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Theory a Body Can Do

Bruises, Becomings, and Affects in Pole Dance

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Abstract and Keywords

Since the affective turn in the social sciences, the mind–body dualism which affect theory was designed to overcome lingers in writings about affect and the body. To overcome this dualism, I rely on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s philosophy and map out their becomings in a third region of emerging and circulating affects. At the same time, I criticize Deleuze and Guattari for portraying becoming as intensely physical and yet not considering it through actual physical practice. I argue that dance practice is an experiment in becoming and affect, and I develop a concrete and affective illustration of becoming through empirical research on pole dance practice, especially focusing on the phenomenon of bruising.

Keywords: affect theory, empirical research, anthropology, body, performance

This paper is based on case studies of bruising in pole dance and a theoretical framework of becoming that is employed in the Japanese-language paper “I could die—Feeling Affect in the Becomings of Pole Dance Practice” published in the *Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology* (Coker 2022a).

1. Why Dance? Why Affect?

Dancing is addictive. Why? Some people might think it is because it is fun. Perhaps it is fun, but that is not always the case. Sometimes it is hard, and sometimes it is frustrating, because no one can control their body completely, and no one can perform their ideal dance all the time. I venture to say that dance is addictive because it is the body in pure, sheer movement in flux, in which one can feel possibilities and limitations dynamically flow through the body. Dance is a performance that is often watched, perhaps because the viewer can see and even feel this phenomenon from dancing bodies. If I were to hypothesize the attractive quality of dance, it is pure *affect* springing forth from the dancer’s body as its site.

There are many definitions of affect across different disciplines, but I specifically refer to the theory that engendered an affective turn in the social sciences from the 2000s. Brian Massumi’s (1995) essay “The autonomy

of affect” has been pointed to as the catalyst for this turn. According to Massumi, affect is precognitive, pre-personal, pre-discursive, nonconscious intensities that circulate in and among our bodies (Massumi 1995, 2002). Affect differs from emotion in that emotions are intensities that are captured and socio-linguistically situated into a personal narrative that makes sense. Affects often don’t make sense- they include the lived paradoxes, latent possibilities, and linguistically irreducible complexities of when feelings circulate the body. Massumi’s affect begs us to look at that which escapes being neatly organized by symbols or narratives and is seated in the body, especially sensation and movement; however, he clearly states that he does not intend to position affect in the body half of the mind-body dichotomy, and that affect is instead the point from where mind, body, and all of existence emerges. Massumi’s discussion of affect draws from neuroscientific experiments, the idiotic and yet powerful rhetoric of former US president Ronald Reagan, and the actual economic effects of certain mindsets or beliefs; the theorization of affect based on the aforementioned cases is largely based on Baruch Spinoza’s concepts of affect (*affectus* in the original Latin) and affection (*affectio* in the original Latin) (translation from Curley in Spinoza 1985:625, 662). Spinoza defines affect, as so far as it can be known, as increasing or decreasing the body’s “power of acting, *or* force of existing” (Spinoza 1985: 542).

Massumi's conception of Spinoza's affect is as follows: "a body's *capacity* to enter into relations of movement and rest... this capacity he (Spinoza) spoke of as a *power* (or potential) to affect or be affected" (Massumi 2002:15). Massumi, who translated the English version of a Thousand Plateaus, also draws on how Spinoza's philosophy is developed in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (hereinafter referred to as D&G).

In this paper, I will clarify and thus develop the idea of affect through an affective and ethnographic approach to pole dance. As an anthropologist, I begin not with a desire to develop a philosophical concept but with a need to understand what is happening in the real physical practice that I find in the field; it is from this need to understand that I employ and develop the philosophical theory of affect. Taking an affective approach to affect means that not only will I discuss affect as an abstract concept, but I will try to make the reader themselves feel the specific and visceral affects that I personally encountered and felt. This is the strength of anthropology, in that it has the power to transmit what happened and what was felt in the field through the experience of the researcher (Navaro-Yashin 2012, Skoggard and Waterston 2015, Stewart 2007). I want the reader to feel the pains and the joys that arise when people pole dance. While thinking, feeling, and maybe even moving together with the reader, I will develop an idea of affect empirically grounded in the practice of pole dance.

2. Affect, Becoming, and Dance

First, I would like to introduce one problem with how Massumi's affect was employed by the social sciences, and how this paper aims to overcome this problem by focusing on D&G's becoming and the emergence of affect in pole dance. Next, I will outline specifically how I interpret and map out D&G's becoming and the emergence of affect within them.

Affect theory in the social sciences has been criticized for upholding the very Cartesian mind-body dualism that it was trying to overcome by reducing the seat of affect to the unconscious body (Cromby & Willis 2016; Leys 2011, 2017; Martin 2013; Mazzarella 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Newell 2018; Smith, Wetherell & Campbell(eds)2018; Wetherell 2012). Recent literature has attempted to complement this approach with the semiotic dimension of affect: to state it very basically, this dimension includes how what is said and what that means for us also influences the way we feel (Wetherell 2012) or how the meanings that material things or environs have for us hold sway on how we feel (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Newell 2018). While this is an important

aspect for affect, it borrows from the so-called mental side of the mind-body dichotomy to compensate for the emphasis on the biological body, and thus I argue that it doesn't provide an ontological framework that overcomes mind-body dualism. This is problematic because mind-body dualism cannot consider the instantaneous arising of affect that envelops our whole being and propels us forward in life. For this reason, I rely on "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible..." the tenth chapter in D&G's *A Thousand Plateaus* (D&G 1987 (1980):232- 309), and in the next section I will outline my reading of D&G's affect that moves past this dualism.

D&G's original term for becoming is the French term "devenir" (D&G 1980: 284), and I understand this becoming as becoming something other than oneself (D&G 1987: 315-6). D&G also draw from Spinoza and state that affects increase or decrease an individual's power to act and thus "affects are becomings" (1987:299). However, affect is not limited to the individual level because "it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (1987: 280). As I will explain in detail later, an encounter with a certain "pack," specifically beginning with an outsider that lures one into their group, brings one to experiment with themselves, being affected by that group, perhaps manifesting affects from the group, and their bodies become a base for these affects to circulate. I think that the state of being affected and becoming something different entails living differently, thinking differently, and feeling differently. The unfathomable number of differences that exist in this world are subsumed and made invisible as they are logically categorized into certain forms of representation and knowledge in an array of social institutions. Becomings are experiments to manifest these multitudinous differences as one realizes hereunto unknown affects. Overall, one encounters something different, enters into a state of becoming this something-different, and is affected in different ways; to put this another way, I could also say that one is affected by something- different, enters a state into which they can live/think/feel differently, and pass through a state of becoming something-else. The process of becoming and the circulation of affects are in an intertwined relationship.

In D&G's chapter on becomings, their examples of affect are mostly from music, visual art, literature, and film, and there is a lack of references to dance. I wonder: if the fundamental of affect and becoming is a phenomenologically corporeal, visceral passage from one state to another, then wouldn't dance be the arena for affects? While dance does rely on verbal communication to think about how to make dance, it is unique because it is a nonverbal form of performance. If there is any physical practice that attempts to follow the flow of

affects and tests one's capacity to affect and be affected, dance is it. If there is any physical practice that can go the furthest in asking what a body can do, a guiding question when thinking about affect, it is dance. Dance can teach us more specifically what happens with the body and what processes occur in the circulation of affects.

This paper will not focus on dance works that are presented on stage, but on the practice of dance in the studio. While D&G focused on the finished works of music, literature, and so forth, the practice and creation behind those works can only be known through recollections from its creators or writers as well as through D&G's inference. This paper will not only develop becoming through theory grounded in empirical research, but that research is conducted through the dancing body of the researcher, myself. Through conducting the physical practice of which I write, I have an understanding that courses through my feelings, my muscles, my body. This creates a more specific and concrete exposition of the becomings and affects in pole dance, in such a way that it creates a map not only of individual becomings (as in D&G's examples) but of the path towards and through becomings ad infinitum.

3. Reading D&G'S "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible"

Whereas Cartesian mind-body dualism separates the life of the body into two opposing quadrants of mind and body, D&G map our existence through two planes of perception. These two planes are irreducible to mind-body dualism and instead are a cartographic approach to a different ontology. I think that we inhabit these two planes simultaneously but also lean towards one or the other depending on the situation and our state. Becoming occurs in a no-man's land that is located between these two planes. Before I discuss becoming, I will explain the two planes below.

The first is a plane of organization, differentiation and development; it is our lives in which we are organized as subjects by different social institutions, like the family and the nation as well as psychology and religion, and the contents of our worlds are differentiated and categorized by their forms and functions. It is on this plane that what we feel is represented and symbolized as emotions and organized into our personal narratives and memories. The world on this plane is perceived through how we are taught to understand our everyday lives, ourselves, and our places in contemporary society.

The second is the plane of immanence, consistency, and composition- a plane that is imperceptible in the first plane. Here, ourselves and the things in our lives

are not perceived by their classification, their function, or their meaning, as in the first plane. D&G write that on this plane "unformed elements and materials dance that are distinguished from another only by their speed and that enter into this or that assemblage depending on their connections, their relations of movement" (1987(1980): 255). In this plane things in themselves are not decided by comparison and classification but exist as sheer dynamic particles and affective intensities. Through becoming, we are moving closer to this second plane.

This brings us to the area of becomings between the two planes. It is here that one can realize latent possibilities through creative experiments within different relations among different actors. These creative experiments begin with an encounter with an outsider and a run-in with a certain deviant group (such as secret societies, a pack of wild animals, or criminal groups) that causes one to try something different and become something other than oneself. Below are two of D&G's examples of becomings that illustrate these encounters and the creative experiments that follow it.

The first example is the becomings that D&G find in Carlos Castaneda's anthropological work *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Castaneda 1968). In his research about shamanism in Mexico, Castaneda becomes the disciple of the sorcerer Don Juan. In this process, Castaneda smokes peyote and encounters a water bowl and a dog, which is suggested to be Mescalito, the spirit of peyote (Castaneda 1968: 48-9), and what happens afterwards is what D&G call a becoming-dog and a becoming-molecular (D&G 1987(1980): 248-9). After smoking, Castaneda is thirsty and begins drinking from a water bowl that Don Juan placed on the floor. When the dog (Mescalito) also began drinking with him, Castaneda could feel the water emerging from each of his pores as fibers of light, so that he had a mane of light similar to the dog's. Then, Castaneda plays with the dog in a way that they could control each other's movements through their own. In this process, Castaneda completely forgot that he was human (Castaneda 1968: 42-4). This becoming-dog suggests how becoming is not something that one can do alone, but requires an encounter with other entities, like a spirit/dog and water, and also is not some logical, goal-oriented process, but is instead a passage through different states with uncertainty, which is one major characteristic of play (Caillois 1961: 7). It is also play in which one fully commits oneself, to the point of letting go of who they once were.

D&G also raise the example of Hans, a pediatric patient of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. D&G explain Hans's feelings not in the psychological language of Freud that portrays that horse as representative of unconscious hang-ups, but as simply being overwhelmed by the affective aspect of the horse he encounters in

the road (D&G 1987(1980): 257-8). Being afraid and yet entranced with the horse at the same time, Hans undergoes a becoming-horse. This process is not difficult, nor abstract; instead it is a specifically physical and creative experiment in movement. For example, whereas the violent horse flings around its large penis, for Hans this affective movement may be to bare his knees. Hans doesn't imitate, nor does he aim to become the horse per-se; rather he is passing through a state of becoming-horse in the present progressive. If we ask what a body is, Hans may never become a horse; but if the question is what a body can do, Hans may feel and exude a similar affective force as the rampaging horse through a becoming-horse. This state is pushing outside of the first plane, it is pulling upon the sheer relations in movement and stillness and the circulation of affects in the second plane, and it is unfolding in between the two planes, before moving onto the next becoming.

4. Becoming-pole-dancer, Becoming-pole

We can see in these examples how becomings emerge and intertwine with affects, and these details are crucial for the design of this research. First, becomings emerge from an encounter with someone/something different than oneself and from outside of one's social milieu. This paper focuses on the pole dance practice of students in a pole dance studio; thus, in their becoming-pole-dancers and becoming-pole, they encounter a veteran pole dancer and the pole dance community from which these becomings emerge. Although this history is not well-documented, from my interviews with pole dancers I found that a large portion of the physical pole-dance moves were created in gentleman's clubs and strip clubs in the U.S. as well as Japan in the 1990s (Coker 2022b). Pole dance began to be learned by mostly women as fitness outside of the club context in the 1990s in the US and the 2000s in Japan, and pole sports has begun to be recognized as a legitimate competitive sport from the 2010s through increased media coverage of pole sports competitions and their champions. Pole dance still carries the deviant image and thus stigma of sex work, and yet it is also being recognized as an acceptable form of fitness, sports, and dance; thus, it occupies an ambiguous position in society. This social positioning of pole dancers as so-called outsiders, in a sense, is conducive to the process of becoming.

Second, D&G expressly state: "Affects are becomings" (D&G 1987(1980): 256). It is certainly affects that drive these encounters and the passage through different becomings, and it is also encounters and the emerging of different relations that allow affect to spread among bodies and subsequently augment or diminish their power of activity. Dance practice

is an experimentation in affect that creatively probes what a body can do. With pole dance, not only is it a nonverbal form of performance but also it demonstrates a relationship with the stainless-steel pole in mid-air that makes it different from ordinary ways of moving on the ground and with gravity. These specific characteristics allow for the affects and becomings in pole dance to be quite pronounced and exaggerated, as I will portray in the next section through my fieldwork.

Next, I will introduce and discuss case studies from my fieldwork on pole dance to develop the ideas of becomings=affects. I began fieldwork on pole dance in 2015 when I started working at a small show pub called "Café Panic Rabbit 84" in southern Osaka (see Coker 2022b) and attending lessons in Kyoto. This fieldwork method is called participant-observation, but this research is heavily based on participation; I couldn't write fieldnotes when I was working and dancing, so I wrote them directly afterwards or the next morning. From 2018, I expanded my research to include pole sports and pole dance competitions, attending two larger studios in Osaka and Kyoto. I kept fieldnotes about my experience in the studio and at competitions, and I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with pole dancers in-person as well as structured interviews online.

As I trained and performed pole dance, I interacted with a large number of pole dance practitioners; this paper especially draws on interactions with 32 people who trained together with me on a regular basis of about five days a week, responded to structured interviews, and provided me with photographs. Their ages ranged from their 20s to their 50s, with women in their 30s being the most prevalent. Although they are not featured in this paper, there are also women in their 60s who participate in this research and practice pole dance vigorously. While women are more common, there were ten men who participated in this research and provided photographs. While I am applying this male/female dichotomy for the convenience of describing the participants in this research, I will point out that there were participants who seemed to blur the binary of male/female, but they are not featured in this paper.

5. Moving towards the Second Plane in Pole Dance Becomings

Specifically, I will discuss becomings=affects by introducing a phenomenon that all practitioners seemed to share: bruising from friction between or collision of the body and pole (see figure 1 and figure 2). This bruising will have different forms and meanings and yet point towards similar becomings and affects. The body stays on the pole and above ground by pressing

and squeezing bare skin against the pole. Let me use the metaphor of walking: when we walk on the ground, our feet press into the floor, and with each step we fall once and catch ourselves with the other foot. Moving up on the pole is similar, in that the practitioner maintains contact with one part of the body to free up another, which then latches onto the pole by pulling away from it or pushing against it. To stay up on the pole, they squeeze and then push or pull the pole not only with their hands, but with many different body parts, including but not limited to the back of their knees, the front of their knees, their shins, the tops of their feet, their shoulders, the inside of their elbows, the inside of their thighs, and their armpits. When this body part is not accustomed to being pressed against the pole in this manner, it often bruises. They are resisting the pull of gravity, and that causes friction between the skin and the pole. In addition to this challenge, new pole moves often feel strange and uncomfortable, and they may have trouble coordinating the body to achieve stability on the pole. Often, after they become accustomed to a certain movement and practice it regularly, bruising will no longer occur in that particular location.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Collages made from photographs of bruises provided by research collaborators

This bruising is a physical manifestation of the becomings through which the pole dancer passes. First, it demonstrates the uncertainty of this transformation, since we can assume that most do not try to bruise themselves on purpose. For example, a young woman in her 20s who enjoys golfing and puppies, told me that “when I had first started pole dance I had bruises all over my legs all the time;” I was there for this informant’s first lesson, when she and a friend giddily tried a beginner’s pole dance lesson. I watched as her friend stopped attending lessons, but this woman gradually attended more frequently- from once a week to three or four times a week- by herself, subsequently rising into the more advanced lessons and installing a pole in her home. I noticed that as she made advancements in her skill level, she seldom had bruises on her legs. These bruises, as well as the fading of the bruises, are physical outcomes of changes in the relations in movement on the second plane of immanence.

Figures 1 and 2 were composed not merely to portray the bruises in pole dance, but to transmit that affect to the reader. I hope that the reader can imagine how different body parts collide with or squeeze into the pole and how that may hurt. I also want the reader to imagine and feel the rush of energy, in other words the sheer affects, that would be required for the practitioner to

not notice, or to only minimally feel these bruises. One informant in her 20s, who competes at the international level and specializes in tricks that require a high level of flexibility, told me that “it is pain that only lasts for a second, so I don’t really mind it much.” Pain becomes a regular part of pole dance, and I could often hear cries of pain accompanied by laughter in the attempts at new tricks. I argue that this is the sign of them being pulled towards the second plane of pure affects and the capacity to feel these affects in new relations. As their energy for this practice is augmented by the affects realized through pole dance, pain becomes drowned out by the magnitude of other positive affects.

Affects, by definition, cannot be verbalized, but these participants were able to vaguely describe the nature of the positive affects in pole dance. Some told me that pole dance was “fun (*tanoshii*);” when I asked what was fun about it, I was often told that being able to do something new, that “sense of achievement (*tasseikan*)” was fun. This is quite in line with the idea of becoming, because through creative experimentation one can enter new relations and be able to do something different, thus augmenting or diminishing their energy. When pole practitioners can enter a new relationship with the pole, it leads to physical discomfort, bruising, and oftentimes pain, but being able to do something new augments their energy, which is their experience of “fun.”

Being able to do something new can be called becoming-pole-dancer, since it is from the encounter with the somewhat-deviant group of pole dancers in which the practitioner becomes able to generate affects similar to those moving through pole dancers. This could be moving around or up the pole fluidly, stopping in an impressive pose, or displaying their bodies in a sensual way, in general. However, I think there is a point where practitioners go beyond trying to become-pole-dancer and towards becoming-pole; This is where they create their own moves and styles based on their relationship with the pole becoming stable in the air like the pole does. Perhaps this is because becomings do not occur through imitation, and each practitioner finds their own way to encounter pole-dancer-ness and thus pole-ness. This way of encountering can never be settled and never lead to a complete achievement of pole-dancer-hood or pole-hood, leading practitioners to repeat incomplete experiments when they train. This suggests why they continue pole dance even though they receive bruises and pain, something that they were not hoping for in the first place.

I noticed one practitioner who attended five or six times a week, as I did, and even if she had business trips, she would often visit local pole dance studios on those trips. Pole dance classes are often held at night after the participants finish work, ranging anywhere from 6:30 to 10:00 pm, and she visited these lessons as well. I asked

her why she attended so much despite of her busy work, and she nonchalantly replied, “to release stress (*stress hassan*).” She is a salaried worker at a major company, and yet she doesn’t want to go home and relax after a hard day at work and instead wants to go to a pole dance studio where the instructors will make her work physically, doing backbends, spinning around the pole upside down, and performing tricks that require strength and flexibility. Rather, doing these things seems to give her energy; even when I met her coincidentally at the grocery store after a lesson at around 9pm she smiled and laughed at the chance encounter. In the end, we took a picture in the prepared foods section, while both of us were undoubtedly hungry as we hadn’t had dinner yet.

Although pole dance is strenuous, the practice’s affects augment our capacity for activity. It is paradoxical- the more energy one exerts, the more energy one gets. In the process, not only the pain but also any other negative affects- feelings of irritation or stress, even hunger or sleepiness- often are wiped away and the body is replenished with positive affects from pole dance. This is a prime example of the nonconscious passage from one state to another that is a becoming while it is affect in itself.

While bruising is an effect of the preliminary becomings in pole dance, an absence of bruising is the outcome of the repetition and continuation of this becoming. For becomings aren’t a static state but a passage from one state to the next. The practitioner cannot stay in the same state but must always be moving, training, and then attempting a new move, a new trick, a new performance. If they try to do nothing and stay in the same place, their becomings and affects will fade, just as their bruising fades. There was one practitioner, a woman in her 30s who worked as a part-time model, and she also practiced about five or six times a week. However, she didn’t participate in competitions, only performing in recitals held at the studio. I asked why she practiced so frequently, and she said that she was afraid of losing the abilities that she had gained. I could understand- she was quite skilled, but it was not the case that she was flexible or strong from the beginning. These were all pathways in her body that she opened from her experiments in pole dance, and she was aware that they were pathways that would close to her if she did not continue moving on the pole. If we ask what this suggests for becomings, we can consider how once affects emerge, that doesn’t mean that they sediment in a static way; they may move away from the practitioner and fade with time, like the bruises themselves. Becomings come from an encounter, and one becoming leads to the next. The physical practices and thus bodies continually change each day. Perhaps dancing is addictive because it is sometimes nearing completion, sometimes getting farther away from completion, and always never complete. This

uncertainty generates a fluctuation of affects that lift one up before letting one down and then lifting one up again. The dancer cannot control it, and the only thing they can control is the choice to stop or to keep going. If they stop, those becomings and those affects will fade, but if they continue, their body will be hurled further through unpredictable becomings and unknown yet latent affects.

Another possibility is that the practitioner may go completely to the second plane and self-destruct. Deleuze and Guattari state that it is important for someone to stay in between planes one and two, and if they were to completely go to the second plane, they would be destroyed. One example they give of this kind of destruction are drug addicts; perhaps they can experience the second plane, maybe even create great art from that experience, but going too far will lead to their destruction. In the case of pole dance, it can lead to heavy and even fatal injuries, either destroying the body by pushing it too far or falling from the three or four-meter heights of the pole. Pole dance demonstrates the importance of being moderate in a becoming and not completely going to the second plane of immanence. It is in the in-between zone of the becomings that the practitioner can experiment and move through different affective states.

6. Moving Away from the First Plane in Pole Dance Becomings

The previous section focused on becomings as a passage towards the second plane without completely arriving there. In the next section, I will discuss how becomings are a passage that is moving away from existence on the first plane.

These bruises also become a physical symbol of their pulling away from the first plane of organization, in which they are an office worker or a housewife, and towards a certain outsider in society, that of the pole dancer. It all begins with the encounter with the pole dancer and of course the encounter with the pole. While talking about bruising to an instructor, I was informed that some students quit pole dance once they learn about the bruising that will occur; for example, women who model professionally will have difficulty working if they are covered in unsightly bruises. Having strange bruises all over one's body won't make it easy for anyone to lead a so-called normal life in Japanese society, especially not women.

In contrast, the participants who provided me with pictures of their bruises instead found a positive meaning in them: bruises were often called a "badge of honor" by instructors as well as the practitioners in that they are a symbol for their hard work at pole dance. These same practitioners undoubtedly know that bruises are

recognized as something else in general society; for example, the women would often jokingly say that they hope others don't think that they are victims of domestic violence if their bruises are spotted at work. This suggests an interaction between the becomings and the first plane of organization- by reclaiming the meaning of their bruises, practitioners first deterritorialize the meaning of bruises from general society and reterritorialize that meaning within the context of the pole dance studio.

The pole dance studio is a somewhat deviant group in that it exists outside of the productive working society and carries with it a certain degree of social stigma, at the same time that it is ambiguous because of its partial acceptance as a competitive sport, as evidenced in media coverage of Japanese pole dancers who win international pole dance competitions. While D&G's examples of outsider groups are extreme- like vampires, packs of mice, secret societies, and so forth- this example of the pole dance studio community as an outsider group exhibits the complexities and ambiguities that come with real life practices of becomings.

Aside from the bruises, there were other physical characteristics that made participants feel their disconnection from their social selves in the first plane. One of this research's participants, a woman in her 30s, works as a pharmacist and often shared how pole dancing affected her work life. As her shoulders grew in width from the muscle required for pole dance, people around her would often exclaim "your shoulders!" or clerks at clothing shops would suggest sizes for tops that were too small for her, unaware of how wide her shoulders were in proportion to the rest of her body. Another woman in her 40s who always had immaculately curled hair and well-applied makeup, looking like a proper kind of woman in Osaka society, said that when she felt muscle soreness from pole the next day at work, she was happy and felt like it was her secret. On several occasions, I also have been told something about my appearance or my muscles- often people make comments about my back muscles or my biceps when I show them my pole dance, before even commenting on the dance itself. In Japanese society, especially, the ideal for women seems for them to be round, with soft body lines, and this practice of pole dance pushes its female practitioners outside of this ideal. The more one practices pole dance, the more pronounced their muscular structures will become, taking them further away from the gender norms for women in Japanese society. The aforementioned pharmacist chooses her clothing in order to camouflage the size of her shoulders, and thus women who work daytime jobs can also find ways to blend their muscular pole bodies back into the image of a typical woman in Japan. Also, women who work as pole dancers in clubs or bars often try to approximate themselves again with gender norms

in the first plane, of getting their bodies ready for the heterosexual male gaze, by putting in several pads or bras underneath their costumes. The more pole dancers approach the second plane of immanence, of diving into the pure affects of pole dance in trying to become stable in the air like the pole, in other words a becoming-pole, the more they are pulled away from the gender norms in the first plane.

The deviation from gender stereotypes regarding physical appearance in the first plane were the most marked for women, but men in this study also discovered adversity in general society regarding their pole dance practice. For example, one heterosexual man in his 20s who participated in this study stated that he was chided as being homosexual when he quite his day job and began seriously training in pole dance. Another recalled that he was told by others that men pole dancing were *kimoi*, meaning gross. Both men who told me this have won national and international competitions, and we can think that they include these stories of simplified derisions in the process of organizing their narrative as one of overcoming adversity.

Another male participant in his 30s demonstrates more accurately the ambiguous nature of how his pole dance training, or rather pole dance becomings, affected his category as an adult male in the first plane. When he first competed in Japan's national pole dance competition in Osaka, his mother came to watch as a sign of support. Since practitioners who place highly in these competitions are often celebrated on tv programs or newspaper articles, it is not surprising that he was proud of his score and assumed others would be as well. He told one of his work superiors at an after-work drinking party about his hobby and his competition success. Instead of his superior congratulating him as he expected, he was told "instead of doing that, you should do something that contributes to society." Although the aforementioned participant successfully worked a full-time office job and trained at the same time, showing up to the studio in a suit on weekday nights and spending his weekends and holidays training, his work-place superiors still expect him to sacrifice himself more for society, which can also be interpreted as one patriarchal extension of the nuclear family. His becomings in pole dance pulled him away from the gender norms operating in one part of his society, the older generation at his workplace.

This participant married a female pole dancer from the same studio, and as of the writing of this paper, they currently perform and appear in competitions together. In my fieldwork, I have also encountered a heterosexual couple in their 40s who competed and opened a chain of pole dance studios together, as well as a heterosexual couple in their 40s who competed and then began a show pub together; both couples have children. There

is also a younger heterosexual couple in their 20s who teach pole dance, operate a pole dance bar, and perform in competitions and events together. When I visited their pole dance bar, the female pole dancer was fully clothed in laid-back black stretch pants and working behind the bar making drinks. It was her male partner as well as another young man who were dancing on the pole on top of the bar, before stripping down to t-back style underpants. The clientele were two female university students and me. I vividly remember the other women laughing and having a good time while the men danced for them. They asked, "where do you buy that underwear in the first place?" referring to the t-back underpants, before searching for the underwear brand on their smartphones and laughing. They were enjoying the scantily clad dancing men, but they also remarked on how they like men but could also see themselves dating women. This example suggests how these pole dancers deterritorialize categories in the first plane and then reterritorialize their gendered bodies to create new pockets of society that allow new possibilities for how gender and sexuality can be lived.

7. Reading D&G'S "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible"

In this paper, I introduced the emergence of Massumi's affect theory and acknowledged one problem with affect theory in the social sciences, namely the lingering of Cartesian mind-body dualism. I argue for the necessity of a clear ontological framework to overcome mind-body dualism and suggest a return to the theorization of affect in D&G's becomings, in which our existence is not understood through the division of mind and body but through the mapping of two planes of existence, with becomings unfolding in between the two. Further, to chart how becomings unfurl, I propose the application of empirical research on dance. This paper argues that pole dance is a preferable performance form for analyzing becomings because of its demanding physical exertion and bodily transformation as well as its ambiguously deviant social standing. Through pole dance, it becomes clear how becomings are specifically physically practiced beginning with an encounter and proceeded by creative experimentation within relationships with the pole and others.

The discussion of becomings in pole dance began with clarifying the pulling towards the second plane, the realm of the imperceptible. The bruising in pole dance is unique in that it makes the imperceptible movement and affects of pole dance visible for a short period of time; similar to becomings, they also arise and vanish in a manner that is uncontrollable by the practitioner. The

practitioner can only guide the passage from one state to another by choosing whether to follow through with their encounter with pole dance and continue training or whether to stop.

The photographs of bruises were provided to allow the reader to be able to imagine how the body creates different relationships with the pole and on the pole by pressing different parts into it. Not only did I intend for the reader to feel the pain through these photographs, but I hope that they can feel how the volume of affects and augmentation of energy, which practitioners expressed as “fun” in pole dance practice could possibly drown out these sensations of pain, wipe out negative affects in general, and spur the practitioner to continue pole dance as a part of their life. At the same time, I hoped for the reader to imagine the danger of pole dance moving too far towards the second plane, and the possible injury and death awaiting the practitioner.

The bruising is also a symbol of how the practitioner pulls away from the first plane through their encounter with pole dancers and the pole. I portrayed how they pulled away from the first plane only to reterritorialize their bodies and reinvent that first plane by redefining the meaning of the bruise. This was especially true for female pole dancers, but I also digressed from the topic of bruises to discuss how male pole dancers are deviating from stereotypical gender norms in their society. Furthermore, I suggested how they use preexisting categories of the married couple or the night/sex industry but reinvent what their bodies can do in those categories.

This paper clearly outlined how Affects=Becomings emerge in specific physical practice. One might think that practicing and attempting to hone a skill like pole dance couldn't possibly create a becoming, but I illustrated how the uncontrollable creative experimentation hurls the practitioner towards unknown affects, which further spur the practitioner to continue experimentation and further becomings. While D&G's examples of becomings are with clearly deviant groups and abstract passages through bodily states, these empirical examples were the opposite: real life on the first plane is more ambiguous, and bodily becomings drawing towards the second plane are more concrete. To be specific, in real life, presented here through empirical research, pole's deviance is not clear-cut and depends on who is talking and in what context. Also, in real life, bodily transformations are visceral and can be felt by the researcher, and possibly even the reader through photographs and descriptions. Whereas D&G's examples of becomings draw from mostly works of fiction or representations of becomings, this paper bases its idea of becomings on empirical research not only understood by me verbally or visually but through my own moving muscular sinewy body on the pole- theory grounded in the researcher's own body. In other words, this is theory that only the body can do.

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