes. Dominant body and beauty ideals can be identified in these evaluation processes, in the desire for a flat stomach or to be thinner, but cannot be reduced to them.

Using ethnography and the conceptual tools of anthropology, and drawing on the literature of situated learning, and particularly the education of perception, I have argued for an approach to bodily dissatisfaction that does not rest on representionalist theories of subjective formation but instead seeks to understand these issues as a result of girls' embodied histories, intersubjectivity and everyday lives. Starting with the everyday context, we can appreciate girls' lives as lived intensely among other people, as well as the broader social processes – including looking and being seen, evaluation and self-scrutiny – within which bodily dissatisfaction may form.

This is not to argue that the subjective experience of bodily dissatisfaction is not important or deeply felt. The personal, internal feelings of bodily unhappiness are real and troubling aspects of experience for many girls (Evans, Rich and Holroyd 2008; Frost 2001). Nor is it to dismiss the effects of the slenderness ideal circulated via media images. Rather, it is to seek to better understand the manner in which they enter girls' life, and the extent they shape experience in relation to intersubjective relations and other regimes of value in circulation. My approach does not presuppose a hierarchy of influence, or reduce girls' experiences to that of a "bad diet" of images, but instead takes as its starting point subjects

developing skills in specific contexts. As Grasseni writes: "Reconsidering the senses, even the most contaminated by the globalising design of the West…means taking seriously an ecological and developmental account of ways of knowing" (2007a:214). In this way, a more complex understanding of bodily dissatisfaction can be sought, and correspondingly, more effective responses to this unhappiness can also be developed.

Taking seriously "ecological and developmental" ways of learning and knowing entails practical as well as theoretical implications. O'Dea and Abraham (2000) demonstrate that educational interventions aimed to "improve body image" or "reduce eating disorders" using "information-based" approaches and conventional dyadic pedagogic modes are rarely effective, and may have unintended negative consequences (such as introducing pupils to specific weight-loss techniques they had not come across before). In contrast, more "ecological approaches", which are not narrowly focused on body image and eating, but are broadly conceived to allow all pupils (i.e. not just girls or those considered "at risk") to explore selves and relationships as well as media forms, are more effective. As part of these kinds of ecological approaches, there is much potential to provide a supportive space to explore the contours of pupils' relationships and their informal realms in school, including ocular themes, as well as using ethnography (such as the work of Popanoe 2004, Sobo 1994) as material for explorations of beauty that exceed a problem-centred approach. In both theory and practice, girls need not be framed as pathological consumers but can instead be engaged as active and skilled participants.

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[i] Becker's research spanned a period of rapid social and economic change (including the introduction of television) in Fiji, and on a later visit she found an increased willingness among her participants to "work" on their bodies, including through dieting and purging practices (2004).

[ii] Differing from US categorisation, this refers to South East Asia.

[iii] Maths, English, Science, Geography and History were streamed according to results of standardised tests taken in the last year of primary school (aged 10 – 11) and Year 9 (aged 13 – 14).

[iv] For Years 12 and 13 in post-compulsory education.

[v] British secondary school is Year 7 (aged 11 – 12) to Year 13. Pupils take a set of national exams at the end Year 11, and can leave school or take further academic or vocational qualifications in Years 12 or 13.

[vi] As has been noted in subsequent critical discussions, the notion of legitimate peripheral participation places emphasis on the centripetal movement from novice to knowledgeable insider, but this does not straightforwardly apply to peer groups and year groups, in which there are not 'old-timers' as such. Centre-periphery are often important shifting dynamics in peer groups (see for example Bucholtz 2001; Goodwin 2006) but some pupils remain peripheral throughout their school experience. Viewing the school as a whole, pupils move up through the years and transform from 'novices' to 'old-timers'.

[vii] Both terms refer to powerful discourses of female sexual promiscuity.

[viii] For both boys and girls educational achievement was not a particularly salient factor in status (or lack of it). High status groups contained among the highest achievers in the year. However, educational achievement on its own was not enough to produce year-wide status and visibility.

[ix] Good looking.

[x] Race-ethnicity cannot be mapped onto status in the informal realm in any straightforward way. For example the "It Girls" were of different race-ethnicities; black West African, Malaysian, Latina and white (see Author 2015 for discussion of racial-ethnic identification/ classification in Collingson).

[xi] A Levels are secondary school leaving qualifications, studied in specific subjects for two years by 16 – 18 year olds in post-compulsory education.