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6 The becoming of family relationships and friendship circles after a bisexual breakup

Annukka Lahti

Introduction

Romantic relationships do not exist in isolation: they are formed, lived, and dissolved in social contexts. Relationships that are connected to people's wider social networks and supported by family and friends are more likely to thrive than relationships that exist separately from them (Sprecher et al., 2002). Research also reveals the effects of the couple norm on social networks and friendship circles (Ketokivi, 2012). Social life is often organised around couple relationships, and participation in a friendship circle may be based on the unspoken rule that one must be part of a couple (Aeby & van Hooff, 2019). This often becomes visible when a separation occurs. In Aeby and van Hooff's (2019) study, people who had recently become single had a difficult time, as they often noticed they were excluded from social events to which they had previously been invited as part of a couple.

This chapter begins with the observation that for some of the bisexual women I interviewed (Lahti, 2019), it was difficult to sustain friendships through relationship breakups. As research on social networks and relationships has concentrated mainly on heterosexual relationships and breakups (e.g. Castrén, 2009; Sprecher, Felmlee, Schmeekle, & Shu, 2006), I explore how bisexual women's family relationships and friendship circles unravel after a relationship breakup. In doing so, I intervene at the conjunction of three under-researched areas: bisexual people's relationships, LGBTIQ+ separations, and social networks after relationship breakups.

Hitherto, only a small number of studies have focused on LGBTIQ+ separations (e.g. Balsam, Rostosky & Riggle, 2017; Gahan, 2018). It has been argued, however, that the long battle for equal rights has placed LGBTIQ+ people's couple relationships under heavy pressure to succeed and appear as ordinary and happy as possible (Gahan, 2018; Lahti, 2015). Consequently, partners in LGBTIQ+ relationships might remain silent regarding the problems and breakups they face in their relationships. They might therefore not get the support they need from their communities, friends, and relatives. Since it is only recently that some studies have concentrated on bisexual people's relationships (e.g. Baumgartner, 2017; DeCapua, 2017;

Gustavson, 2009; Hayfield, Campbell, & Reed, 2018; Lahti, 2019), there is no research on the specific effects of separations on bisexual people's family relationships or friendship circles. This chapter aims to fill this research gap.

Previous research on bisexual people's relationships has produced important insights regarding how binegative cultural constructions – which invalidate and stigmatise bisexuality as a wavering, promiscuous sexuality, and bisexual people as unable to commit to long-term relationships – might contribute to uncertainty and mistrust in bisexual people's relationships (e.g. DeCapua, 2017; Gustavson, 2009; Hayfield et al., 2018; Klesse, 2011). This can happen regardless of whether bisexual people wish to engage in monogamous or non-monogamous relationships (Baumgartner, 2017; Gustavson, 2009; Klesse, 2011). Other studies have focused on how bisexual identities can be made visible in the context of relationships (e.g. Hartman-Linck, 2014). Baumgartner's (2017) study of (internalised) binegativity and my own study (Lahti, 2019) of bisexual women's relationships highlight the subtle ways in which oppressive cultural discourses (or the absence of discourse) work and cause pain, including from within bisexual subjects themselves. In my study, the precariousness of bisexual identity – since a strong frame of intelligibility is not always available for differently gendered desires – required affective work, not only on the part of bisexual women, but also by their partners (Lahti, 2019). Yet to fully understand how the affective, messy realities of bisexual people's lives unfold after their breakups, it is not enough to focus on how bisexual people experience their identities, or even on how they negotiate those identities in relationships with others.

This chapter offers a new perspective on the becoming of bisexual bodies through breakup assemblages. Drawing on a Deleuzo-Guattarian framework, I conceptualise family relationships and friendship circles after relationship breakups as processual assemblages where multiple and complex elements come together. My starting point is an understanding of bisexuality as a process of “becoming” as part of these relational assemblages, rather than as “being” a stable identity. In these becomings, relationship norms and hierarchies, and (bi)sexuality and gender norms, entangle with events, scenes, and affective intensities, which come together as a flow, connecting in various ways and various forms. This approach makes it possible to explore what kinds of relational assemblage enhance bisexual bodies' vitality and capability to connect with other bodies – and what kinds of assemblage diminish their vitality or force them to deteriorate.

From binegativity to the becoming of bisexual bodies

In this study, “bisexuality” refers to the experience of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of more than one gender. It is often thought that because bisexual people can “choose” partners of different genders, they have uncomplicated access to heterosexual privilege. However, many

bisexuals encounter prejudice and discrimination in both heterosexual and LGBTIQ+ communities, which can be an isolating experience (Hayfield, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014, Kangasvuo, 2014). In bisexuality research, the concept of sociocultural binegativity is widely used to explain the social marginalisation of bisexuality and bisexual identities in various areas of bisexual people's lives, including relationships (DeCapua, 2017; Hayfield et al., 2014, 2018; Klesse, 2011). However, the theorisation of bisexualities cannot end with the concept of binegativity. When binegativity is utilised as an analytical tool, it risks creating the notion that there is an essentialised core of bisexuality and bisexual identity that suffers binegative oppression. This notion has a tendency to universalise bisexual experience, and perhaps produces too simple an idea of how bisexual experiences come about.

In this chapter, I distance myself from the idea that bisexual identity is something that “belongs” to an individual (e.g. Fox & Alldred, 2013; Kolehmainen & Juvonen, 2018) and suggest that how bisexuality matters – for example, when a breakup occurs – depends not on an inner truth or identity, but on the assemblages it forms with other bodies (Malins, 2004). From this perspective, becoming bisexual can be seen as a transsubjective and intercorporeal process, rather than as the achievement of a fixed identity (Kolehmainen & Juvonen, 2018). This approach derives from new materialist approaches in (bi)sexuality research (Fox & Alldred, 2013; Fraser, 1999; Kolehmainen, 2018; Lahti, 2018, 2020). New materialist relational ontologies challenge prevailing conceptualisations of gender and sexuality (Kolehmainen, 2018, 2019; Kolehmainen & Juvonen, 2018). In this framework, bisexuality (like other sexualities) is not conceived of solely in identitarian terms, as residing within an individual; nor can it be reduced to social structures, discourses, or conventions (Fox & Alldred, 2013; Fraser, 1999; Kolehmainen, 2018; Lahti, 2018).

Inspired by researchers (e.g. Fox & Alldred, 2013; Fraser, 1999; Kolehmainen, 2018, 2019) who have mobilised Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) approach, I conceptualise bisexualities as emerging through affective assemblages where multiple and complex elements come together as flows that might go in various directions (see also Kolehmainen, 2018; Lahti, 2018). Instead of analysing only one element or dimension that determines the other elements – for example, thinking that relationship breakups are determined by (bi)sexual identities – I understand the affective effects of relationship assemblages in terms of how each unique assemblage increases the bodies' affective capabilities to connect with other bodies – in other words, the vitality of the bodies involved.

In relational affect studies, affects – understood as intensities, energies, and flows – are conceptualised as emerging out of dynamic encounters between bodies and things (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Kolehmainen & Juvonen, 2018; Seyfert, 2012). Affect can entail emotions, but it is not synonymous with individual human emotions as understood, for example, in the sociological theorisation of emotions (Kolehmainen & Juvonen, 2018). Affect is

an effect of somebody or something on another, and is often not consciously experienced. Affective transmission and interaction are determined by the affective capabilities of all the elements and bodies involved in an assemblage. In this sense, “affects do not ‘belong’ to anybody” and cannot be ascribed only to human bodies (Seyfert, 2012, p. 27), but involve encounters with all kinds of bodies: human, non-human, artificial, and imaginary. The affects of an assemblage are rhizomatic: They connect bodies up with other bodies, affects, and social relationships, in many different directions (Malins, 2004).

My question is thus not what (bisexual) bodies are or how to define them, but rather what bodies can do – or what they can be made to do as part of an assemblage (Fraser, 1999; Kolehmainen, 2018). Exploring different relationships of bodies, things, and affects in bisexual women’s breakup assemblages might shed new light on bisexualities and bisexual identities, which are often thought of as temporary, vague, or wavering (Lahti, 2019). What kind of family relationship or friendship circle assemblages allow bisexual bodies to intensify or to live – or force them to deteriorate? Since all assemblages are unique, the analysis in this chapter cannot, of course, be generalised to all bisexuals, or to all bodies in bisexual assemblages. Nevertheless, it provides an example of how bisexuality can be conceptualised as a body’s capacity to act: how family relationship and friendship circle assemblages enable or block the affective capabilities of the (bisexual) bodies involved.

Data and methodology

In this chapter, I draw on two sets of interview data. The first set comprises eight interviews with LGBTIQ+ people who had experienced a recent relationship breakup. I concentrate on the three interviewees who had relationship histories with partners of various genders. In these three separation interviews, the participants were aged between 27 and 41. All of them said their official gender was female, but one of them said they did not see their gender as “100 per cent female.” The second data set is a longitudinal set of interviews: five (originally seven) couple interviews with bisexual women and their variously gendered partners (four women and three men, one of whom identified as a trans man) conducted in 2005, and 11 follow-ups conducted some ten years later in 2014–15. These participants were aged between 22 and 42 at the time of the first interview, and between 32 and 52 at the follow-up interview. By the time of the follow-up interviews, the majority of the couples interviewed in 2005 had separated, and most of the interviewees had new partners. Both sets of interviews were conducted in Finnish cities and towns. The original couple interviews were semi-structured; the couple follow-ups and the separation interviews were biographical narrative interviews. All the interviews lasted between one and

four hours and were audio-recorded and transcribed. I conducted the analysis in Finnish, then translated the extracts for publication. All names used are pseudonyms.

In the analysis, I pay attention to the changes of patterned relationships, the flows and interruptions of affective intensities, in family relationship and friendship circle assemblages. Lines of energy are continually becoming through complex groupings of assemblages, which are always temporary and always more than the sum of their elements (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). Yet it is possible to detect some segmenting and violating forces within these becomings. In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, the lines of energy can be congealing, solidifying, territorialising forces. But there is therefore also a possibility that energy will break off from normative lines, and the energy thereby released will enable becomings in unpredictable, deterritorialising ways (Huuki, 2016; Ringrose & Renold, 2014). By following the affective intensities and territorialising and deterritorialising energies in bisexual women's family relationship and friendship circle assemblages, I wish to shed light on the constructions of – and challenges to – power that lie hidden in the affective flow of events, scenes, and experiences that come together in breakup assemblages.

Mixed relationships Partner's gender steering affective intensities in family relationship assemblages

While I was exploring bisexual women's assembled family relationship and friendship circles after their breakups, it caught my attention that the gender of their partner mattered in how affective intensities were assembled in their family relationship assemblages. According to Sara Ahmed's theorisation, happiness functions as a promise that steers us towards certain objects in the world. Especially within bisexual women's family relationships, heterosexual couple relationships functioned as a "happy object" (Ahmed, 2010), which had the power to steer affective intensities towards some bodies and away from others, sometimes in very unhappy ways.

Emma, who had a relationship history with both men and women, described how her parents reacted to her breakup with her first female partner: "My parents were so happy about that breakup, which was really quite grim, when I was so broken over it." When they had first found out about her female partner, they had told Emma they were going to kill themselves. Her parents' violent rejection of her non-heterosexual relationship and their threats of suicide affected the becoming and vitality of her body long after the breakup:

It was quite a ragged course ...¹ how I continued my life after that. It was such a roller coaster for many years, many different kinds of relationships, and I was really out of sorts with my identity.

Later on, the vitality of her body increased again. Moving away from a small town to a bigger city, and finding a circle of LGBTIQ+ friends, essentially increased her body's capabilities to connect with other bodies – for example, in the form of relationships. Emma explains:

I moved to Helsinki and at some point started to look for other rainbow people [a common expression for LGBTIQ+ people in Finland]. I felt like I hadn't had enough such people around me who would share that kind of reality, and then I found a group of people, and soon I also met my next long-term partner in that group.

This kind of friendship circle was often a very important source of support and sharing in interviewees' lives. Friends' support also helped them in the process of coming out to their parents. Often, over the course of their lives, interviewees' parents met their partners of different genders and came to accept and like them. However, it was striking in the data that even after the participants had lived in LGBTIQ+ culture for a long time, and had had partners of different genders, in their family relationship assemblages, powerful positive affects such as happiness were repeatedly assembled to their relationships with cis men.

Interviewees' relationships with cis men seemed to assemble especially with their mothers' vitality and happiness. For example, Pia related in an understanding tone that her "parents haven't had it easy," since her sister was also bisexual and was married to a woman. She reckoned "my mother is even more happy about Martti," her husband, the reason simply being that "Martti is a man."

A mother's happiness could also be intensified through the fact that the daughter "didn't become a lesbian," as Marja humorously explained:

Now we [Marja and Thomas] have two children and a dog and an estate car, so my mother must be as happy as a person can be (laughs): I didn't become a lesbian after all, and gave her grandchildren and everything.

This sheds light on how women's bisexuality affected their family relationship assemblages differently, depending on the other assembled elements – for example, the gender of their partner. However, the happiness assembled with male partners might make it difficult for bisexual bodies to be open to non-heterosexual relationships. Further, affective intensities assembled around mixed-sex relationships might give rise to ambivalent feelings in bisexual women if they knew their female relationships were not similarly embraced by their family members.

Crossing the homo/hetero binary and rebounding

Although in most family relationship assemblages, a mixed-sex relationship remained the celebrated "happy object" (Ahmed, 2010), family members

could also regard a bisexual woman's new male partner with mistrust after her separation from a long-term female relationship. In Laura's family relationship assemblage, strong affective intensities were assembled around her crossing the homo/hetero binary.

According to Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) notion of the rhizomatic organisation of assemblages, a part of an assemblage can always be plugged into another assemblage, where it can grow along its old line or along a new line. Yet in Laura's family relationship assemblage, a relationship with a male partner could not be smoothly plugged into her history of an established female relationship. Rather, her crossing the homo/hetero binary created a rupture that resembled typical negative reactions to a person coming out as homosexual – anger, sadness, disapproval, and disbelief. These negative reactions were now plugged into Laura's family relationship assemblage, hampering her bisexual becoming.

In the following extract, Laura accounts for her family members' reactions to her new male partner after she broke up with her long-term female spouse, with whom she had been in a registered partnership and had three children together:

My parents didn't understand this choice *at all* ... especially my father had a bigger problem with the fact that I had started to date a man. It wasn't a straightforward condemnation of it from his part, but he mourned it intensely that I had broken up with Heli and all the difficulties related to it ... and then my mother asked me straight out what does this mean, does it mean that now I have come to the conclusion that I want to be with men? ... That could be answered straight, that it does not mean that, but rather it's life and things happen ... then my sister thought that I'm not capable of heterosexual sex ... that it is somehow physically difficult for me, or repulsive, and then I turned down that idea as well ... and then my ex-partner Heli could not understand how Jari could be interested in me, because she thought I had a lesbian haircut and that I dress in a very unfeminine way, and also suspected that Jari must be secretly homosexual ... also my sister thought that Jari is only interested in me because I have small children and he has to be a paedophile.

In the interview, Laura often spoke about her feminist political stance, a world-view she had shared with her ex-partner, Heli: "We formed together a strong view of how we wanted to lead our lives, which was based on gender." During Laura and Heli's relationship, female relationships and rainbow families engaged in various political struggles in Finland. When I first interviewed them as a couple, the registered partnership law for same-sex couples (Act 950/2001) had been in effect for only three years. It was not until 2017 that marriage became gender-neutral in Finland (Act 98/2017). In the face of these legal struggles, Laura and Heli had been very political about their family. This might have given energy to the doubt and confusion

within Laura's family relationship assemblage in the face of her new male spouse.

Moreover, this was also fuelled by the homo/hetero binary as a territorialising force. As Laura's parents and family members had gone through the emotional work of "accepting" their daughter's female relationship, this possibly made them "rebound" in the form of irrational accusations when Laura started to date a man – as if the emotional work of acceptance had been "all for nothing." As Laura put it, "After they had chewed it [her relationship with Heli] over for a while, they found that this is actually a good idea, that a relationship with a woman is actually a much better option – and there was some kind of idealisation attached to it."

In the interview, Laura's expressions of her own discomfort with what looked like heterosexual coupledness was assembled in close sequence with her depictions of her family's inconvenience with her new male partner. Her own palpable discomfort at moving from a woman-centred life to life with a man resonated with her family members', lack of comfort and one seemed to give energy to the other. For Laura, feminist politics meant, for example, taking a critical approach to heteronormative cultural conventions such as romance. She felt uneasy about appearing with her male partner in public, where she was plugged into a heterosexual assemblage. She said miserably, "I cannot escape it, however differently I might experience it, and the other party [her current male spouse] understands it and is sensitive towards it." She continued: "I hardly show any affection to him in public ... somehow it is uncomfortable for me, and there's also a sense of shame attached to it, it is somehow embarrassing for me." As there is hardly any visible bisexual political movement in Finland (Kangasvuo, 2014), Laura's new relationship could not easily be assembled with her woman-centred feminist commitments. Rather, her relational assemblage created strong affective intensities with negative tones, such as shame. Combined with her family's affective reactions, this contributed to the diminished vitality of Laura's bisexual body.

Friendship circles blocking bisexual becomings

Although bisexual women in both sets of interviews mentioned their friends, both inside and outside LGBTIQA+ circles, as an important and continuous source of support in their lives, on some occasions these friendships were difficult to sustain through a breakup, both for the women themselves and for the friends. For many bisexual women who had dated women, their friendship circles – which often consisted of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women or (queer) feminist groups – were very important. When they started to date cis men, this could mean ruptures, tensions, and even rifts within their circle of friends. Pia explained:

Dating Martti and getting married to him led to my best friend, my ex-best friend ... her girlfriend once burst out when she was drunk that

this friend of mine does not accept me getting married [to Martti] – she had promised to be my chief bridesmaid, but then I found out that she doesn't quite accept my fiancé and then it led to that we haven't been in touch for a year.

This had affected the whole friendship circle, which consisted mainly of women and their girlfriends or wives:

It's been bad, because I haven't seen certain friends who I would mostly see at parties. I haven't gone to those parties, because I didn't want to face Helena [her ex-best friend]. So I'm somewhat isolated now in this [small town].

Apart from Helena, Pia saw some of her other friends from their friendship circle separately, but she no longer met them as a group. The affective rupture between the two friends had the power to disrupt and rearrange relationships in the whole friendship circle assemblage, without anyone's overt intention. When I asked her about it, Pia pondered repeatedly whether Martti could not be integrated into the friendship circle because of his gender. The matter seemed more complex, and also to depend on the elements from which his masculinity was assembled: "Maybe it's been like why am I no longer together with Kalle, who liked knitting. Like, why am I together with Martti, who likes motorbikes."

Thus, when a bisexual woman started to date a partner with a different gender – or a differently gendered partner – from their previous partner, they did not always fit into their social circle as easily as they had previously done. This sometimes meant losing a friend, or a circle of friends. Here Kaja describes the becoming of a social circle in a gender studies community:

That community was a system in itself, which had developed its own norms and rules ... It was for me personally quite a harsh observation that when I was in that female relationship ... we were welcome everywhere, to all social occasions. ... We fitted in very well (laughs) ... but then when all of a sudden I was dating a man, who was a bit of a bloke, had a beard, and was like this ordinary straight man, I started to get occasional comments that I am a scab, or that I have made a wrong choice. For me it was like, what the hell, we talk here about tolerance and ethics and making space for all sexualities and genders and their diversity – that is not being actualised here at all! It's like you have to be like this and that and that, so that you fit into this thing ... which is quite the opposite of everything really being okay ... like that the masculine men were as okay as the masculine women, or that straight men were as okay as lesbian women. And then I made a bit of a break from it ... although I'm grateful for that time and for what I got there.

In Kaja's description, the gender studies social circle was a community where relationships between women had become a norm. When she started to date a cis man, she was told that she had made the wrong choice. She experienced this as pressure to be of a certain kind in order to fit into the group. This went strongly against how sexual diversity was spoken about within the community, where the diversity of all genders and sexualities was supposedly embraced. When Kaja tried to make sense of this, she painted a wishful picture of a world where a masculine man was as acceptable as a masculine woman and a straight man as acceptable as a lesbian woman. Yet as I listened to Kaja, I could not help but think that there are very few spaces that resemble her description of the gender studies social circle, where a masculine woman or relationships between women are the norm – in most spaces the situation is exactly the opposite.

Thus, although the exclusiveness of this particular community clearly echoes binegative sentiments, the underlying territorialising force that steers the becoming of this community seems to be the power relation that places heterosexual relationships and masculine men at the top of the hierarchy. Since this is almost always the case, the community's space – where the situation was reversed for once – was protected. Yet both sides effectively blocked bisexual bodies from becoming: the feminist/queer/gender studies community because (cis)male partners were not appreciated, and mainstream culture because queer/same-sex partners could not be accepted. As the gender studies social circle could not give energy to the becoming of a bisexual body, for Kaja there was no option but to leave the community.

Kaja describes in the interview how since that time she has been able to explore what was discussed in theory within the gender studies circle regarding the diversity of sexualities and genders. This has turned from theory to lived experience for her. She now embraces the playfulness of tantra as a way to enhance her body's vitality and energy:

At one event we danced, and all of a sudden I had this orgasmic, ecstatic feeling that my body is jiggling and wiggling – an intense, strong experience of pleasure about my body, which is full of energy, and which jiggles.

Kaja explains: "At the moment I feel that the limitations [regarding gender and sexuality] are inside me if they are anywhere, and I can be as wild as I want to be, or as wild as I dare to be." She experiences tantra as a way to exceed her own embodied gendered and sexualised limitations (see also Kolehmainen, 2019).

Nevertheless, the homo/hetero binary also steers the becoming of the tantra community, as Kaja describes most of the tantra courses she attends as being full of mixed-sex couples. She says she knows about a teacher who

teaches gay tantra courses, especially abroad. If she were with a woman, she would probably attend these, but it would not be comfortable to do so with her current male partner.

The hierarchical homo/hetero binary is a strong territorialising force that is hard to escape, wherever bisexual women find themselves in their lives. As there are still very few bisexual spaces in Finland (Kangasvuo, 2014), becoming bisexual often requires living in various social circles segmented by the homo/hetero distinction. Yet through these becomings across different relational assemblages, women often traverse the homo/hetero binary, and thus the becoming of their bodies can be thought of as a bisexual becoming. Through these becomings, they form hybrids where their previous experiences of female relationships, their feminist world views, and solidarity between women are reassembled into new social assemblages, affecting the latter's lines of becoming.

Friendship circles energising bisexual bodies

In some cases, bisexual women's friendship circles are hybrids that vitalise the becomings of their bisexual bodies. Marja calls her bisexuality a "mother's sexuality," referring to how she raises her children to accept all sexualities and genders. She explains:

I guess honestly it is quite a straight life that we live now ... pointless to try to prove that one is somehow different or deviant, yes, yes. But at least half of the boy's godmothers are lesbians (laughs).

Yet her lesbian friends and her son's godmothers do not only have an educational function in the son's life. Spending time with them also energises Marja's bisexual body. She explains:

In the summer, when I go to see women's baseball, maybe it is somehow related [to my sexuality] ... I went to the ice hockey game with Olli and his godmother once, and there were quite a lot of female couples there in the audience ... so it felt a bit like isn't this a bit like a lesbian thing to come here and watch ice hockey. And I thought when I was there with Olli's godmother ... do the others think that we are a couple with her ... But maybe it was only my interpretation (laughs).

Marja describes the scene of going with her lesbian friend to an ice hockey game and seeing many female couples in the audience. By seeing herself through other female couples' eyes as part of a lesbian couple, Marja could temporarily become with the lesbian assemblage. The idea of being recognised as part of a lesbian couple by other female couples seemed to give her joy and energise her bisexual becoming.

Discussion

This chapter makes a unique contribution to existing literature on how couple relationships begin, thrive, and end in social contexts. It extends current perspectives by including bisexual relationship breakups. Further, it suggests that LGBTIQ+ breakups cannot be approached as a unitary whole, and that there might instead be important differences within LGBTIQ+ break-ups. The analysis has revealed some specific issues relevant to bisexual relationships and breakups.

But instead of focusing on how bisexual identities are experienced or negotiated in the context of relationships (or breakups) (Gustavson, 2009; Lynch & Maree, 2013), or how binegative sentiments affect bisexual people's relationships (DeCapua, 2017; Hayfield et al., 2018; Klesse, 2011), this chapter offers a novel perspective on the becoming of bisexualities with social relationships after breakups. In my analysis, bisexuality's function was not determined by participants' identities but by the specific assemblages it formed with other bodies, relationships, and affects. The assembled relationships and affects had the power to (dis)connect bisexual bodies with (from) other bodies, affects, and relationships, steering them in different directions.

Hierarchical and binary notions of sexuality and gender often gave energy to the intensification of affects (with a positive or negative tone) when bisexual women started to date a partner whose gender was different from that of their previous partner. Yet as all assemblages are complex and unique, the gender of the bisexual woman's partner mattered differently depending on the other elements and relationships in the assemblage: what relationship forms, genders, and sexualities were most respected, what the women's political commitments were, and how their previous relationships had been sequenced before the breakups.

The hierarchical homo/hetero binary and heteronormativity as territorialising forces were hard to escape, wherever bisexual women found themselves in their lives. These forces had the power to (dis)connect bisexual bodies with (from) their relational assemblages. This could radically diminish the vitality of bisexual bodies and their capability to connect with other bodies. However, the bisexual becomings often continued as the bisexual bodies were connected to other relational assemblages, affecting the latter's lines of becoming.

This analysis shows that when we study social networks after relationship breakups, it is important to attend to their dynamic processes, which are affected by gendered and sexualised power dynamics as well as the other relational and affective dynamics that come together in breakups. Yet it is important to analyse breakups in ways that do not reduce gender and sexuality to individual human subjects or stabilise sexual identity categories such as bisexuality in predictable, predefined ways. Rather, breakups and bisexualities should be thought as multiplicities in motion (Deleuze &

Guattari, 2004). Thus this chapter on the becoming of bisexual women's breakup assemblages is a beginning for a theorisation of multiple bisexual potentialities.

Note

- 1 For legibility, I have slightly modified the data extracts by adding punctuation marks and removing some meaningless words and utterances such as “hm,” “er,” “like.” Sometimes the interviewees' talk wandered off the topic or repeated what had already been said. Omissions of this kind of talk are marked with “...”.

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