

Chapter 4

Mapping Affective Capacities: Gender and Sexuality in Relationship and Sex Counselling Practices

You are not allowed to talk about work, wealth, parish or politics. In this camp, we are only wives and husbands.

The quotation above dates back to an interview with the CEO of an organization which organizes marriage camps in Finland (published in *Anna* magazine in 2017). Although it expresses only one person's viewpoint, it not only sheds light on the ways intimate relationships are separated from work, wealth, parish or politics, but also summarizes what many think is central for understanding intimate relationships: issues related to gender and sexuality. For example, when the CEO genders the participating partners, she positions the (married) heterosexual couple at the core of intimate relationships. Of course, it is not only organizers and other professionals that employ repertoires of gender and sexuality—clients also draw upon and mobilize different conceptualizations and experiences. This leads one to ponder such questions as whether relationship and sex counselling practices renew normative ideas concerning gender and sexuality, or whether they can subvert, queer or multiply prevalent notions of masculinity, femininity, sexuality and intimacy.

The quotation also illustrates how, in the wake of therapeutic cultures, relationships and sexuality are increasingly addressed as in need of labour-intensive work. In many Western countries, therapeutic cultures and markets have proliferated (Furedi 2006; Illouz 2007). This is often connected to the cultural tendency towards individualization, which gives

prominence to lifestyle gurus and personal advisers acting as new cultural intermediaries of the self (McRobbie 2009; Wood & Skeggs 2004). This has been seen as overlapping with neoliberal tendencies, which emphasize the ability to self-monitor, self-regulate, make choices and transform oneself—to the extent that individual choice and self-transformation can be called cultural imperatives (see Kolehmainen 2012a). The pervasiveness of therapeutic cultures becomes tangible in the advancement of never-ending self-reflection, self-diagnosis and self-management—it is no longer just ‘sick’ selves but also ‘healthy’ ones who are addressed as potential clients or customers (Oullette & Wilson 2011; Swan 2008). This further fuels the markets, and makes therapeutic practices a widespread contemporary phenomenon.

However, little is known about how gender and sexuality are (re)produced in the processes of advice-giving and advice-seeking. Several organizations and professionals, from healthcare institutions to community colleges, from parishes to LGBTQI organizations, now offer advice and support on relationships and sex for diverse groups such as heterosexual, gay and lesbian couples, the recently divorced, and singles. As the emphasis in relationship and sex counselling has shifted from preventing divorce to taking care of relationships (Maksimainen 2014), people who do not actively seek help may also browse advice columns and read self-help books, or otherwise attend and attune to therapeutic practices. In addition to psychotherapists and certified counsellors, sex therapists, sex coaches, dating experts, love consultants and volunteers now offer counselling, guidance and support. There is significant variety in the policies promoted: some Finnish organizations or actors consider lifelong (hetero) marriage the ideal relationship, while others call for greater inclusion of a variety of gender identifications, sexual orientations and intimate practices.

In this chapter, I ask how gendered and sexualized power relations are (re)produced in the practices of relationship and sex counselling by diminishing and enhancing bodies’ capacities

to affect and be affected. I therefore apply the Deleuzian idea of affective capacities to the analysis of gender and sexuality. From this perspective, gender and sexuality are products of bodies' relations with other bodies; they are about 'becoming' rather than 'being'. This kind of framework builds upon the new materialist ontology, where the focus is on what bodies and things do—rather than what they are (see Coleman 2009; Fox & Alldred 2017:65).

Further, affective inequalities within this framework are understood mainly as emerging through such relations, which augment or diminish affective capacities and have the potential to open up or close down possible becomings.

Data and Methodology

This chapter contributes to ethnographic approaches to relational therapeutic practices. In previous studies on therapeutic cultures, ethnographic orientations have been scarce.

Salmenniemi's (2017) mapping reveals that these studies have been mainly concerned with how therapeutic discourses are mobilized to govern populations in the context of contemporary capitalism. Some scholars connect therapeutic cultures with the weakening of public life and a diminishing commitment to social institutions and politics; several interpret them in the light of increasing individualization at the expense of traditional authority; others identify the rise of 'psy' knowledges as part of neoliberal (bio)politics. Hence, the focus has been on top-down approaches, and Salmenniemi suggests that future studies should delve more deeply into the lived, networked, relational and embodied experiences of therapeutic engagements through ethnographic research. By employing ethnographic research methods and using multiple entry points into the practices of relationship and sex counselling, I seek to engage with the multiple, complex, embodied and affective ways therapeutic practices are mobilized.

In order to analyse how bodies' affective capacities relate to the processes of gendering and sexualizing, I discuss my fieldwork notes on counselling events and relationship enhancement seminars. I approach these events as event-assemblages, stressing that they are not simply about humans or human agency, but rather about relational networks between the animate and inanimate (Fox & Alldred 2015, 2017). When event-assemblages become the focus of research studies, they interact with the research-assemblage, which entails theories, methods, researchers and so on (Fox & Alldred 2015). For example, the ethnographic methods that I have employed, covering both participant observation and the foregrounding of my researcher-body, are part of the research-assemblage. This kind of employment of ethnographic methods enables me to work with and through embodied-affective data, that is, data that focuses on the embodied experiences of bodies 'in' affect (Kinnunen & Kolehmainen, under review; Knudsen & Stage 2015; see also Walkerdine 2010). In my study, this encompasses both observations concerning affective encounters and personal experiences of embodied affect. This kind of approach helps to produce more nuanced accounts of how therapeutic practices are actually employed through affective relations.

I view methods not as descriptive, but as performative and productive. Hence, when conducting fieldwork at various relationship enhancement seminars and other events in 2015–2017, I decided not to make a 'cut' by separating formal and informal counselling. Cuts refer to processes of including and excluding in the research process; cuts are boundary-drawing processes that come to matter through what they reveal or conceal (Barad 2007). Methodological cuts make some aspects of the explored phenomenon visible but some other aspects less so, and the researcher is responsible for the cuts that are made in the practice of boundary-drawing (Coleman & Ringrose 2013; also Uprichard & Dawney 2016). Hence events featuring psychotherapists or certified couple counsellors as speakers, events organized by religious or spiritual communities, and events featuring relationship bloggers or

peer supporters are all included in the data. The inclusion of both formally acknowledged and informal forms of therapeutic cultures makes it possible to make visible their potential entanglements.

The majority of these events were targeted at ‘ordinary’ couples, or at people who had been or were hoping to find relationships. The events in question took place in five different Finnish cities, their venues ranging from libraries to fairs, and from religious sites to conference rooms. Some of them were organized by NGOs or public institutions and charged no attendance fee; some of them were organized by religious or spiritual communities, were free or low-priced, and mainly attracted members of pre-existing communities; and some of them were commercial events with attendance fees, sponsoring companies, and sales of related products. Many similarities remained, however. Typically, there were one or more experts giving talks, with some time allotted for questions and answers. Nonetheless, these events featured much more than simply giving advice, from musical performances to mindfulness exercises, and from couple discussions to coffee breaks, as my analysis will illustrate.

I draw upon my fieldwork experiences to provide detailed analysis of four different event-assemblages from a feminist Deleuzian perspective on relationship and sex counselling. From a relational Deleuzian perspective, the methodological task is to apply methods that enable the identification of the relations of a particular event-assemblage (see Fox & Alldred 2015). In particular, I seek to map how gender and sexuality are produced through relations, and how bodies’ capacities to affect and be affected connect to the processes of gendering and sexualizing. This kind of approach to gender and sexuality emphasizes relationality and co-production (see Blackman & Venn 2010:22), providing a fruitful way to discuss affective inequalities and how they are produced through relations. In particular, I am interested in widening existing scholarship on how bodies’ capacities to affect and become affected can

diminish or increase, by exploring how gender and sexuality play a role in the processing of affecting and becoming affected.

To supplement my approach, I mobilize the concept of post-feminism as an analytical tool. The concept is often used to refer to a backlash against feminism, such as the assumption of an already-achieved gender equality or the supposed irrelevance of feminism. Yet it is best understood as entailing continuity, change and contradictions— for example, the emergence of popular feminism can coexist with intensifying misogyny—and thus it should not be seen simply as a form of anti-feminism (Gill 2017; Kolehmainen 2012a). Following Gill (2017), I use the term post-feminism analytically by rendering post-feminism an object of analysis, not a descriptive notion. Even though in Finland the widely supported discourse on equality remains the main means of addressing issues related to gender and sexuality, the concept of post-feminism is useful for interpreting the kinds of phenomena where gendered and sexualized power relations are produced in subtle and ambivalent ways (Hasanen *et al.* 2010:44–45). I find this especially relevant in the case of counselling, where new ways of rerouting gender and sexual difference and related classifications and hierarchies continue to emerge.

A Deleuzian Approach to Affect and Embodiment

This chapter employs the Deleuzian conceptualization of affect as bodies' capacities to affect and become affected (Deleuze 1992). Affect as a concept directs attention to relations between (different kinds of) bodies or things without foregrounding the individual human as a subject of feeling, and refuses any idea of pre-existing entities that somehow influence each other (see Blackman 2012:51). Putting emphasis on relationality displaces the self from the core of the analysis of therapeutic cultures, even though therapeutic cultures are often framed as if they were mainly about self-management and self-transformation. This kind of relational

approach allows one to show how gender and sexuality are not simply ‘residing’ within individual bodies: the human body, or an individual, is not seen as the locus of gender or sexuality (see Coleman 2009; Fox & Alldred 2013). Rather, gender and sexuality are produced through multiple assemblages, and include elements which do not necessarily foreground a human subject or an individual body, such as affective forces that cannot be reduced to cultural discourses or predefined subject positions (see Lahti, this volume).

In order to provide a detailed analysis of how gender and sexuality work in and on therapeutic practices, I rely on an understanding of affect as pre-individual bodily forces that augment or diminish a body’s capacity to act (Clough 2008). This view is widely promoted in Deleuzian approaches, as for Deleuze (1992:625) a body affects other bodies, and is affected by other bodies—in other words, relations create certain affects. From a Deleuzian perspective, it is not what a body ‘is’ that matters, but what it is capable of, and in what ways its relations with other bodies diminish or enhance those capacities (Coleman 2009; Coleman & Ringrose 2013:11; also Anderson, Reavey & Boden, this volume). A relational take on affect directs attention to the relations between bodies (e.g. Fox & Alldred 2013; Paterson 2005). Affect does not ‘belong’ to anybody and cannot be ascribed only to human bodies, but involves encounters with all kinds of bodies: organic, non-organic, artificial and imaginary (Seyfert 2012). Hence, affect cannot be reduced to the responses or reactions of individual human bodies, nor is it about subjective feelings (Clough 2008).

The exploration of affect 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). However, Deleuze-inspired studies have been criticized for ignoring or neglecting questions of power, and also for leaving the relations between affect and power underexplored. Several scholars have responded to these criticisms by providing readings that foreground issues of power. Within Deleuzian thinking,

the dominant systems of power remain: they are the mechanisms which provide the conditions of possibility for certain subjectivities to emerge, while others are less possible or impossible (Renold & Mellor 2013:26). From a Deleuzian perspective, then, power operates by opening up and closing down possibilities of becoming. Contrary to some interpretations, Deleuze's concept of becoming does not refer to an unrestricted process (Coleman & Ringrose 2013:9; also Coleman 2009). Rather, a Deleuzian approach to the social is as much a mapping of what is impossible, what becomes stuck or fixed, as it is of flux and flow (Coleman 2009; also Coleman & Ringrose 2013:9). Power relations are also inherent in Deleuze's terminology, where territorialization refers to the processes of stabilizing an assemblage, and deterritorialization to destabilizing it (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:88–89).

A Deleuzian take also provides opportunities to foreground the relational nature of gender and sexuality and how they are about 'becoming' rather than 'being'. Hence, to focus on affective capacities is to highlight the relations between bodies (Coleman 2009:27) and not to foreground gender and sexuality as predefined categories. My approach is strongly inspired by, and builds upon, previous feminist Deleuzian contributions to empirical studies on gender and sexuality, such as Annie Potts (2004) on whether the use of Viagra promotes a return to (reterritorializing) or subversion of (deterritorialization) conventionally gendered and normative sexual practices and experiences; Rebecca Coleman (2008, 2009) on how girls' bodies become through their relations with photographs and media images; and Emma Renold and David Mellor (2013) on the ways in which 'gender' and 'sexuality' work on, in and across bodies and things. Following previous lines of thought, I understand bodies not in terms of gender, sexuality, race or age; rather, they are always in the processes of—becoming of—gendering, sexualizing, racing and ageing (see also Coleman 2009:23, 59). Relationship and sex counselling practices also participate in these processes of gendering, sexualizing, racing and ageing, as my analysis will demonstrate.

While developing my argument, I also employ Bruno Latour's (2004) ideas concerning the body and its becomings, as well as its capacities to learn how to become affected, which enrich my attempt to work with the idea of bodily capacities. Latour uses 'becoming a nose' in the perfume industry as his example of how bodies are not only capable of affecting and becoming affected: bodies are taught to become affected. Novices in the industry slowly learn with the help of odour kits to become affected by different odours. The more they learn, the more elements they learn to be affected by, and the more differences they become sensitive to (Latour 2004). Even though Latour's approach to the body is different from Deleuze's, the ideas concerning learning and teaching are also essential to my analysis of how bodies' capacities become gendered and sexualized. From a Deleuzian perspective, embodied capacities are increased or decreased by various elements, from sounds and smells to the atmospheres of places and people (Hickey-Moody 2013). This opens up a relevant approach to the study of gender and sexuality, as it sheds light on the processes through which bodies 'learn' to become gendered and sexualized.

Further, the Latourian conceptualization of bodies points to the way in which bodies can be seen as processual and relational, instead of pre-existing entities that then interact. This kind of relational perspective is especially useful when subjects/bodies are considered to be neither entirely open nor closed (see Blackman 2012:23), as indicated in the idea of bodies' capacities to affect and be affected. As such, affect refers to the openness of a body (Clough 2008:4); otherwise, it would not make sense to talk about bodily capacities. Yet, the question remains: to what are the bodies taught to open, or learn to open? Which bodies are taught to open and which bodies to close, and what does this have to do with gender and sexuality? However, I wish to take one step further and pose a new question: might the same relations that diminish some capacities increase other capacities? In what follows, I seek to illustrate

the relevance of this question to my Deleuzian feminist analysis of event-assemblages in which bodies' capacities become gendered and sexualized.

Rethinking Bodies' Capacities to Affect and Become Affected

In order to illustrate the entanglement of bodily capacities, gender and sexuality, I will now move on to analyse four different event-assemblages—all of which are documented in my fieldwork notes. My first example demonstrates how bodies' capacities to affect and be affected relate to gender and sexuality. It discusses an event with a focus on well-being. The speakers, Theresa and John, are famous for their successful well-being business, whose services are mainly about dieting, exercise and fitness. However, one of the two speakers is also a sex counsellor. Theresa and John debated issues ranging from nutrition to the essence of love, and the audience was encouraged to vote to choose the winner of the debate. In this way, the two speakers provided different views on sexuality through a humorous performance:

The fifth claim is: sex is about satisfying one's needs. Theresa says that this is not correct. John says that even mice lust. You can have sex on your own, with a partner, in a group of three or four, you can play power play or shorthanded. Theresa says that she holds a somewhat deeper attitude towards sex. [...] For example, many women can find it difficult to enjoy sex; many women suffer when there is no genuine presence. Shopping lists or kids steal over your mind. In that case, your needs won't get any satisfaction. John says that he wasn't actually talking about making love. Sex is about satisfying your needs; making love is something different. When John makes love, lakes melt, Kilimanjaro shakes. (Event, 2017)

At this event, women's sexuality was associated with traditional women's work, such as grocery shopping or taking care of the children, and men's sexuality was associated with natural forces. It has been well documented that women's sexuality is stereotypically connected to emotional fulfilment, here represented by the emphasis on a 'deep' attitude, the demand to 'be present', and difficulties in getting satisfaction. Likewise, men's sexuality is stereotypically connected to physical performance, here by associating sex humorously with sport ('power play' and 'playing shorthanded' are terms used e.g. in ice hockey, while here the connotations attached to those words also refer to BDSM) and by comparing male sexual performance to natural forces. Certainly, the debate was designed to be entertaining, and the use of humorous exaggeration was anything but accidental. Nonetheless, when John claimed that when he made love lakes melted and Kilimanjaro shook, he was portraying the male body as capable of affecting natural phenomena—which is power, too. In this way, male bodies are presented as things that can extend beyond themselves, and that have power over other (both human and non-human) bodies.

Thus, whereas a man's body was associated with powerful capacities to affect even natural phenomena, a woman's body was associated with capacities to become affected by mundane household chores and childcare. Female bodies are not thought to have similar capacities as men's bodies; they are bodies which register unfinished shopping lists or cannot help attuning to kids, and are also further affected by the failure to be present. Hence, it was assumed that women had diminished capacities to enjoy sex. As bodies both become extended and become stuck at certain points in processes that may involve gendering, sexualizing, racing or classing (Coleman 2009:75), we can think about how female bodies are thought less likely to be 'open to' sexual desire; and in the process of opening to sexual desire they are seen as becoming-stuck through their relations with traditional 'women's work'. In contrast, male bodies become extended through sexuality. However, while female bodies close down sexual

encounters, they open to shopping lists and kids, which is one example of how opening up and closing down are interrelated and may happen at the same time.

My second example comes from a wellness fair, whose programme included lectures and workshops related to intimate relationships and sexuality, among other activities. One of the lectures was by Daniel, a psychologist, who while acknowledging same-sex couples became more or less limited to heterosexual couples only. Daniel also suggested that women have too much power—especially over men. This kind of view is a stellar example of the post-feminist argument that equality has ‘gone too far’ (see Hasanen *et al.* 2010; McRobbie 2009), and was used here to mobilize an attempt to restore men’s power:

Men have become too nice, empathetic, they are too afraid to disagree with their girlfriends, they do not dare to say that ‘we won’t buy this Hästens mattress.’ There is some grass inside the mattress and it costs 10,000. Man says no, woman starts to cry, man says ‘let’s buy it.’ Woman feels that she can boss the guy around. Well, I don’t mean men should be roughnecks or cavemen, Daniel adds. The idea is that man learns how to live through tense situations. [...] Daniel talks about polar energy. There should not be too much polar energy, nor too little, but you should be able to play with it. (Lecture, 2016)

During his talk, Daniel equated the ‘problem’ in heterosexual relationships with affective relations between genders. Despite the seemingly modern framing and Daniel’s warnings against ‘caveman’-like behaviour, which I see as a way to distance himself from ‘old-fashioned’ gender roles, the lecture also ambivalently reterritorialized masculinity with the old ideals of rationality, control and self-containment (see Connell 2000:5; Kolehmainen 2015). Further, women’s capacity to affect men through their tears—here a feminized means of exerting control—was framed as a major challenge in intimate relationships. From a

Deleuzian perspective, women's power, as in their capacity to act and affect, was made into a problem, at least for men. This is also a very interesting statement from the perspective of post-feminism, as it seems that post-feminism has created men's bodies as capable of being overtly affected by women: the same relations that augment affective capacities in some bodies diminish some other bodies' capacities to act. Here, women's capacity to affect men is diminishing men's capacity to act. This highlights the importance of exploring the entanglements of augmenting and diminishing, as well as their interactions with gender and sexuality.

Interestingly, if women's tears were something that should not be allowed to affect men, human bodies in general were assumed to become positively affected by 'polar energy', here referring to the erotic tension and play between two opposite poles. Even though it was not made explicit that these poles would equate with 'opposite' genders, the idea of polar energy resonates with the ontological assumption of binary gender. In this way, the realm of affect, emotion and energy was territorialized as a crucial site for maintaining gender difference.

Interestingly, this also seems to connect with post-feminist ideas of women having too much power over men. Whereas Coleman (2009:144) found that girls experienced their bodies as affected by the bodies of boys but as lacking the capacity to affect them back, in this event-assemblage bodily capacities were organized in a different manner. Rather than framing male bodies as capable of affecting but being affected, viewing them as becoming affected appears to be a way to ground post-feminist ideas: of a 'good', reciprocal relationship when affected by 'polar energy', and of feminism gone too far when affected by feminine tears. Hence, being affected by women's bodies was welcome when sexuality and heterosexual desire came into play, and unwelcome when it was about making joint decisions.

Teaching Bodies to Open Up and Close Down Their Capacities

To take a closer look at how bodies' capacities to affect and be affected are gendered and sexualized, I will now move on to explore how bodies are taught to open up to and close down particular relations. I will start by discussing an example from a women-only course. Its theme was 'becoming the woman you are', and it focused on femininity and sexuality, under the supervision of a female instructor, Daphne. At the beginning of the first meeting, Daphne stated that women had been oppressed for a long time, and after that women had aimed to be on top. Now womanhood had been lost. This again involved an element of post-feminism, as feminism was rendered an irrelevant thing of the past (Gill 2017; McRobbie 2009). Next Daphne advised us to do a short meditation practice, during which she talked about rush and stress as the enemies of sexual desire. From a Deleuzian perspective, rush and stress were seen as elements that diminish bodies' capacity to act in sexual terms, and avoiding them was offered as a solution to augment sexual desire.

Each of us had a colour palette in front of us, and we soon moved on to work with painting:

Daphne gives us all glasses, filled with water spiced with floral drops. In addition, she instructs us to paint with our left hands, after checking that we all are right-handed.

Both the drink and the left hand are connected to the unconscious. [...] Daphne says many kinds of emotions may arise, and we are allowed to cry and rage. (Course for women, 2017)

The elements in this event-assemblage that (potentially) affected our bodies constituted several sensory experiences and material elements, from colour palettes to floral drops. The event-assemblage was anything but random, as our bodies were intentionally affected by being made to enter particular kinds of relations. Many of these relations are possible to identify, such as using the left hand when right-handed, and drinking special herbal tinctures.

In this way, our bodies were mobilized to ‘open up’ to a particular kind of femininity, as the course aimed to deepen and widen attendees’ sense of femininity and sexuality.

The relations through which we were becoming affecting and affected were thus partly predefined—in Latourian terms, we can conceptualize this as a process of teaching and learning about becoming women. For example, saying that many kinds of emotions may arise, and that there is a private space available to us if we feel like crying or raging in privacy, is a potential means both to affect our bodies—by foregrounding certain embodied responses—and to invite us to interpret affected bodies, or bodies ‘in’ affect (see Knudsen & Stage 2015). Likewise, even though we were given the option not to disclose anything about our lives, we were encouraged to at least say something about the paintings we produced. For many, this was read as a possibility to bring forward personal accounts of having been in a vulnerable position or otherwise hurt in the past. The discussion of the paintings was also a way to encourage us to verbalize possible affective states and bodily experiences. The other bodies present, their becomings, and similarly the produced paintings and verbalized accounts, also continued to affect each other.

Finally, to deepen my argument concerning how bodily capacities are taught to open up and close down, I discuss my experiences of a mixed-gender tantric workshop. I did not know what to expect, but found myself hugging and touching strangers and dancing to rhythmic music. There was a lot of movement, which emphasizes how bodies are taught to open and close to/through different feelings, sensations and rhythms. Overall, attending the workshop was surprisingly fun, although I started to feel irritated when the instructor began to rant about the shame women felt when men looked at their ‘boobs and bottoms’, suggesting that women should learn to enjoy becoming objects of a sexualizing gaze. Soon after that we were divided into two groups:

The first group is assigned the task of dancing in a sexy manner. The second group is assigned to look at the first group dancing. My first reaction is irritation; I immediately think this is a way to teach women how to become objects of the male gaze. Nevertheless, my irritation does not rule out the return of good vibes. [...] I am a member of the group where we are supposed to look at the dancing others; the instructor says we can put our hands on our waistline. The music starts and the second group start moving. [...] A woman seeks intense eye contact with me and dances in a flirtatious way in front of me. (Tantric workshop, 2015)

The bodies become gendered through the affective relations they are involved in—through the expansion and limitation of their affective capacities, bodies become gendered (Coleman 2009:142). During the workshop, bodies became gendered as women's bodies and as men's bodies: the bodies dancing were gendered as women's bodies, and the bodies looking at them were gendered as men's (despite the fact that these two groups were not formed in terms of 'being' any particular gender). Here, becoming a woman or a man happened through certain relations such as the presence of differently gendered bodies, music and movement, and engagements with the senses. Thus, even though processes of becoming are open-ended and uncertain, the relations through which becomings happen can be at least partly predefined and purposefully assembled. This does not make becomings predictable or predefined, but points to one potential way to address power within a Deleuzian framework. It also, once again, highlights how becomings do not equal unrestricted processes, and how becomings may still be open-ended and uncertain. For example, the gendering process and associated heterosexual desire did not prevent a 'queer' situation in which a woman approached me in a flirtatious way.

To continue Latour's (2004) idea of bodies that are taught to become affected, in the tantric workshop bodies did not only become gendered as female and male, as those gendered bodies

were further taught to become affected in different ways. Further, to enjoy being looked at was framed as enhancing bodies' capacities in terms of sexuality and sensuality—diminishing shame. This resonates with the post-feminist celebration of femininity, where (hetero)sexuality is seen as an essential part of femininity, and where a shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification has taken place (Gill 2008). Indeed, bodies can and do also become in repetitive ways (Coleman 2009:198), and here bodies' becoming was (re)territorialized by normative ideas concerning two opposite genders. Becoming a masculine woman, or a feminine woman who does not enjoy men's attention, or a man who wishes to be looked at, seemed not to be available options. While for example capacities to augment femininity or become a feminine woman were increased, other capacities were diminished, and the potential to become in alternative ways decreased. This highlights how diminishing and augmenting are not separate, opposite or alternative processes.

Conclusion: Gender, Sexuality and Affect

Therapeutic technologies have been a topic of feminist debate in terms of whether they provide empowerment or ultimately make women endlessly responsible for familial and intimate issues (see Oullette & Wilson 2011). Of course, it is not either/or—as my analysis of four different event-assemblages has shown, relationship and sex counselling practices can become (re)territorialized by normative ideas concerning gender and sexuality, or they can deterritorialize prevalent notions of masculinity, femininity, sexuality and intimacy—even at the same time. Ambivalence, multiplicity and uncertainty are indeed strongly present in the therapeutic practices I have explored in this chapter. Social categorizations, hierarchies and asymmetries are increasingly produced through ambivalence (see Kolehmainen 2012b, 2017; Skeggs 2004:29), and this also holds true in relation to the production of gender and sexuality. This ambivalence may pose a challenge to feminist politics and research, since it makes criticism difficult. Also, the post-feminist elements present in therapeutic practices can

and do involve both feminist and anti-feminist aspects (Gill 2017), which invites a nuanced analysis of different entanglements, overlaps and ruptures.

In particular, I have demonstrated that gendered and sexualized power relations are produced through opening/closing bodies' capacities to act. In practice, I have applied the Deleuzian take that bodies' capacities to affect and become affected can diminish or increase to the critical study of gender and sexuality. I have argued that not only bodies but also their capacities become gendered and sexualized. My first example of an event-assemblage produced such becomings, where male sexuality was associated with a natural-force-like capacity to affect both human and non-human bodies, and female sexuality was associated with a capacity to become affected by housework and childcare. My second example of an event-assemblage provided female bodies with a capacity to affect male bodies. However, becoming affected by women's tears was made into a problem, as it was seen as unwelcome; becoming (sexually) affected by 'polar energy' was seen as welcome. These examples demonstrate that increasing and diminishing are not opposites or alternatives, as they can actualize simultaneously. The same relations that diminish some capacities may increase other capacities—and the same relations that diminish the capacities of some bodies may increase capacities in other bodies.

In other words, bodies' capacities to affect and become affected are not so much about what bodies are or how to define them, but what they can do—and what can they be made to do. As Patricia Clough (2008:5) puts it, a turn towards affect 'not only shows what the body can do, [it] show[s] what bodies can be made to do'. From a feminist Deleuzian perspective, it is important to consider how gender and sexuality relate to the ways in which bodies are made to do. In this chapter, I have been interested in what bodies are made to do in the practices of relationship and sex counselling. My analysis of the third event-assemblage shows how bodies were made to enter particular relations as a part of processes of 'finding' womanhood

and feminine sexuality, varying from drinking special herbal tinctures to producing left-handed paintings. Likewise, my analysis of the fourth event-assemblage highlights how bodies were taught to learn to become through gendering and sexualizing relations—in this case, in a repetitive manner, for example by gendering the bodies to be looked at as women's bodies and bodies who looked as men's bodies. However, despite the teaching and learning, not all participants (or bodies) became in the same ways through their relations with the therapeutic practices (cf. Coleman 2008).

Finally, when analysing the production of gendered and sexualized (power) relations, it is exactly this simultaneous dynamic which provides a novel perspective on the analysis of complex and affective gendered and sexualized power relations. This kind of conceptual work reminds us how relations enable, widen and increase bodies' (particular) capacities while at the same time decreasing some other capacities. Of course, I am not suggesting that increasing and diminishing always work in concert, or trying to reposition femininity and masculinity as separate or opposite things. Rather, my analysis raises the question whether gender and sexuality should be explored as relations in themselves. From a feminist Deleuzian perspective, they cannot be known in advance, but rather they live, transform, emerge and cease to exist, always in relations. This also poses a challenge for the study of affective inequalities, as bodies' relations cannot easily be grasped, nor should they be viewed as stable, certain or predictable.

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