

Chapter 00

Introduction: Thinking with and Through Affective Inequalities

This book's approach to affect sheds light on subtle mechanisms of inequality which may easily go unnoticed, given that affects are often ambivalent, mundane, ordinary and difficult to capture empirically. Yet the new ontologies opened up by relational affect theories suggest that inequalities can be known affectively, as they are felt intrapersonally and made tangible in interpersonal encounters. While taking affective inequalities as its point of departure, this book introduces alternative and novel ways of conceptualizing and approaching the workings of affect in intimate relationships.

Why Affective Inequality?

Why do many inequalities concerning gender and sexuality prevail, even in countries that rank highly in international equality measurements and where general demands for equality are widely approved and supported? This question was our starting point while we were drafting our successful research proposal on affective inequalities, of which project this book is one of the outcomes. We assumed that it was perhaps more difficult to disrupt power relations in intimate relationships than in other social realms, especially if we wish to reach

beyond such widely acknowledged concrete issues as equal pay, household chores or care responsibilities and to consider the full spectrum of inequalities. These include the hardly recognizable, unthoughtfully mundane or otherwise complex and messy power dynamics through which people experience their relationships. Further, we wondered how these kinds of subtle operations of power could be recognized, and whether new conceptualizations or methodological innovations would be needed.

In particular, we could not avoid noticing how previous studies stressed heterosexual relationships as persistent arenas for renewing gendered conventions and hierarchies, which was simultaneously often explained away by referring to stereotypical gender roles.

However, we started to ponder to what extent inequalities in intimate relationships can actually be traced back to heterosexual dynamics. Alternatively, might there be something else about intimate relations themselves that makes them a fertile ground for sustaining unequal practices—regardless of who the partners are, and irrespective their gender or sexual identifications? With such questions in mind, we started to reflect on how inequalities are shaped in everyday affective encounters, as well as in their interpretation and judgement. We finally came up with the concept of affective inequality, hoping with its help to identify phenomena that are difficult to capture empirically. Moreover, we wanted to experiment and even play with the collocation—and to see what other scholars might have to say about it.

The aim of this edited collection is to explore affective dynamics with particular attention to affective inequalities in intimate relationships. By doing so, *Affective Inequalities in Intimate Relationships* opens up a new path in affect studies. It draws upon affect theories in its aim to set a research agenda for the definition, recognition and exploration of affective inequalities in intimate encounters. While placing focus on intimate encounters, we seek to promote a relational understanding of affect. From such a perspective, affect can neither be reduced to an easily defined, captured or proved ‘it’ nor viewed as a personal property or individual

reaction; rather, affect emerges in encounters, and provides a novel perspective on relations between bodies and subjects. A relational approach further invites the exploration of aspects of intimate relations that underline corporeal co-constitution, intersubjective connection, multiple assemblages and affective entanglements. For example, acknowledging the everyday flows of forces, charges, energies, moods and atmospheres is crucial for developing our understandings of the fabrics of different relationships, which cannot be grasped by employing conventional analyses of power.

Having a look at intimate relationships is probably as timely as ever—they hardly ever go out of fashion. Despite the shifts in the ways in which intimate lives are organized in late modern societies, a coupled relationship still has high status and a robust allure. Various forms of intimate relationships—be they a fling, a marriage or a polyamorous arrangement—are expected to offer personal and emotional fulfilment. At the same time, normative and non-normative relationships are sites where social expectations and lived experiences concerning gender and sexuality are renewed, produced and resisted. However, these intimate entanglements are often challenging to recognize, as many forms of intimate vulnerability and suffering are hardly tangible and difficult to pinpoint. Taking a closer look at the ways in which affectivity connects with power relations in intimate relations expands our knowledge of the social significance of affective inequalities and the workings of power beyond conceptualizations that foreground structures, institutions and norms.

The difficulty of recognizing affective inequality as it occurs brings us to another aim of this book, which is to bridge the gap between affect theory and empirical social research with innovative methodologies. A great body of theoretical work has been published on affect, yet the sophisticated debates on the significance of affect in renewing social hierarchies and indicating societal power relations have remained somewhat distanced from empirical inquiry. We do not seek to mobilize juxtapositions of the ‘theoretical’ and ‘empirical’, yet we

too cannot avoid noticing that affect studies are often literally about affect theory—which makes us ask how empirical inquiry might enrich the current approaches to affect. This book for its own part seeks to offer ideas and inspiration by providing practical examples of how to work with affect in empirical research practice.

In particular, we are interested in developing and working with methodologies that provide better access to affect as an embodied experience. We envision that it will produce knowledge about the ways in which inequalities are mediated affectively. All in all, with its focus on affective inequalities, this volume presents cutting-edge empirical studies on affect and intimate relationships. In this way the book not only provides tools to analyse affective inequalities in intimate relationships, but also puts forward the idea that to think through affect has the potential to transform the way we understand the social, and hence offers new possibilities to politicize it. For us, the motivation to pose questions about affective inequality is also a political, ethical and feminist endeavour. Even though this volume focuses on affective inequalities in intimate relationships, it is evident that its theoretical and methodological contributions not only help to deepen our understanding of affective inequalities both in and beyond such relationships, but can also be employed when exploring operations of force and power in other kinds of encounters as well.

Relational Understanding of Affect

An increasing interest in the study of affect across the humanities and social sciences has simultaneously raised doubts concerning its ‘newness’. These criticisms are often made by pointing towards previous studies on emotions. Even though this kind of debate is necessary and relevant, a simplistic identification of affect studies with emotion studies does not do justice to the new ontology affect studies advance. Of course, several questions and concerns discussed across affect studies appeared in feminist theories of the body, in various

psychoanalytic approaches, and in critical inquiry on the emotions, before the breakthrough of affect studies (Blackman & Venn 2010:8; Seigworth & Gregg 2010:6–9). Still, we wish to highlight that affect is not more or less synonymous with individual human emotions. Affect can entail emotions, but it is not by any means limited to them. The relational understanding of affect foregrounds the importance of acknowledging intercorporeality and trans-subjectivity (e.g. Blackman 2012; Blackman & Venn 2010:8; Seyfert 2012). Hence, affect as a concept directs attention to the relations between bodies—be they individual or collective, human or non-human.

Crucial for the relational understanding of affect is the idea that affecting and becoming affected emerges in and through encounters between bodies and things. Affects, as in energies, flows, intensities and resonances, are not to be understood as straightforward reactions or simple results of relating, because the encounters and their effects are themselves open-ended and productive. Moreover, it would be misleading just to see affects emerging as a distinct result of particular encounters, since affects also contribute to the happenings of these encounters. They can be viewed as active agents themselves, having productive capacities (also Kinnunen & Kolehmainen, submitted). The encounters are thus not to be understood as interactions between two separate bodies: to foreground relationality is to reject the idea of pre-existing entities that interact, as the relation itself is seen as primary (Blackman & Venn 2010:10, 22). From this it follows that individuals, or couples for that matter, are seen as emerging through entangled processes of relating.

These affective encounters take place with bodies—but also within bodies. Even though affect does not require pre-existing subjectivity and exceeds human agency, the workings of affects can become individually felt or experienced, or otherwise registered in human bodies. We can get affected by other people's affects or non-human elements. Likewise, we can get affected by just the mere anticipation of affective intensity, or by our embodied memories.

These activities stress affect's distinctiveness from human emotion. Paying attention to different bodily responses helps to illustrate the involuntary actions of bodies, as well as their fluid compositions: we can hardly perceive blood pressure or control goosebumps. However, affect is not only about bodily responses. Rather, affect as a concept refers to different embodied, non-conscious and non-linguistic systems of meaning-making, knowing, remembering and experiencing (Blackman & Venn 2010). In other words, not seeing the body as singular, autonomous, individual or human only provides one way to consider communication without limiting it to assumptions about intentional social interaction, and without privileging anthropocentric notions of agency.

It should not be overlooked either that embodied experiences, intimate ones in particular, also have psychical relevance. Deeply affective, unconscious interpersonal dynamics are a fundamental part of intimacies, and hence the psyche should not be written out of accounts of intimate relationships when we consider the social or political meanings of intimacies (Frank, Clough & Seidman 2013:2–3). The affective flows in intimate relationships may create a quality or intensity that gives them a persisting and meaningful tone, or the affective flows can play a role in sustaining unequal and even toxic relationships. People also often make strong affective investments in couple relationships, partly because they are valued over other relationship forms. The consequences of these investments are unpredictable: for example, falling in love can make one lose one's sense as a singular, autonomous individual. This can feel very welcome and ecstatic if we find comfort in mutual and trans-subjective feelings of joy and pleasure, or extremely distressing if love only hurts and intensifies feelings of loneliness and disconnection. In any case, the potential of affecting and being affected is essential for understanding a myriad of intimate entanglements and their consequences for psychological well-being.

Thinking through and with affect also enriches our understanding of the social by moving us away from assuming that there are a priori affective domains, even if there are domains of intimacy that are commonly considered to be prime sites for affects, such as couple relationships or care relationships (Lynch, Baker & Lyons 2009). However, as others have pointed out, the operations of intimacy in everyday life extend beyond certain types of relationships (Frank *et al.* 2013; also Woodward 2015). Affectivity can include any form and instance of relatedness that can shape people's capacities, sense of self, feelings and attachments (cf. Sehlikoglu and Zengin 2015:20–22; Wilson 2012). Because affective encounters are taking place everywhere and all the time, such encounters cannot and should not be confined to any particular predefined fields of social action, such as intimate relationships—even though in this book the latter happen to be the object of study.

This being said, a relational understanding of affect is well suited to enriching our understanding of intimate relationships. To work with affect opens up possibilities to attune to and notice the sensations, intensities and textures through which ordinary life is experienced and registered by the body (Coleman & Ringrose 2013; Stewart 2007, 2017) without assuming a predefined affect. Affective registers foster the conditions for experiences of intimacy or the lack of it: while affects mark a body's belonging as well as non-belonging to the world, they do not only draw us together, whatever our intentions; they also force us apart, or signal the lack of any real intersubjective connection (Hemmings 2012; Juvonen & Kolehmainen 2016; Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Exploring affectivity provides a fruitful tool for identifying belonging and non-belonging, and related inequalities and asymmetries.

Rethinking Power Relations

Conventional approaches to power make it difficult to acknowledge the ways in which many forms of power are mediated affectively. The dynamics of intimate relationships cannot be

explained or grasped by relying on predefined structures, institutions or categories—in the case of intimate relationships, ‘patriarchy’, ‘heteronormativity’, ‘gendered conventions’ or ‘sexual orientation’ make little space for noticing the mundane affective encounters which are often crucial for understanding the subtle operations of power in intimate relationships. The relational understanding of affect rejects the privileging of any social structures, institutions or categories as deterministic explanations of social phenomena or as good-enough shorthands for power, as they themselves are seen as demanding explication instead (see Fox & Alldred 2017; Latour 2005; Stewart 2017:194). Working against the simplification of human experiences is, of course, challenging, and requires a welcoming of multiplicity and uncertainty (Ulmer & Koro-Ljungberg 2015). Affect studies, for their part, enable us to address the under-the-radar entanglements of power relations that are essential in shaping the everyday fabrics and textures of intimate relationships.

There are, however, already existing approaches that have fruitfully sought ways to scrutinize the links between affect and power. Previous studies have successfully pointed out how norms and hierarchies related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class are often articulated in the name of affective judgement (e.g. Ahmed 2004; Kolehmainen 2012; Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008). When it comes to intimate relationships, what is seen as desirable or disgusting, pleasurable or painful, exemplifies the connection between affect and moral judgement. In this way, affects can indeed be used to cover, reveal and negotiate power relations and related inequalities. Thus, the norms concerning a dyadic couple or a nuclear family can be mobilized to maintain affective inequalities within or between relationships. Yet even if our affective responses are revealing of wider social power relations, it would be misleading to see affect only as an individual or collective response that straightforwardly points back to wider power relations. For example, leaning on reaction models or causal explanations for the

effects of the use of power insists on a vertical, repressive and deterministic understanding of power, and forecloses any acknowledgement of the possibility of new becomings.

Likewise, a previous body of work has offered some insights into our initial question of why many forms of affective inequality persist. It has been pointed out that often people affectively invest in unequal settings even though it will increase their pain. It is possible to become affectively attached to the very thing that is the source of the inequality we are suffering from (Berlant 2011), be it the relationship we are engaged in or something else. However, affects have a capacity to sediment power imbalances and already existing asymmetries, as well as to provide empowering experiences or pave the way for change. In other words, affects can be a site of change and transformation as well as a site that arrests, sticks and solidifies (Blackman 2012; Kinnunen & Kolehmainen, submitted). Hence, paying attention not only to pain but also to moments of happiness, healing or hope is required to understand the complex dynamics around affects and power: why they emerge and exist; how they persist and prevail—and how to end them.

Nevertheless, affect theories—or at least some versions of them—have been criticized for justifying apolitical perspectives. It has been argued that if affect is associated with pre-subjective capacities, it loses sight of the subject, and power relations become impossible to address. However, the current body of work on affect does not abandon the subject. Rather, the relational understanding of affect foregrounds the importance of intercorporeality and trans-subjectivity (e.g. Blackman 2012; Seyfert 2012). Hence, it seeks to pose the challenge differently: how to address issues of power when the subject is no longer seen as sovereign, singular and human only? If, for example, gender or sexuality are not seen as simply residing within individuals (cf. Fox & Alldred 2013, 2017), such features as sexual orientation, gender identity or desire cannot be reduced to being ‘internal’ or ‘individual’ either. This paves a way for non-humanist approaches to the study of gender and sexuality, inviting us to look at

gendered and sexualized power relations in the context of intimate relationships with new eyes.

To think power relations and affect also draws our attention to the mundane and subtle forms of force and power. Although most mundane affective encounters perhaps take place unnoticed during the course of everyday life, it does not mean that they go by without affecting us. On the contrary, they may be the ones that affect us the most profoundly, simply because they may feel ordinary and thus remain undifferentiated, or because their singular effects are so minimal that their accumulation can be noticed best only in retrospect. As there is a certain tendency in affect theory to focus on intense experiences such as trauma, the everyday might go unnoticed. Yet ordinary affects are just as central to intimate lives as intense experiences (see Stewart 2007). For example, in intimate relationships, resentment, humiliation and unreciprocated desire are just examples of daily forms of suffering—even though they often remain invisible, unlike large-scale consequences of poverty, famine or natural disasters (see Illouz 2012:15). By focusing on affect, even when it is not especially forceful, we can help to denaturalize the everyday as the unthought (also Seigworth & Gregg 2010:2; Stewart 2017:195).

Whereas the affective encounters themselves are open-ended and unpredictable, over time they might become patterned. The (un)just effects of affective encounters can and do accumulate in various ways, to the extent that we can speak of both affective privilege and affective inequality (see Kinnunen & Kolehmainen, submitted). This is not only a question of singular happenings or events and their potential effects, but refers to embodied, affective and psychical processes. We can notice, for example, how particular encounters enhance capacities to affect or be affected in some, while diminishing them in others. Such a weakening of affective capacities in relation to others, as well as affective pulls or attachments to unequal situations, produces affective inequalities, perhaps making certain

subjects once again more vulnerable during ensuing encounters. So we maintain that affect studies make it possible to address the questions of power differently, while departing from dualistic conceptualizations. It is also vital to find ways to address affective inequality by developing new tools to attune to affective encounters and their effects, which cannot be known in advance.

Affective Methodologies

We are currently in a situation where multiple affect theories are in circulation, as the ‘affective turn’ includes a range of different, even contradictory articulations (e.g. Blackman 2012:9; Seigworth & Gregg 2010:3). Consequently, there is little agreement on the concept of affect (see Hemmings 2005; Koivunen 2010). For some, affect is more or less synonymous with human emotion; for some, emotion refers to cultural expression, while affects are biological in nature; and for some, affects are not emotions but capabilities of bodies to affect and be affected. This raises the question whether affect, as a general concept, has much explanatory potential. This question is also a methodological one, as it relates to the ways of practising research. We argue that it is important to indicate one’s entry point to affect to avoid vague catchphrases. For example, instead of talking about affect in general, by focusing on affective encounters it is possible to identify and examine the powerful forces that set the conditions for making some forms of affect possible and others less likely or impossible (see Skoggard & Waterston 2015:113). Affect studies are not exempt from the rigour necessary to any scholarship: it is crucial to be aware of one’s particular scholarly stance, and to ask specific questions stemming from it.

Affect has been deemed a challenging object of study (e.g. Blackman 2015a; Knudsen & Stage 2015; Lury 2015; Wetherell 2012), and despite the theoretical blossoming, empirical

research on affect has proved puzzling. In order to rise to this challenge, attempts to prove and verify affect have proliferated. However, many scholars have warned against such positivist endeavours (Pedwell 2017). Affect is not simply an entity that can be captured as an ‘it’ or thing, so the practical challenges are not to be solved by trying to provide evidence of what affect is (see Blackman 2015a:40). Rather, a more fruitful question may be to consider what particular versions of affect *do* in our theorizing (Blackman & Venn 2010:8–9). We argue that such affect studies, which rely on non-humanist ontology, make it possible to accept new methodological challenges, which give impetus to new kinds of empirical inquiries. The book maps possibilities to start with, or works through concepts such as assemblage, resonance, orientation, intensity or capacity. These concepts also meet the methodological task to enter the middle, the between: to relate (Coleman & Ringrose 2013:9). When studying intimate relationships, then, this means that the point of departure cannot be fixed; and there is a reason to seek alternatives to privileging the dyad.

Yet the current fascination with affect results partly from the tendency to assume that affect can offer a route to explore life in its authentic forms, as if untouched by the ‘social’. Nevertheless, affects are not lenses onto truth or reality, as it continues to be very difficult to get unmediated access to what is ‘really’ going on (see Hemmings 2012; Pedwell & Whitehead 2012; Wetherell 2012). Nevertheless, exploring affects provides an opportunity to acknowledge one important circuit through which cultural meanings and social (power) relations are felt, imagined, mediated, negotiated and/or contested (Pedwell & Whitehead 2012). Hence exploring affectivity does not provide us with easy access the ontological realm of how we exist—in opposition to the ways we describe or understand how we exist—in this world. Rather, the nature of the relationship between ontology and epistemology is dynamic (Hemmings 2012). This is why grasping affectivity does not offer a shortcut to reliable knowledge of the social realm, intimate relationships included. However, it does provide a

means to develop methodologies that foreground alternative ways of noticing, registering and attuning to the social as it happens. In this way, affect studies can widen and renew existing ways of knowledge production.

The methodologies employed in the humanities and social sciences have been criticized for overly relying on language and sight (Blackman & Venn 2010). Thus far, the liveliest methodological debate concerning affect studies has addressed the relation between language and affect. Undoubtedly, affect studies open a novel path to the study of experiences, memories and knowledge which do not operate through the structures of language, discourse and meaning (Blackman & Venn 2010). Putting emphasis on embodiment has raised the methodological question of whether textual materials (understood widely, from narratives to representations) are at all suitable for studying affect. While some scholars argue that affect takes place beyond language categorization, others hold the view that language is capable of expressing affect (Knudsen & Stage 2015:4). Even if language were seen as a suitable medium for studying affect, many questions would remain. It has been pointed out that language tames affect and limits our understanding of complex affective encounters to already available discourses. A focus on language also (re)centres the human subject, which may prove problematic if we wish to depart from privileging anthropocentric notions of agency and embrace relationality.

Still, the real challenge lies in the question of how to take embodiment into account—for example, how to examine embodied experiences of affecting and being affected without reducing affect to the responses or reactions of individual human bodies. Taking affect as an autonomic bodily response wrongfully makes affect the equivalent of the empirical measure of bodily effects, registered in individual embodied activity (Clough 2008). This kind of reductive description fails to account for how affects are transferred to others and fed back to the relational self in different encounters, thereby locating the body in a circuit of feeling and

response (Hemmings 2005:551). Hence, affects themselves are productive, throwing causality and prediction into question (Lury 2015:238). Because affect is not a result of a causal relation, we consider it essential to explore its complicated entanglements with networks of power. Moreover, understanding affect as an individual reaction may lead to a focus on immediately visible bodily reactions, such as laughter or tears. However, affects do not necessarily manifest themselves in easily identifiable or recognizable ways. Further, paying attention solely to immediate and visible reactions is problematic, because affects do not follow the chronological ticking of time (Ahmed 2004; Wetherell 2012). Rather, affects carry past, present and future within them in non-linear and unpredictable ways.

Finally, taking affect seriously shifts conventional approaches to data. We suggest taking on board from post-qualitative research the idea that data is not to be understood as passive, but is ‘data alive’ (MacLure 2013). This stresses the importance of relating to data and analysing it in a way that does not iron out its dynamism and movement (see Blackman 2015b). Some scholars stress the potential of embodied-affective data, which is indexically linked to the bodies ‘in’ affect, of both the researcher and the researched (Knudsen & Stage 2015; Walkerdine 2010). Yet other kinds of data may also have their own affective activities, as they may glow and provoke through their ‘hotspots’, and by doing so draw scholarly interest to themselves (MacLure 2013; Ringrose & Renold 2014; also Lahti, this volume). Data may also haunt the scholar (Blackman 2012; also Dernikos, this volume). Likewise, working with affective data is an open-ended process—to the extent that it may change the life course of the scholar (see Juvonen, this volume). In any case, researchers themselves are in many ways entangled within the assemblages they seek to study (Coleman & Ringrose 2013:6), and should also analytically explore their own affective investments in the subject under investigation (Blackman 2015a:25–26). This is to remind us that affectivity is a question pertinent to the research process as a whole.

Once More with Feeling: Navigating Through This Volume

While compiling this book, we sought to address some of the challenges that theoretically advanced affect studies pose to the empirical study of social, in this case intimate, relationships. As there is no single affect theory but many affect theories, the authors also have theoretically different entry points to affect, partly because they come from different disciplinary backgrounds: gender studies, sociology, social policy, social psychology, psychology, educational sciences, political science and history. Several chapters indeed seek to employ and develop empirically recent conceptualizations, such as affective resonance, affective intensity, affective orientation or affective practice. Many of the contributions work with Deleuzian frameworks while focusing on affective capacities, assemblages or becoming, while others focus on the interplay between ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’.

Similarly, the methods chosen by the individual authors vary a lot. Several methodologically innovative chapters of this volume point to a variety of possible ways in which the social realm can be attuned to, registered and felt. These chapters offer novel insights by focusing on listening and touching, or on telepathy and haunting memories. Furthermore, in some chapters the researchers employ novel tools offered by so-called post-qualitative inquiry or Deleuze-inspired methodologies, or engage with creative writing practices. Some chapters contribute to empirical research on affect by extending the analysis of affect to already established methodological choices and analytical strategies, such as surveys, interaction studies or narrative analysis. Yet regardless of their take, all the chapters in this book rise to the challenge of conducting empirical research on affect, by providing tools for the definition, recognition, interpretation and operation of what the authors perceive to be affective inequality.

The book is divided into four parts, each of which seeks to address slightly different concerns about the inequalities that are inescapably embedded in the affective, lively and often messy realities of relationships (see Lahti, this volume). Part one, ‘Affective capacities in embodied encounters’, includes chapters exploring bodily capacities. Katie Anderson, Paula Reavey and Zoë Boden analyse interviews with couples in mixed-sex relationships, in which women (unlike men) are usually expected to perform emotional labour. The authors question the traditional approaches of drug studies by asking whether in some cases the joint use of MDMA (ecstasy) as a couple might actually enhance partners’ affective capacities. It may help to overcome affective inequalities that stem from discrepant expectations with regard to gendered emotional expressiveness. Antti Malinen explores emotional wounds in intimate relationships in the aftermath of World War II, opening up a historical perspective on the emotional work conducted by women. Malinen analyses the letters that desperate wives of traumatized Finnish war veterans sent to church relationship counsellors. He finds that the religious advice given to the women may not have improved their situation, but rather instructed them to stay in affectively unequal relationships. Annukka Lahti makes a psychosocial interpretation of the affective intensities present in interviews she has conducted with Finnish bisexual women and their ex-spouses, who reflect back on their former relationships in research assemblages which foreground listening to old interviews. Lahti suggests that relationships are always in the process of becoming, and power relations in bisexual people’s relationships cannot be reduced either to the effects of cultural discourses that invalidate and stigmatize bisexuality, or to the gendered dichotomies and hierarchies of the heterosexual matrix—contrary to what previous research on bisexuality in relationships has often claimed. In the last chapter of this section, Marjo Kolehmainen applies the idea of the body’s capacity to affect and be affected to the analysis of gender and sexuality. By drawing upon her fieldwork on relationship and sex counselling, she concludes that bodies’

capacities themselves can become gendered and sexualized. Her exploration shows how gendered and sexualized power relations are produced by opening and/or closing bodies' capacities to act, which opens up a new perspective on affective inequalities.

The chapters in part two, 'Affective transitions throughout intimate lives', address experiencing, understanding and coping with subtle life changes that eventually radically disrupt the customary affective engagements of intimate couple relationships. In the chapter that starts this section, Tuula Juvonen contributes to lesbian studies with the analysis of her own diaries, which she reads for the fluctuation of affective resonances between her and her partner. Through such self-study she hopes to understand better the couple's journey towards an unavoidable break-up. For her the affective inequality within the relationship grew from her cumulative feelings of being deprived of the intimate reciprocity she expected to be part of an intimate relationship. Yet her analysis also contributes to the discussion on how affective inequalities interact, intersect and relate to other kinds of inequalities. Liina Sointu combines affect studies with social-political issues as she investigates caring as an affective practice. Drawing upon sensory methodology, she has conducted research on spouses whose partners have fallen permanently ill. Sointu describes how spouses in mixed-sex relationships adopt their new role as caregivers through affective adjustments. While the necessity of care forms a central power dynamic in the changed relationship, its inherent imbalance also becomes a source of affective inequality. While Nina Lykke also focuses on a care relationship, she does so from a very different angle with her contribution to queer death studies. Her autophenomenographic analysis is based on her own affective writings from the time she was engaged in a passionate companionship with her partner, who was dying of cancer—and she herself was inevitably approaching lesbian widowhood after being corporally affectively entangled with her partner for decades. With death as her point of reference, Lykke enriches the remarks and openings of the other authors by reminding us that not all

differences between partners in an intimate relationship can be accounted simply as signs of inequality.

Part three, 'Affective negotiations between partners', includes texts that dissect the power dynamics within, around and related to intimate relationships. Raisa Jurva identifies the affective orientations of middle-aged or older Finnish women who are or have been in relationships with younger men. On the one hand, the interviewed women see a marked improvement in their partnerships compared with their previous relationship experiences with men of their own age or older. On the other hand, many of the women end up resorting to the affective orientations of either independence or vulnerability when imagining their relationship futures. Contributing to feminist studies on heterosexuality, Jurva locates affective inequality in the women's justified lack of trust in a secure joint future in their mixed-sex relationships. Sociologists Olga Sabido Ramos and Adriana García Andrade explore the potential of a survey method for relational affect studies in a chapter that looks at how urban Mexican students envision gender relations and conflicts in their intimate relationships. The authors stress that we live love with and through the body, and hence it makes sense to explore, for example, the implications of menstruation or embodied feelings of jealousy when talking about intimate relationships. Here too, affective inequalities arise from gendered demands and expectations, many of which disadvantage and stigmatize young females. On a more positive note, the chapter by Polona Curk outlines that intimate conflicts between partners also have a potential to disrupt the very gender binaries that may be causing them, especially if the conflicts are used as a point of departure for acknowledging the affective exchange that takes place in a relationship. Curk suggests, drawing upon psychoanalytic theory, that a profound analysis of the elements, moods and responses in conflict situations may help us to register, and possibly to resolve, the conflicts before they

amount to unbearable affective inequalities. She demonstrates this by providing an analysis of her own diary entries.

The final section, entitled 'Affective intimacies beyond couples', widens the scope of this volume beyond couple relationships to other kinds of relational affective intimacies. Katja Chmielewski and Katharina Hajek illustrate how the New Right in Germany uses emotional pedagogy to politicize intimate relationships. The erosion of traditional family models has resulted in insecurity and discomfort, and these collective affective responses are now mobilized to promote the nuclear family and heteronormative intimacies. Chmielewski and Hajek analyse the successful instrumentalization of such emotional pedagogies in video clips of political talks held during the Demo für Alle marches. Verónica Policarpo, for her part, discusses affectivity and intimacy from the perspective of friendship. Policarpo interprets a Portuguese man's friendships in order to identify the affective figures that made his successful educational and career transitions possible. Her firm sociological analysis also underlines how friendship can provide a sense of affective community, which helps one to cope with many forms of structural inequalities. Relying on interaction studies, Julia Katila investigates the embodied and affective relationship between a child and her mother. She analyses videotaped haptic negotiations for the affective practices established by touch. Although both the mother and her child are present in the same situation, it becomes evident that their embodied capacities are anything but identical. Still, both parties participate in (re)producing the boundaries between subjects through touch. Whereas Katila's analysis relies firmly on touch, in the final chapter of this book Bessie P. Dernikos enquires into telepathy and investigates memories that have been haunting her affectively ever since the sudden death of her former student. For Dernikos, affective inequality works as a critique of the politics of fear that seek to arbitrarily limit the occurrence of intimacies between students and teachers but at the same time miserably fail to acknowledge the full range and potential

of affective experiences and encounters in pedagogical settings. The chapter widens the discussion of intimacy to cover intimate relations that take place without the material immanence of embodied encounters.

To sum up, all these chapters introduce empirical case studies which offer a perspective on affective processes in diverse relationships, both those that maintain known inequalities and those taking up the unknown promise of change. Hence, while offering new perspectives on the difficulties faced by contemporary intimate relationships, the authors contribute innovative suggestions to the challenging endeavour of conducting empirical social research on affect. Some of the authors focus on particular kinds of intimate relationships, such as heterosexual, lesbian or friendship relationships. Others concentrate on specific events or processes, such as illness, break-up or widowhood. The individual chapters thus shed light on both everyday affectivities that often go unnoticed and intense occasions with a specific affective charge. All the chapters, while focusing on intimacy and affect, also open up novel perspectives on affective inequality. Their approaches to and interpretations of the use of the concept vary, which we hope will spark the imagination for future considerations concerning affective inequalities and their relevance in and beyond the study of intimate relationships.

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