The becoming of bodies:

Girls, media effects and body-image

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An on-going area of concern in feminist research is the relations between women's bodies and images. Feminist theory, for example, has long been occupied with the relations between women's bodies and mirror images (de Beauvoir 1949), and images in art (Betterton 1987, 1996; Pollock 1987), photography (Kuhn 1995; Lury 1998), film (Doane 1992; Mulvey 1989; Stacey 1994), and magazines (McRobbie 1999). Recently, much feminist empirical work has focused on the relations between girls' and young women's bodies and images in "the media"[1]. This article considers some of this research, and its limitations, through an exploration of my own research with a small number of white teenage British girls. My aim in this article is to open up the possible ways in which the relations between girls' bodies and images might be conceived. In particular, I argue that existing feminist empirical and theoretical work is underpinned, usually implicitly and to greater and lesser extents, by an oppositional model of body/image, subject/object. In contrast, by developing Deleuze's concepts of becoming through my research, I propose an alternative model grounded not in oppositions but in process, relationality and transformation. Such a model understands bodies and images not as separate and separable entities (subjects and objects for example) between which relations operate, but as <u>constituted through</u> their relationality. I consider the ways in which bodies are known, understood and experienced <u>through</u> images, that is, the ways in which bodies <u>become</u> through their relations with images.

My argument here is four-fold. First, in discussing some of the existing empirical research on the relations between girls' bodies and images, my concern is to explicate the binary opposition of subject/object. Second, I examine how the body/image, subject/object model often relies on and reinforces a relation of media effect. This "media effects" model has been critiqued for its inability to measure "effect" in any meaningful way (for example Gauntlett 2005) but I suggest that it also simplifies the complex relations between bodies and images. Third, in drawing attention to these complex relations, I argue that to separate bodies and images into a binary opposition of subject/object is unhelpful because, as feminist theoretical work on the relations between women's bodies and images has suggested, women's bodies are often <u>both</u> subjects and objects of images and do not exist as an entity that is secure and bounded from images. Fourth, and as indicated above perhaps most fundamentally, my argument aims to demonstrate how, in working with a dichotomy of subject/object, much feminist work obscures the ways in which bodies become through their relations with images. If this point is taken seriously, the questions for feminist empirical and theoretical research must shift. In terms of the argument that I have sketched so far, feminist research must shift from understanding bodies and images as subjects and objects which exist prior to their relationality. Consequently, feminist research should attend not (only) to how images <u>effect</u> bodies, that is to how pre-existent bodies are effected by pre-existent images. Rather, if relations with images constitute bodies, a focus of feminist research should be on how bodies are experienced <u>through</u> images and on how these experiences limit or extend the becoming of bodies.

Feminist empirical research

Feminist empirical work on the relations between girls' and women's bodies and images is wide-ranging, trans-disciplinary and concerned with images in different contexts. For example, research focuses on beauty industries (Black 2004, Craig 2006), "health" and dieting industries (Nichter 2000), magazines (Duke 2000), and mass media images (Grogan and Wainwright 1996, Grogan et al 1996, Durham 1999, Goodman 2002, Goodman and Walsh-Childers 2004). A central theme of much feminist empirical research is on the increasing homogenisation of Western cultural images of female bodies (as young, white, thin, attractive, healthy, heterosexual, middle-class for example), and with how women feel about and respond to such images. Specific issues that feminist empirical work has attended to include the pressure women feel from images results in an increase of young women developing eating disorders and/or "body-hatred" (Frost 2001), the negotiation of women's "self-image" with the "body work" of dieting and exercise, cosmetic surgery and appearance (Gimlin 2002) and the resistance of popular media images by the construction of "alternative femininities" through appearance, body modification and clothing (Holland 2004).[2]   While it is difficult, if not impossible, to summarise such a diverse field, my concern here is with the ways in which this work tends to map bodies and images onto a prior distinction between subjects and objects.

To demonstrate my point in more detail, the focus of the discussion in this section is two research projects which examine different aspects of the relations between girls' bodies and media images: Grogan and Wainwright's (1996) study of girls' experiences of body dissatisfaction and Duke's (2000) study of the role of culture in girls' interpretations of the feminine ideal in teen magazines. These research studies are discussed because

they are indicative of the questions and conclusions of much feminist empirical research, and because of the number of methodological features they have in common with each other and with my research[3]. I am interested here in the conceptual framework underlying these studies and the kinds of assumptions and arguments about the relations between bodies and images such a framework makes possible.

Grogan and Wainwright (1996) argue that girls as young as eight recognise and internalise dominant cultural pressures to be thin. Their article is part of a wider psychological study of young women's body image and body (dis)satisfaction based on group interviews with white working and middle-class girls aged 8 and 13 from the UK. Some of the questions asked in these group interviews specifically concerned models in magazines and media role models (1996, p. 668) and the girls raised issues of weight and body shape, exercise (and body building in particular) and food as particularly worrying and discussed their dissatisfaction with their own bodies. For Grogan and Wainwright, this is evidence that "girls of these ages have already internalised adult's ideals of slimness" (1996, p. 668) and, further, that "women from primary-school age onwards are sensitive to cultural pressures to conform to a limited range of acceptable body shapes" (1996, p. 672). In identifying girl and teen magazines in particular, and drawing on feminist research in this area, Grogan and Wainwright argue that images in such magazines:

Have powerful effects on their readers, serving to foster and maintain a "cult of femininity", supplying definitions of what it means to be a woman. It is a matter

of concern that the images presented in teen magazines present such a restricted range of models for young women. If women's body image can be bolstered by alternative sources of information, they may be more resilient against influences such as teen magazines, because young women who grow up with a positive body image are less likely to be affected by cultural messages. (Grogan and Wainwright 1996, p. 672, references omitted).

For Grogan and Wainwright here, girls' bodies need to be "more resilient against influences such as teenage magazines" in order to be "less likely to be affected by cultural messages". They suggest that "alternative sources of information" are one way of "bolster[ing]" "women's body image" because they would feature a less "restricted range of models for young women" and would thus "supply" a greater range of feminine ideals. Grogan and Wainwright's argument here clearly relies on a separation of bodies and images and a mapping of these distinct entities onto a dichotomy of subjects and objects. Moreover, what this separation of bodies/subjects and images/objects produces is a relatively straightforward and linear relationship of media effects; young women's bodies are vulnerable to the "powerful effects" of magazine images.

Leaving aside the difficulty of how such media effects can be measured, from the perspective of media and cultural studies Grogan and Wainwright's psychological position is problematic in its silence around questions of "readership" and "interpretation". What does it mean for an 8 year old and a 13 year old white working or middle class girl to read a magazine? Do they interpret the same material differently? Are

their levels of "effectability" from cultural messages different? Questions such as these derived from cultural studies of audiences and feminist research on gender, race and adolescence occupy a central place in Lisa Duke's (2000) research on girls' interpretations of the feminine ideal in teen magazines. Duke's research questions specifically address why and how girls read magazines (are magazines satisfying the girls' needs and desires? Do they read fashion and beauty critically?) and the role of race in "influenc[ing] the way these middle-class girls interpret teen magazines' images and text" (2000 p. 374). Duke's article is based on a wider longitudinal study which traces girls' interpretations of magazines from early to late adolescence (2000, p. 375). Three groups of middle-class girls participated in the research. The first group comprised of ten white girls interviewed aged 12-14 and again aged 16-18 and the second and third groups comprised of sixteen African-American girls, eight of whom were aged 12-14 and eight of whom were aged 17-18 (2000, p. 375).

Duke's starting point is that "[m]edia have been implicated in establishing atypical standards of appearance as the social norm and encouraging girls' preoccupation with their looks" (2000, p. 369). Adolescent girls, because they "experience significant physical and developmental change" are especially vulnerable to the media, and "media like teen magazines serve as guidebooks on acceptable appearance, gender roles, and relationship formation […], replacing parents and augmenting or surpassing peers as primary information sources" (Duke 2000, p. 369). In Duke's interviews, both black and white girls discuss how magazine images are unachievable but nevertheless powerful in

their ability to "put a picture in your head" (2000, p. 377). However, Duke's study indicates that:

> Most African-American girls […] were uninterested in striving for or achieving the ideal feminine physique, as the magazines portray it. Similarly, there was little interest in makeup and grooming advice that was seen as inappropriate for Black girls, due either to formulations intended for White girls, or African-American girls' belief that cosmetics were superfluous to being attractive. (2000, p. 382)

For Duke, whereas the white girls in her study evaluated and defined themselves by their appearance, the African-American girls deemed personality and character more significant (2000, p. 382). Duke argues that the feminine ideal of beauty and slimness is less important to African-American girls, partly because of the exclusion of images of black girls and women in magazines and partly because of African-American culture which has a

> more realistic, inclusive view of the female physical norm […] reinforced by elder female family members, who were said to view heavier girls as healthier, and by African-American men, who prize "thick" or amply filled out girls as sexually appealing and desirable. (2000, p. 385)

Duke argues here that the African-American cultural valuation and appreciation of a "more realistic, inclusive […] female physical norm", are directs African-American girls'

interest away from "striving for or achieving the ideal feminine physique" depicted in teen magazines. However, although her argument focuses on how African-American girls are not as "effectable" as white girls and therefore attends to more complex questions of readership and interpretation than the psychological study, there remains a reliance on a model of media effects and on a separation of bodies and images into bounded and different subjects and objects. Indeed, in some ways, Duke's argument is similar to Grogan and Wainwright's in that "alternative" "cultural messages" will "effect" bodies in a more positive way.

Feminist theory

Feminist theoretical work on the relations between women's bodies and film, art and photographic images has complicated and disrupted any clear distinction between subjects and objects by arguing that such a distinction is inherently masculine. In her exploration of the ways in which photographs create specific ways of seeing, knowing and living, Celia Lury argues that subjectivity has been defined through its difference to objectivity; subjects are conscious, have a continuity of memory and an ability to authorise such a continuity and have a recognisable, that is unique, body (1998, pp. 7-12). Such a notion of subjectivity is inherently white, masculine and class-privileged, for it depends upon qualities such as rationality, autonomy and control which are not and have not been equally available. Rosemary Betterton (1987) focuses on the spectatorship of art to demonstrate that the dichotomy between "the subject who looks" and "the object looked at" collapses if considered from the position of women. As part of a visual culture characterised by the pervasiveness of images of the female body, Betterton argues that women are everywhere constituted as objects, that is are always, potentially, both subject

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and object. The spatial and temporal gap between subject/body and object/image does not exist for women. This point is also made by feminist scholars of film. Laura Mulvey's (1989) classic "cinepsychoanalytic" perspective, for example, critiques conventional understandings of cinematic pleasure by demonstrating how they operate through a notion of male desire where the male subject is the viewer who looks at images of females. Similarly, Mary Ann Doane (1992) contrasts masculine and feminine modes of looking and, drawing on Freud's distinction between seeing and knowing, argues that, while for masculine subjects there is a gap between what he looks at and what he knows, for feminine subjects this distance or gap is "negate[d]": "For the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image – she is the image" (1992, p. 231).

The problem of the "over-presence" of the image is explored by feminist theorists such as Susan Bordo (2003). For Bordo there is a clear link between contemporary Western visual culture and the burden of weight for Western women. Bordo's concern is the way in which perfected bodies become normalised through the sheer number of images and their rapid and pervasive circulation:

> These images are teaching us how to see. Filtered, smoothed, polished, softened, re-arranged. And passing. Digital creations, visual cyborgs, teaching us what to expect from flesh and blood. Training our perception in what's a defect and what is normal (2003, p. xviii)

Like the other feminist theorists discussed above, Bordo frames her argument in terms of seeing and spectatorship. Drawing attention to the ubiquity, or "over-presence", of images of particular kinds of female bodies, Bordo argues that perceptions of "real" bodies shift to expect "[f]iltered, smoothed, polished, softened, re-arranged" bodies. In this sense, Bordo blurs the boundaries between bodies and images by highlighting the lack of a spatial and temporal gap between them; bodies are "creations", "hybrids" of images. However, despite this, Bordo's argument rests upon a model of subject/object. Her argument operates through a (Foucauldian) notion of subjectivity where the women who look at images are subjects who look at objects. As such, the subject/object distinction is confused but not dislodged. This point is also relevant to the work of the feminist theorists discussed above; while the subject/object dichotomy is blurred the model itself remains. In the rest of this article, I want to displace the subject/object model and instead conceive the relations between bodies and images through becoming.

Becoming

The basis of my empirical research was to understand bodies as becomings and to explore the ways in which bodies become through images. In this section I outline what is meant by "becoming" and suggest some of the shifts involved in taking up this concept. For Deleuze, becoming refers to process, inter-connectivity and relationality.[4] Becoming is a means to "get outside the dualisms" that have conventionally governed Western thought and instead to "be-between, to pass between […] never ceasing to become" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 277). Becoming in this sense explains the world not as relatively stable and discrete forms or beings (subjects/objects, bodies/images) but as

processes of movement, variation and multiplicity. Becomings are transformations – not of forms transforming into another or different form but of constantly processual, constantly transforming relations. A first consequence to note in Deleuze's shift from a philosophy of being to becoming is that subjects and objects become replaced with bodies. In a Deleuzian sense, bodies refer not necessarily to human bodies but to a multiple and diverse series of connections which assemble as a particular spatial and temporal moment (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Multiplicity and difference are key to Deleuze's concept of becoming and it is through the connections between multiple and different things that bodies must be understood. For example, a Deleuzian account would understand bodies not as a bounded subject that is separate from images but rather would see the connections between humans and images as constituting a body. Models which map fluid and dynamic becomings on to static and closed systems of being risk ignoring the ways in which bodies are constituted and, crucially, could be constituted differently. It seems imperative that a feminist account of the relations between bodies and images is able to account for how bodies might become differently.

In highlighting how a body becomes through its inter-connections with multiple and diverse things, Deleuze is arguing that a body is a relational becoming, is "never separable from its relations with the world" (Deleuze 1992, p. 628). Bodies are processes which become through their relations and, as such, there are not relations between pre-existent entities (bodies and images, subjects and objects) but rather entities are constituted through their relations (Fraser et al 2005, p. 3). A body is not a human subject who has relations with images, then, but rather a body is the relation between what

conventional philosophy has called a human subject and images. A second shift

introduced by a Deleuzian perspective on the relations between bodies and images is that

it is the relations, rather than the bodies and images themselves, that are brought into

focus. A Deleuzian account of bodies must attend to how that body becomes through its

relations. This would suggest that what is at stake in such research is the ways in which

relations constitute bodies and images and the ways in which it is through relations that

bodies and images become. This might mean that instead of focusing on what are "good"

and "bad" images, or what are dissatisfying or unhealthy bodies, research would focus on

what the relations between bodies and images limit or extend. For example, what

knowledges, understandings and experiences of bodies are produced through images?

How do relations constitute particular kinds of bodies and images?

Shifting to examine relations as extending and limiting particular becomings of

bodies raises a third implication for feminist research on bodies and images. Deleuze

argues that relations create certain <u>affects</u>: "a body affects other bodies, and is affected by

other bodies" (1992, p. 625). According to this Deleuzian perspective, it is not that

images have negative <u>effects</u> <u>on</u> the vulnerable bodies of girls as there are no clear lines

of division between them. Instead, the relations between bodies and images produce

particular affects, some of which – like "feeling bad" – might be limiting to the becoming

of bodies. This is, I would suggest, a radically different understanding of the relations

between bodies and images from the model of "media effects", not only because of how

bodies and images are understood as in constitutive relations but also because, as I will

argue, studying affective relations raises new questions for feminist research.

The becoming of bodies through images

Method

My empirical research project explored the relations between a small number of girls' bodies and images and argued that bodies become through their relations with images. Thirteen 13 and 14 year old white girls participated in the research. They came from two schools, one in south east London and one in Oxfordshire. My contacts in both schools (a white male teacher in one and a white female counsellor in the other) secured consent from their schools for the research to take place, explained the research to one year group class in each school and asked for volunteers to participate. The girls were therefore self-selecting due to their interest in the area, rather than being selected according to specific criteria. As they were in the same class, the girls knew each other, but had different levels of friendship. My contact with the girls occurred in their schools within the usual school day and took place over the summer term of 2003. The research consisted of an initial group meeting with the girls and a series of three recorded interviews.

In the initial meeting I introduced the research project to the girls and gained consent both from them and from a parent/guardian. The first interview was a semi-structured focus group in which the girls discussed their relations with images in a general sense. I began the focus group by asking the girls to talk about their bodies in their own domestic photographs which they had brought with them. This served to stimulate the conversation, and proved useful in asking the girls about other images of

their bodies that might be important to them. The second interview was an individual interview with each of the girls[5] in which I asked them to follow up, expand on or correct, issues which had been discussed in the focus group interview. I also asked the girls specifically about how they imagined their bodies in the future, and about the relations between these future bodies and images of their present and past bodies. The third interview was an image-making session in which the girls created images of their bodies using an "archive" of magazine images, a Polaroid camera, make-up, food wrappers, craft materials, scissors, papers, pens and glues. This interview was designed to make images not only the subject of the research but also part of it. The interview data discussed below is taken from the first and second interviews.

In the sections above, I have indicated the way in which I understood "body" in the research through a Deleuzian framework. It is worth noting that "image" was also conceived in an open sense; my focus was not specifically on "media images" but was concerned with the images that were significant to the girls who participated. As demonstrated at the beginning of this article, opening questions in the research included, "what does image mean to you?", "what images are most important to how you experience your body?", "how do you experience your body through images?" While images in popular media were an important image through which knowledges, understandings and experiences of their bodies were produced, the girls also discussed other kinds of images, for example mirror images, photographic images, glimpses in shop or car windows, images produced through comments from boys, from friends and from parents. In discussing these different kinds of images, my research attempted to attend to

the relations that images are involved in and the ways in which experiences produced through one kind of image might complement or contradict experiences produced through other kinds of images. In the section below I discuss how experiences of bodies produced through images from teenage magazines and popular culture are understood through experiences of bodies produced through the girls' relations with their own photographs. As outlined above, my focus here is not on the effects of photographic and popular cultural images <u>on</u> bodies, but on the ways in which the girls' bodies can be understood as <u>becoming through</u> their relations with these specific kinds of image.

Photographic images

RC: ok, so if a photo makes you feel bad, why does it make you feel bad?

Ta: cos you don't like the way you look

[…]

S: because you just look bad, and it makes you think "is that, is that what I actually look like?"

[…]

A: yeah, "is that what I actually look like?"

[…]

RC: so that's why you don't like them? Because you think that that's what you actually look like?

F: yeah, because it's gonna show you how you actually look

In this extract from one of the focus group interviews, Tasha, Sammy, Anna and Fay discuss how their own photographs show them as they "actually look". Photographs make them, in my words, "feel bad" about their bodies because photographs show a body that "just look[s] bad, and it makes you think, 'is that what I actually look like?'" Such an understanding of the relations between their bodies and their own photographs suggests that for the girls here, the body of the photograph is only one way in which they know, understand and experience their bodies; there are other, diverse and multiple, bodies which are not experienced as they "actually look" in photographs. Photographic images, then, are a specific kind of image which produce particular knowledges, understandings and experiences of their bodies. In this section, I want to explore the experiences of bodies that photographs produce and examine how these experiences can be understood through movement and transformation, that is through a logic of becoming.

The notion of "actuality" which the girls point to above was closely linked to their understanding of a photograph as "capturing" a body as a specific spatial and temporal moment. Photographs captured a body, as it actually looked, as a moment in "the past" and through this capture knowledges of that body both in the past and in the present and future were produced. For example, in the following extract Emily, Dionne, Sammy, Fay, Katie and Anna discuss how their knowledges and understandings of the body captured in a photograph are multiple and changing:

E: yeah, well, I've got quite a few pictures of where I was a bit younger

       where I thought I looked really nice but I actually didn't, I looked a lot

       bigger than what I actually was and that put me down quite a lot

RC: so in relation to kind of how you think about and feel about your body,

       how are photos part of that? Or are photos part of that?

D: well, yeah, cos if you take a really bad picture you're like, you hide it,

       don't you? Cos like

S: cos you don't want other people to see it

F: yeah to see what you actually look like

K: but it's funny then when you look back and like it's only even a year ago

       and you think "God I was really fat then" or something and I've really

       changed a lot

F: yeah I've got this picture of me playing badminton and I was like, "look at

       my belly!" And you just think, oh, I don't know

D: what was it, a centimetre? Don't worry

A: or you think you like that clothes and then you look back in a photo and

       yeah

K: oh, I don't like that now

F: yeah pink and purple and stuff and it's just nasty

What emerges in this extract is that the capturing of a body in a photograph does not

reduce or limit the knowledges of that body to that photograph. Instead, the body that is

captured within a photographic image can itself be understood differently; "I thought I

looked really nice but actually I didn't", "you look back […] and I've really changed a lot", "I don't like that now". The "past" body, then, is not static or contained within the photograph but, on the contrary, is constantly transforming; is (capable of) constantly being known, understood and experienced differently.[6] The "capturing" of a body in a photograph in this sense refers not to the depiction of a body in its entirety but to how a photograph produces particular knowledges, understandings and experiences of a body, for example as showing a body as it "actually" looks.

Indeed, Tina explicitly discusses the inability of a photograph to capture a body in its entirety:

Ti: yeah cos like in a picture you capture like […], say I did something with my lips or something, like pushed them right out, it would make me look worse so people might think I look like that whereas normally if I just do that then I can put it back and you can see it's just like that

Some of the girls also discussed how photographs, in showing them what they "actually" look like, are deliberately made to show only a partial image of their body. This seemed especially the case when the girls discussed what makes a "nice" photograph:

RC: so what makes a nice photo then?

E: just when you're looking nice

F: and when you look natural and you don't look like you're posing

S: yeah yeah

D: I can't, I can't be natural, I always pose

S: like when us two, like when your dad took a photo of us two

F: yeah,

S: kind of nice but natural as well weren't we?

F: yeah, we did her hair all nice so she was like really pleased with that

RC: so like, you've made an effort but you look, you don't look posed

F: no, no you don't look false, it's just kind of snapshots of you all through your life

Looking "nice" in a photograph, according to the girls here, is achieved through looking "natural", where natural refers to the presentation of the body as not "posed" or "false". Looking nice through looking natural is, in the terms I have described above, the capturing of a partial image of a body where the body not looking nice is obscured or erased. In drawing attention to the ways in which a body escapes its capture in the girls' own photographic images, that is to the way in which a body always exists elsewhere and "elsewhen" to a photographic image, I am suggesting that bodies and images cannot be easily or clearly bounded into separate entities, into subjects and objects. Instead, what seems to be significant in the ways in which the girls explain the relations between their bodies and their own photographs are notions of movement, change and transformation. I would suggest that to account for these notions, a model of subject/object should be displaced and instead a logic of becoming taken seriously. Such a logic attends to the multiplicity of the ways in which bodies are known, understood and experienced through their relations with images and, moreover, would take this multiplicity and diversity to be

characteristic of the relations between bodies and images. Bodies exist not separately to (photographic) images but rather become through these images; knowledges, understandings and experiences of bodies are not "effected" by images but are produced through, or become through, these images.

Popular media images

I argued above, that the girls' photographs capture their bodies as different temporal and spatial moments, and can therefore, in Fay's words, function as "snapshots of you all through your life" which provide knowledges of the change and movement of that body. In this section, I want to suggest that the relations between bodies and images of women's and girl's bodies in popular media forms such as magazines, television and celebrity culture more generally can also be understood through the concept of becoming. Again, I want to draw attention to how bodies exceed their "capture" within a specific image and exist as knowledges, understandings and experiences elsewhere and "elsewhen".

The notion of capture which was important to the girls' understandings of their photographs was also important to the way in which they discussed the bodies of "media images". While the girls talked about how they often felt bad about their own bodies in relation to the bodies of media images, I would suggest that this can be conceived not as an "effect" of media images but as a concern with how the becoming of bodies is limited or extended in particular ways. Consider, for example, the following extract in which Chloe discusses her relations with magazine images:

RC: so how important are like media images and things like that to you?

C: erm, I think they are quite important cos when you're looking through magazines and stuff you're like, "well, I wanna look like that" and stuff but I can't cos of the things they might put themselves through in order to look like it so they are important when you're looking through magazines will like bare, like, tans and make-up and stuff and when you look in the magazine and you think "that looks nice" and you try and do it yourself and it never goes right but it is quite important, it's depressing in a way

RC: why?

C: cos like the things that run through your head when you're looking at them and you're like "I wanna look like that", "I wanna be her" and then you look at them and you just sit there and think "well I can't" so it's just like depressing

A feminist model of media effects might argue that the kinds of images of women's bodies that are published in magazines make Chloe feel depressed because, as she puts is, she can't look like they do. Magazines, and the media and fashion industries more generally, only show "impossible images" of women's bodies and this causes women, and young women in particular, to feel depressed about their own bodies and to have a bad body image. However, to return to the notion of capture discussed above, Chloe also points to the way in which the body of a media image is itself a body that has been captured as a specific spatial and temporal moment and that therefore also exists

elsewhere and "elsewhen" to this image: "all the things that they might have put themselves through in order to look like it" are air-brushed out of a media image but cannot be completely erased.

Some of the girls openly discussed the techniques and technologies that went into the capturing of a body in a media image:

T: yeah but everyone always says "yeah I'd like to look like that person in a magazine" but they've been made up, and must have so much make-up and stuff on to look

F: yeah and photos, you can have them all airbrushed so they can look

Ta: yeah, cos if they were us, if they had just a little bit of make-up on like we do then, they'd look so different

F: yeah when I look at them and I try when I look at them to think "oh they must have their insecurities like everyone else" and you think they're this perfect image because everyone loves them don't you and you think "I wanna be like them" but they must have their own insecurities as well

According to Tasha and Fay here, make-up and air-brushing are typically part of the process of being captured for a magazine image. However, being aware of what goes into the production of bodies in media images does not in itself dispel feeling bad. One way to consider the "feeling bad" is through how the girls discuss not liking their bodies in their own photographs, and the kinds of techniques they are involved in to try to look better,

for example looking nice through looking natural. Just as the girls are aware that they can do things to try to make their bodies "actually" look nice in their own photographs, they are aware that the bodies of media images are also "put through" things to look nice. In this sense, then, the bodies of their own photographs and the bodies of media images are understood in similar ways, that is the bodies of media images are not understood as "impossible" in and of themselves. Rather, the bodies of media images are also understood as diverse and multiple, as being caught as a specific spatial and temporal moment and therefore as not reducible to that image. As such, the bodies captured in media images are not fundamentally different to the bodies of the girls that are captured in their own photographs:

> D: what makes me feel better is like when you look in magazines at like the rough pages where the photographers have just caught them when they've like just walked out of the house to get some bread from the corner shop
>
> F: and you're like "ha ha ha ha"
>
> D: yeah
>
> RC: so does that make you feel better then?
>
> F: yeah, but in a really bitchy way it makes you feel,
>
> [laughter]
>
> […]
>
> RC: so why do those type of things make you feel better?
>
> Ta: cos it makes you think they're just the same as us cos but they're made up and when they're in magazines and stuff its not their true face

F: and they have bad hair days too and they don't look very good, cos all you

        generally see are good pictures of them whereas of yourself you see good

        and bad pictures, so when you see them not looking good

In arguing that the bodies of their own photographs and the bodies of media images are irreducible to the specific images that they are captured as, I am not suggesting that the possibilities of becoming through relations with photographs and media images are the equivalent. That is, I am not arguing that the girls' bodies become in the same way through their relations with photographs and media images. However, neither am I suggesting that the different possibilities of becoming are because the girls' own photographs involve the capture of their own body, and that media images involve the capture of another woman's body. As the extract above indicates, the bodies of media images are "just the same as us". What a feminist account of the becoming of bodies through images needs to address, then, is the specificities of becomings: what extensions and limitations of becoming are produced through particular relations between bodies and images?

The potentialities of becoming

It is clear, I hope, that a focus on becoming does not ignore the way in which relations between bodies and images may not be satisfying or acceptable from a feminist perspective. To argue that bodies become through their relations with images, rather than being effected by images, is not to overlook the ways in which the girls, in both my research and in feminist empirical research more widely, describe feeling bad or

depressed.[7] Rather, an ontology of becoming avoids conceiving "feeling bad" as an <u>effect of</u> images and does not inscribe bodies and images onto a pre-existing distinction between subjects and objects. Instead, an ontology of becoming attends to the complex ways in which bodies and images are entwined. This "constitutive relationality" can be understood in terms of affect (rather than effect), that is through the ways in which bodies both affect and are affected by other bodies and, further, become through these affects (Deleuze 1992). Conceiving bodies and images as in constant affective relations of production and transformation means that a finishing point for a feminist analysis of the relations between them cannot be an account of the "negative effects" of images on bodies. Such an account stops at the "impossibility" of images rather than exploring how bodies (have to) continue to become through their relations with these images. Being unhappy, depressed or angry with a body are still kinds of becoming; a body does not stop becoming because it is unhappy, depressed or angry. A feminist approach to the relations between bodies and images must seek to trace the becomings that relations with images produce, and to examine the ways in which bodies become through affects which might be conceived as "impossible". In this sense, I am arguing that the becoming of bodies is "actualised"[8] in ways that produce limiting images of those bodies. Bodies and images are not separate (body/image) but, instead, bodies become through images (body-image).

In this article I have attempted to demonstrate how the relations between the girls' bodies and their own photographic images and "media images" limit and extend the possibilities of becomings. I suggested that, while it is relatively straightforward to

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conceive photographic images as producing the becoming of bodies through the knowledges, understandings and experiences they produce, to think of media images in the same way seems a more difficult endeavour. However, conceiving media images not as isolated images but as always in relations with other images, including domestic photographs, opens up a way of seeing how they are not in relations of effect but rather themselves limit or extend the becoming of the girls' bodies. Both photographic images and media images involve the capture of a body as a particular spatial and temporal moment and produce specific possibilities of becoming; both photographic and media images produce knowledges, understandings and experiences of bodies through which these bodies become. In the case of the girls who participated in my research, photographs and media images produce knowledges of a body as multiple, as irreducible to that image. The multiplicity of a body, and the ways in which that multiplicity becomes through relations with images, seems to me to be a productive area for feminist research to explore.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. To draw attention to the problem of grouping images from different mediums – magazine, television, film etc – under the umbrella term "the media", I have placed it within inverted commas. I am grateful to Imogen Tyler for bringing this point to my attention.

2. These references, of course, do not include more general feminist media, cultural and social research concerned with the relations between women's bodies and images which is not empirical. See for example, Hollows (2003) on Nigella Lawson's cultural personae on her television cooking programmes as the negotiation of feminism and femininity, Barnet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer (2006) on post-feminism and make-over television, Woods and Skeggs (2004) on the re-emergence of class in reality television, Davies (1995) on cosmetic surgery and Holliday and Sanchez Taylor (2006) on "aesthetic surgery".

3. All of the research involved group interviews with teenage girls, and all used visual materials in some way. Grogan and Wainwright used pictures of food cut out from magazines to focus the girls and Duke's interviews required the girls to read and discuss a teen magazine of their choice. In my research, the girls brought in their own photographs to discuss and one interview involved them making their own images. The girls in all of our research projects also raised issues of weight, beauty, fashion and appearance as important experiences of the relations between their bodies and images.

4. Deleuze's work is characterised by the concept of becoming and it is therefore difficult to point to any one work which deals with becoming. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Deleuze (1991, 1992, 2001) as examples. For readers unfamiliar with Deleuze's work, see Colebrook (2002) for an eloquent and insightful introduction to Deleuze's

work, including a chapter on becoming. See Buchanan and Colebrook (2000) for a collection on feminist theory and Deleuze, and Grosz (1999) for a collection on becoming and temporality. There is little published work that I know of that takes up Deleuze's work to do empirical work, see Potts 2004 as one example.

5. apart from one where I interviewed two girls together.

6. I do not have the space to develop this point here, but my argument is not that the girls' knowledges of their bodies captured in photographs changes <u>over</u> time but rather that these changing knowledges of bodies constitute time itself. This is an understanding of time not (only) as an external linear progression but rather as an internal, intuitive duration. See Bergson (1999, 2002), Deleuze (1991) on this notion of temporality, Grosz (1999, 2005a, 2005b) for the relations between duration and becoming and Colebrook (2002) for an explanation of these terms in the work of Deleuze.

7. I make this point because one common criticism levelled at the work of Deleuze is that there is no account of power or inequality and that Deleuze's concepts focus only on the new and exciting aspects of transformation. This, I would suggest, is a mis-reading: Deleuze's work clearly points to the ways in which change involves repetition (2001) and impossibilities as well as difference and potentialities. Feminist theorists have also been keen to demonstrate how Deleuze's work can open up ways of thinking about gender, sexuality and embodiment – see for example Buchanan and Colebrook (2000), Grosz (1994, 1999, 2005a, 2005b) and Braidotti (1994, 2002).

8. "Actualisation" in the sense that I use it here has a quite specific meaning. In <u>The Fold</u> (2003) Deleuze has two sets of "couplings"; the "virtual-actual" and the "possible-real". The real is what is realised of the possible, where the possible refers to "an infinity of

possible worlds" (Deleuze 2003, p. 104). The actual is what is actualised of the virtual, where the virtual refers to a finite world, a world "chosen" out of the infinity of possible worlds. The virtual is therefore a finite world, or a finite set of potentialities, through which some potentialities are actualised (as opposed to an infinite set of potentialities, some of which are realised). What is actualised, then, is in some way restricted through the virtual. My argument here is that a body's becoming is not the realisation of an infinite set of possibilities but an actualisation of a finite set of possibilities. This is also why I argue in note 7 that understanding Deleuze's work as having no concept of limitation is a mis-reading.

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