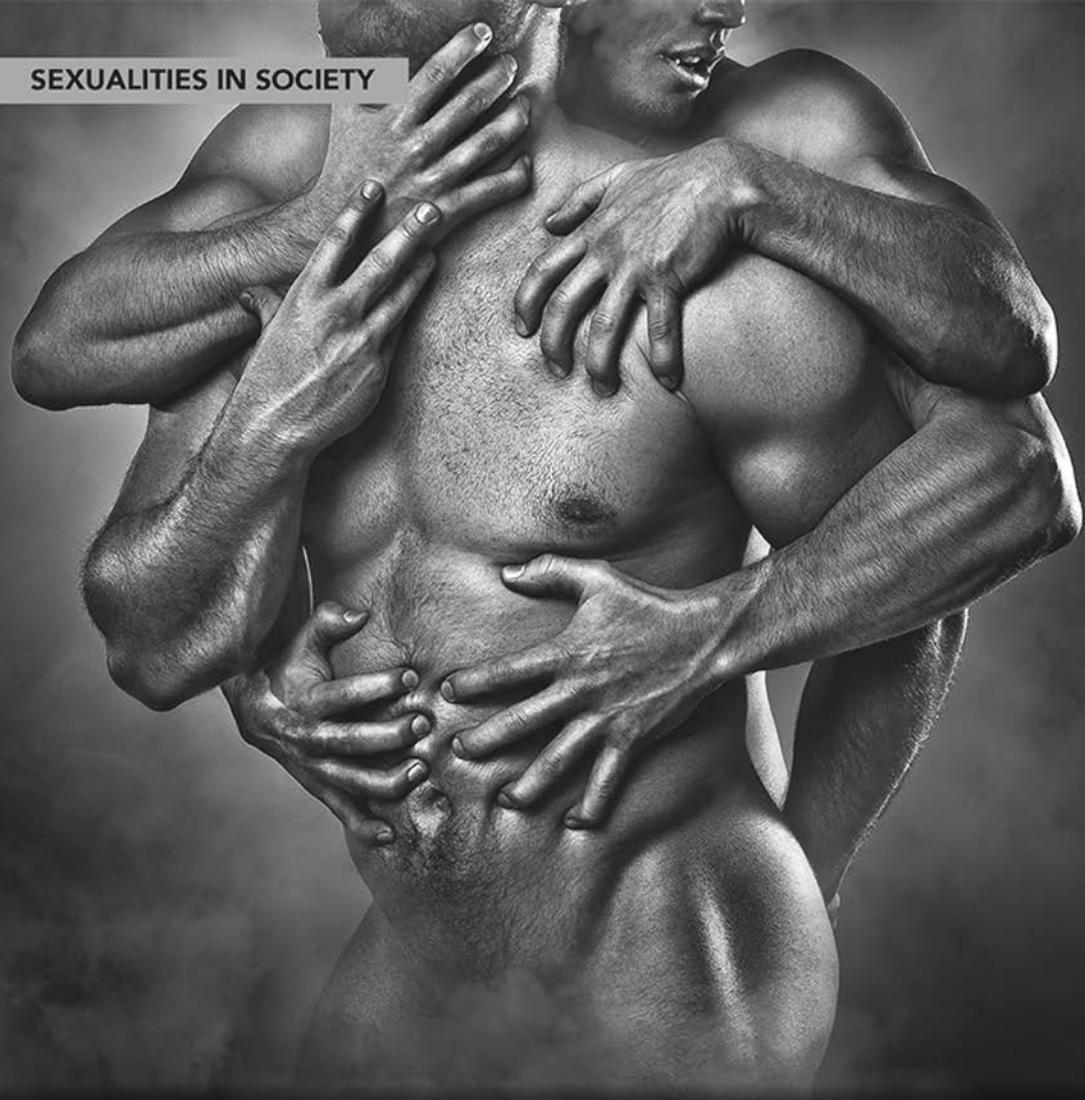


SEXUALITIES IN SOCIETY



RADICAL SEX BETWEEN MEN

ASSEMBLING DESIRING-MACHINES

EDITED BY

**DAVE HOLMES, STUART J.
MURRAY AND THOMAS FOTH**

ROUTLEDGE 

“Mid-century ethnographers mapping the ‘deviant’, exotic, gay subcultures such as cruising, the baths and ‘tearoom’ could not have anticipated the civil liberties discourses that increasingly focused on the person and identities. However, the body and some sexual praxes retain a ‘radical’, transgressive seditious *otherness*. These sophisticated essays draw on post-structuralism, queer theory, and other theoretical perspectives to provide a timely, nuanced interdisciplinary re-imagining of power and resistance of erotic bodily practices in contemporary discursive formations of ‘rad’ sex.”

—Professor Anthony Pryce-Curling, University of Greenwich, UK

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—Dr Helen Lees, York St John University, UK



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This edited collection is dedicated to Joseph Basak, my partner in crime during the time this book was written and assembled in Palm Springs, California, during the summer and fall of 2016. I thank him for our unrelenting and endless discussions and his thoughtful insights during numerous BBQs, dinners, hikes, camping trips, text messages, and email exchanges. I am also forever grateful that he helped me to discover new forms of pleasure in everyday life. I dedicate this book to him in the hope that it was worth it.

**Professor Dave Holmes, RN, PhD
Ottawa, Canada
December 25, 2016**



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Contents

<i>Cover image</i>	xi
<i>Contributors</i>	xii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xviii
<i>Foreword</i>	xix
WINSTON GIESEKE	
<i>Opening quotes</i>	xxii
Introduction: RadSex in theory and in practice	1
STUART J. MURRAY, DAVE HOLMES, AND THOMAS FOTH	
PART I	
Bareback sex	23
1 Brothers-in-cum: a critical discourse analysis of barebacking rhetoric	25
DAVE HOLMES, CHAD HAMMOND, AND MATHIEU MERCIER	
2 Mediated intimacies: raw sex, Truvada, and the politics of chemoprophylaxis	40
TIM DEAN	
3 “Not only macho-fuckers are barebackers”: challenging gender relations among men who have sex with men	61
ANGEL GASCH	
4 The anatomy of a forbidden desire: men, penetration, and semen exchange	73
DAVE HOLMES AND DAN WARNER	

PART II

BDSM practices 91

5 BDSM, sexual subcultures, and the ethics of public health discourse 93

DAVE HOLMES, STUART J. MURRAY, NATASHA KNACK,
MATHIEU MERCIER, AND J. PAUL FEDOROFF

6 Degenitalizing the sexual: BDSM practices and the deterritorialization of bodies and pleasures 117

DAVE HOLMES, STUART J. MURRAY, NATASHA KNACK,
MATHIEU MERCIER, AND J. PAUL FEDOROFF

7 Fucking with fluids and wet with desire: power and humiliation using cum, piss, and blood 142

JEREMY N. THOMAS AND DJ WILLIAMS

PART III

Public sex 151

8 Transgressive assemblages: an ethnography of gay group sex 153

DAVE HOLMES, PATRICK O'BYRNE, STUART J. MURRAY,
CHAD HAMMOND, AND MATHIEU MERCIER

9 Faceless sex: glory holes and sexual assemblages 177

DAVE HOLMES, PATRICK O'BYRNE, AND STUART J. MURRAY

10 Profiling public sex: how Grindr revolutionized the face of gay cruising 190

MATTHEW NUMER, DAVE HOLMES, PHILLIP JOY, AND RYAN THOMPSON

11 Secret desires: contemporary Brazilian masculinities in the era of network relations 203

RICHARD MISKOLCI, LARISSA PELUCIO, AND LUIZ FELIPE ZAGO

Index 214

Cover image

The Grip 2017 © Jonathan Hobin (www.jhobin.com)

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Foreword

Welcome to the world

The stranger kneeling before you has a face like a ravenous animal. It's not so much the mug itself – which at a glance appears to be handsome – that has you rethinking this whole thing. It's the expression of hunger, desire, and seeming insatiability that alarms you. *This is so not my world*, you'd thought to yourself upon entering this residence that looks to you to be a step down from an abandoned flophouse.

This is not. my. world

The place smells like the spinning teacups after some poor attendant has had to cover a pile of projectiled stomach contents with sawdust and spray the air with a foul-smelling sanitizer. Your jeans are down around your ankles, your manhood is terrorizing this guy's esophagus, and you have no idea what happened to your shirt. Abject terror is preventing your hippocampus from creating new memories. *Damn Craig and his list for getting you into this mess*. “Deep throat slut demands abuse.” *Demands*. After suffering a particularly heinous week of vocational abuse, you'd thought perhaps this was the release you needed. But now you're not so sure.

While the bob knob certainly feels good, the idea of a person demanding unlimited abuse is bizarre. And the stranger's claim that “no safeword is needed” is downright foolhardy. It's not as though this guy needs some gimmick to get some. In fact, the dark-haired, bearded, and seemingly ripped – the lack of illumination leaves you somewhat in the dark about his overall fitness – stud who can't seem to get enough of your bobby dangler is just the sort of person you are drawn to. You, with your mousy brown hair, unremarkable features, average build, and massive self-esteem issues, are far less doable. If it weren't for your oversized baby arm, you suspect, no one would pay attention to you.

The stranger is sucking so intently that you decide to see how much he can take. Grabbing the back of his head and yanking it forward, you shove all of your disco stick into his mouth, which causes him to gag. After a second he can't take it and quickly turns his head to vomit. You're not certain, but you think there might

be blood in there as well. You glance downward and decide it's probably yours; there are scrape marks up and down your shaft, as if someone had teased it with a cheese grater.

You're surprised by how much this doesn't bother you.

Done puking, the stranger seems eager to get back to his job of blow. But the fact that his retching seemed not to bother him either suddenly opens up whole new vistas in your head, so you jerk your body to the right, flopping your member away from him. The stranger looks confused, and you decide he needs a boot to the stomach. Besides, those three beers you chugged before summoning the nerve to come here are begging for release.

He's flat on his back. And seeing how much weight his six-pack abs are able to handle, it seems only natural for your other foot to get to know his left pec. As you bounce up and down on his torso, you wonder how difficult it would be to crack a rib. And this thought titillates. The stranger's mouth is open; you're not sure if this is the result of pain, pleasure, or disbelief, but when you find yourself coughing up some foul-tasting lung butter, you decide to share. Your spit aim is spot-on. The stranger seems to savor your throat yogurt before swallowing it, and he looks like he could handle more. Only none is forthcoming. Just then, your bladder calls again – and this time you decide to answer.

The second your recycled beer reaches his flesh, his mouth opens again. You wonder if this is Pavlovian. Your aim is still spot-on, and he devours your piddle like mother's milk. You then spread the love by raining down all over his body.

As you pull him up by his hair, he yelps like a stepped-on puppy, which thrills you. So does the noise his face makes when you send it straight to the ground, possibly breaking his nose.

You penetrate him froggy-style, which he seems to enjoy. If him sobbing uncontrollably is any indication. You can't believe how turned on you are. Maybe *this is my world*, you think. You're suddenly curious about many things. How much of your arm could you get up there? Is up to the elbow even possible?

The answer, you learn, is yes.

When you're ready for him to finish you off, you go back to basics. Your goal is to cleanse his puke-mouth with your milky, all-natural, industrial-strength cleanser. Your loads are legendary, and as this one erupts, you grab the stranger's head and once again thrust it forward. As you fill him up, Niagara Falls-style, a look of panic comes over the stranger's face. He puts one hand on his throat as the other tries unsuccessfully to push you away.

It's not until your well is completely dry that you realize the stranger is no longer breathing.

Knowing just what to do, you pick him up, whip him around, and throw five good slaps on his back, just between the shoulder blades. You then wrap your arms around him – marveling for one quick second at how firm his pecs are – and give the stranger a serious push in and upward. Thankfully, he responds with a violent eruption of your man juice, some gasps, and a coughing jag.

Far from a buzzkill, this is whipped cream and *two* cherries. It's a super King Kamehameha turn-on. You feel alive like never before. You can't wait to come

back here. But first things first: You're once again standing at attention. Time for round two.

The stranger moans. "Man," he manages between coughs, "this is *so* not my world . . ."

It's then that you climax a second time. Welcome.

Winston Gieseke

Opening quotes

There is an affinity, or at least a synchrony, between a culture of boredom and an orgiastic one.

Jacques Derrida, 1995, p. 35

I think I have real difficulty in experiencing pleasure . . . It's not as simple as that to enjoy oneself . . . Because I think that kind of pleasure I would consider the real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming I couldn't survive it . . . A pleasure must be incredibly intense. But I think I am not the only one like that. I am not able to give myself and others those middle range pleasures that make up everyday life. Such pleasures are nothing for me.

Michel Foucault, 1996, p. 378

No words are clear enough to express the happy disdain of the one who dances with the time that kills him for those who take refuge in the expectation of eternal beatitude. The kind of fretful saintliness – which first had to be sheltered from erotic excess – has now lost all its power: one can only laugh at a sacred drunkenness allied with a horror of debauchery.

Georges Bataille, 1985, pp. 236–237

Introduction

RadSex in theory and in practice

*Stuart J. Murray, Dave Holmes,
and Thomas Foth*

This collection of essays offers critical analyses of three distinct – but sometimes overlapping – “deviant” sociosexual practices between men: bareback sex, BDSM, and public sex. The authors draw on a wide range of perspectives informed in large part by queer theory and poststructuralism. However, the primary purpose of this collection is neither to contribute to specific theories of sexual “deviance” or paraphilia, nor to theories or practices of sexual “liberation.” Rather, building variously upon poststructuralism, queer theory, and the field of gender and sexuality studies, the essays gathered here explore the empirical risks, economies of danger, and public health messaging that converge on sexual bodies and pleasures – even “unbearable” ones (Berlant & Edelman, 2014). Engaging embodied practices and other social texts, this collection bridges theory and praxis to offer an interdisciplinary and nuanced account of the complexities of human sexuality, from the margins. In so doing, the essays gathered here examine what we might call the scandalous social structures and dangerous discourses that constitute RadSex and situated carnal knowledges in the current context.

“Rad” is a colloquial abbreviation of “radical.” The term gained popularity in 1970s American skateboard and surf culture to describe particular moves considered “extreme,” “risky,” and for this reason, “cool.” If “rad” moves are dangerous or extreme, these connotations sit somewhat uncomfortably alongside the etymology of “radical,” from the Latin *radicalis*, which relates to “root” or “roots” – that which is considered original, essential, fundamental, or vital. “Rad” offers an implicit critique of origins, essences, and fundamentals; “rad” moves shift the terrain, flaunt the norm, and performatively subvert or uproot the respected order of things. Elsewhere, in the field of mathematics, “rad” is a unit of angle, a measure derived from “radius,” the distance from the center to the circumference of a circle or an arc. In this respect, “rad” suggests a link to – and an observable distance from – a central point of reference or origin, a fixed point from which a measure derives its significance. But again, the slang “rad” seems to play with the fixity of a central point of reference; radical moves become their own restless and protean points of departure, or rather, “lines of flight,” as Deleuze and Guattari might say, and “rad” roots become rhizomatic, if not anarchic, without clear origins. This is not new. In the late eighteenth century, the term “radical” began to take on distinctly “rad” political overtones: “radicals” were those who agitated

for far-reaching, and sometimes even revolutionary, social or political reforms, in part by challenging that which was widely presumed to be original, essential, or fundamental to social and political life. In the current political context, we hear a great deal about “radicalization,” a term applied to the Islamicist enemy in the War on Terror. To say that someone is “radicalized” is to suggest that they have returned to or adopted some fundamental or essential religious truth, and to imagine that their bodies have become war-machines somehow beyond civil society. Such radicalization is said to deserve our strongest condemnation and to justify our targeted acts of killing, or “surgical” strikes. If terrorists pose a threat to the biological life of civil society, the Manichean discourse on “radicalization” would as it were immunize us from our own involvement, if not our complicity, by telling an essentializing story of good versus evil, life and death. These narratives – radicalizing in their own right – prevent us from seeing how the War on Terror, and on radicalism more generally, is effectively an auto-immune response (Derrida in Borradori, 2003, pp. 94–102). Self and other enter a dangerous liaison, private and public become unstable categories, and pleasure and pain are found to be intertwined.

These forms of radicalism are surely implicit in our understanding of RadSex: “risky” and “extreme” moves, criminal intimacies, politics, and praxeologies that contest the presumption of social and sexological origins or norms, and that challenge the conception of sexual deviance as a measurable or observable distance from orthodox or “normal” sex epitomized in heteronormative ReproSex, conservative sex, the missionary position. RadSex threatens to expose the “origin” or “norm” as unstable, even fictitious – a construct, a lie of sorts propped up by the prevailing discourse on sexuality, a way of thinking and acting and speaking that is and always was contingent, rather than necessary, that is and always was a product of historical and cultural beliefs and social praxes.

Foucault (1978) draws a critical distinction between “sex” and what he calls “the discourse on sexuality” – a discourse, he writes, that produces “sex” as “an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality – [a discourse] that each individual has to pass through in order to have access to his own intelligibility . . . , to the whole of his body. . . , to his identity” (pp. 155–156). From the mathematical image above, we might uncritically imagine “sex” here as the central point, and “the discourse on sexuality” to be the circumference of a circle or its arc. Sex, Foucault argues, becomes the hidden “truth” of the subject, a secret one must discover, what we imagine conventionally as the point of origin, essence, or fundament of the subject’s sexual agency and autonomy. Foucault argues that this essence is illusory: it is (re)produced by the discourse on sexuality as a technology of control, disciplining us from within. Sexed bodies, desires, and carnal knowledges are produced and policed according to discursive norms that are surreptitiously “naturalized,” through implicit reference to the “center.” Sex and desire are discursive effects that only *appear* as a root cause – as “origin,” “essence,” or “fundament.” A Foucauldian critique thus examines the ways that sex “is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies in their materiality, their forces, energies,

sensations, and pleasures” (p. 155). The center is, then, an imaginary point consolidated in and by a constellation of discursive practices – materialities, forces, energies, sensations, and desires. The sexual subject is trapped, as it were, in and by discourse. In response, Foucault imagines a “rallying point” for what he calls “the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality.” The counterattack, he writes in a famous passage, “ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures” (p. 157). How bodies and pleasures are meant to liberate us from a sex-desire produced in and by the discourse on sexuality is another matter. However we conceive them, bodies and pleasures are not in themselves essentially free from the effects of discourse but always in relation to and with them. Foucault ends his book with a stark warning about the deployment of the discourse on sexuality: “The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our ‘liberation’ is in the balance” (p. 159). Ironically, liberation itself is a great ruse, he argues; indeed, it is far from radical because it is often just another technology of social control, much in the way that “freedom” and “liberty” are deployed as the unreconstructed truth of the global War on Terror.

Poststructuralism and queer theory form the theoretical frame within which this collection’s essays are situated. These theories are brought into dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical (non)concepts of the “assemblage” and “desiring-machines.” In introducing these themes, our treatment is not intended to be thematically or historically exhaustive, but to provide a cursory background for readers who may be less familiar with these theories. Along the way, we develop our understanding of RadSex in contradistinction to the normative ideals of reproduction (ReproSex) and its governing temporalities (ReproTime). We conclude with synopses of the essays gathered thematically in the book’s three sections.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a philosophical approach developed by French philosophers in the 1960s and 1970s. Thinkers as diverse as Bataille, Cixous, Deleuze & Guattari, Derrida, Foucault, Irigaray, and Lyotard sought to challenge dominant hierarchies, ideologies, and epistemologies – systems of meaning that make sense of social practices, including sexual relations. This work has been taken up across the humanities and social sciences in order to analyze those “commonsense” categories and historical concepts that tend to be treated as natural and immutable, if not structurally universal, necessary, or even sacred. How do power and social norms, for instance, influence what we take to be true and inform our understanding of ourselves as social and political subjects? Or what forms of power/knowledge have come to regulate sexual relations – socially, morally, politically, scientifically, and juridically – and on what grounds, and by what or whose authority? In a nutshell, poststructuralist critiques diversely demonstrate how those structures that govern our social worlds are *themselves* products of cultural beliefs and praxes. In other words, these structures are radically contingent, socially and historically situated, and provisional rather than foundational. Consequently, feminists, queer scholars, social activists, and critical race, dis/ability, and postcolonial

theorists, among others, have found something liberatory in poststructuralism, which they have critically mobilized across scholarly discourse, (counter)culture, and political activism. However, “liberty” must be used cautiously here, perhaps as a value informing an ongoing and unending set of critical interventions, rather than as an essence, truth, or fixed point of reference.

More specifically, according to Scott (2001), poststructuralism is an antifoundationalist approach that attends to language and meaning-making: “a starting point for understanding how social relations are conceived, and therefore – because understanding how they are conceived means understanding how they work – how institutions are organized, how relations of production are experienced, and how collective identity is established” (p. 255). Through such a critique we begin to understand that our social order is neither necessary, natural, nor “true”; things might have been otherwise, which implies that we might intervene in that social order and open a world of possibilities for the future. In this, we might say that poststructuralism destroys the idea of foundations. Unsurprisingly, this has been met with resistance. Many opponents of poststructuralism complain that it also destroys the conventional concepts by which we understand the human body, subjectivity, and ethical agency. Some worry that poststructuralism ushers in a moral relativism, and, they argue, if everything is contingent – and nothing is foundational, necessary, or true – then we must abandon any possibility for social order and ethics. Indeed, it is often in this foundationalist (and sometimes fundamentalist) vein that conservatives condemn nonnormative sexualities, practices, and gender identities. Butler’s response to this condemnation is clear: “We would need to pause and ask in return, which foundations have come under criticism, and how is it – through what means – did we come to understand foundations to be a kind of *sine qua non* of ethics in the first place?” (Murray & Butler, 2007, p. 419). Butler’s question demonstrates the force of poststructuralist critique. How, she asks – on what basis and through what means – should we conceive of the ethical subject when poststructuralism has called into question the conventional foundations, the roots, of subjectivity and social order? Butler continues: “the subject needs to be reconceived as part of a network of relations, produced through differentials of power, which is to say, its boundaries are defined through exclusion but also through contact and proximity” (Murray & Butler, 2007, p. 419).

This is to say that our social order is not fixed, and it is not as if altogether autonomous subjects approach each other fully-formed and only then negotiate the terms of their engagement, sexual or otherwise. It is problematic to assume that autonomous subjects author social contracts, freely, with other free and wholly independent agents. Rather, and foremost, we are interdependent creatures and arrive on a scene that is always already saturated with sexual norms, differentials of power, and reigning discourses; we arrive as subjects repeatedly subjectivated by particular values, cultural practices, moralities – informed, in part, by public health discourses, popular culture, religious attitudes, or perhaps even by a robust countercultural discourse, such as we find in many BDSM communities, for example, where existing practices may suggest in advance the respectful limits to and terms of permissible play (see Khan, 2014). Progressive sexual practices

are always already communitarian, always already social and iterative, and cognizant of the ways that sexual activities take place in a network of relations, as Butler says, and are produced through differentials of power, ritualized institutions, particular proximities as well as exclusions. Power differentials can be playfully inverted, of course; sexualities are porous and sexual positions are neither timeless nor absolute; tops can become bottoms, we can bottom from on top, or top from the bottom, etc. Even so, there is no play within any scene that is not already drawing on – and responding to – a set of boundaries that produce sexual subjectivities, even as those subjects appear together, proximally and within, a scene of ethical address, sexual or otherwise. As Scott (2001) asserts, “Discourse is thus contained or expressed in organizations and institutions as well as in words; all of these constitute texts to be read” (p. 256). It is the task of poststructuralist thinkers, feminists, and queer theorists to critically read – to interpret, to understand – these social texts and how they work.

Queer theory

Building in part on Foucault and Derrida, Butler’s (1990) ground-breaking theory of gender performativity further nuances our understanding of root “cause” as opposed to discursive “effect,” nature as opposed to artifice. For Butler, gender is performative, which is to say that its practices constitute a “*corporeal style*, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘*performative*’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (p. 139). To say that gender is performative is not quite the same as saying it is performed; it is a corporeal style, and “act” is placed in scare quotes, suspending the immediate agency and autonomy of the actor. Performative practices consolidate a series of gendering effects that are taken up and lived out (and lived in) in the ways that we imagine the “being” of a man or a woman, *as if* this “being” emerged from some interior essence. In other words, queer or RadSex is not a simple parody or deviation from heteronormative or ReproSex – not an imitation or a copy of something original or natural – but reveals instead how the coherence of heterosexuality is itself neither original, essential, nor fundamental: heterosexuality is itself anxiously (re)produced through the normative – and normalizing – (re)citation of dominant social, cultural, and historical discourses. “Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction ‘compels’ our belief in its necessity and naturalness” (p. 140). RadSex threatens to expose this compulsion, to expose the “radical instability,” the “naturalness” and credibility of the norm, as well as the punitive forces that police the politics of gender, the politics of pleasure. To slightly queer a phrase once used by Haraway (1988), RadSex opens onto the possibility of situated *carnal* knowledges.

One basic assumption of queer theory is that the logic of the heterosexual order is deeply embedded across our social and cultural practices, norms, and

institutions. Butler (1990) refers to this as the “heterosexual matrix”: “that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized” (p. 151n6), arguing that genders are not “natural” but are cultural productions. Butler reminds us of Simone de Beauvoir’s famous claim that one is not born a woman but becomes one: “woman” is not “natural,” but a social category that has been discursively *naturalized*. Similarly, Berlant and Warner (1998) refer to “heterosexual culture” because, as they put it bluntly, “Heterosexuality is not a thing” (p. 552), and as such, it must be evaluated as a complex cultural formation. And as Sedgwick (2008) argues, “An understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical perspective of modern homo/heterosexual definitions” (p. 1). As a critical perspective, then, queer theory is a diverse field of studies that inquires into the status of norms – into that which is considered “normal.” More than this, however, queer theory also often inquires into normativity, which is not quite the same thing as norms. Normativity refers to what is moral or ethical – that which *ought to be*, rather than that which is. Above, we mentioned subjectivity and ethical agency, which are crucial for queer theory: if desires – even purportedly “deviant” ones, paraphilia – are deemed natural, and if we are “born this way,” as Lady Gaga and some geneticists tell us, to what extent is the subject responsible for those desires? *Should* that subject be free to act out these desires? And who should decide and police the border between ought and is?

Building on earlier feminist scholarship and the practice of deconstruction (see Derrida, 1976), queer theory thus offers a critical perspective on that which appears, in the dominant discourse, as normal, desirable, even natural, and how compliance with norms is compelled and rewarded, while noncompliance or deviance is “policed” and variously punished. This applies to bodies and anatomical sex, and whether one’s sex is or ought to be determined by genetics or by the presence of identifiable genitalia at birth (both demonstrate natural variance, which makes this a problematic “foundation,” as XXY and XYY human karyotypes and the birth of intersex babies attest). Queer theory also studies how myriad aspects of biological sex map – or fail to map – onto the ways that sexuality is lived out (and in) and embodied erotically and culturally, as a legible or illegible gender in the social sphere, and as an identity that is experienced and/or conveyed. It also analyzes the many often violent social, political, (bio)medical, and legal repercussions – good intentions notwithstanding – that result when subjects deviate from norms and normative expectations. Foucault (1978), for example, charts the emergence in the early nineteenth century of the homosexual as a “species,” which is not to say that sex between men did not occur before this time, but that this is when same-sex activities were named and entered discourse in a particular way, to become the object of power/knowledge – a problem or a threat calling for moral condemnation, criminalization, medicalization, or psychiatrization, etc. Sexual activities – *what* one does and how one acts – thus became the index of an interior life – *who* one is and ought to be. This led Foucault (1977) to remark that “the soul is the prison of the body” (p. 30). We are, in other words, “disciplined” by religion, law, (bio)medicine, and psychiatry, among others. We internalize their

subtle mechanisms of control, turn their gaze back upon ourselves, and are imprisoned from within by their ideologies and discourses, which appear to be our own. The human subject is no longer a “ghost in a machine” – a soul trapped inside a body, as Descartes once imagined us, but machines that function within, and by virtue of, the ghostly apparatus of a set of increasingly “expert” discourses and citational practices that circulate in society as “truth.”

Queer sociodiscursive praxes seek to destabilize “normality” and naturalized or essentialized relations of power/knowledge. Drawing on feminist theories, we can begin to understand that “embodiment . . . is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning” (Haraway, 1988, p. 588). From this perspective, sexual subjectivities and modes of existence must be examined regarding their relationships to hierarchical gender relations and to dominant patterns of masculinity and femininity. Traditionally, heteronormativity operates as a form of power/knowledge that pervades society and naturalizes and exalts monogamous heterosexual relationships and practices, meanwhile pathologizing, criminalizing, and variously discriminating against nonheteronormative ways of living, including homo- and bisexuality, BDSM cultures, polyamory and promiscuity, public and commercial sex, etc. (Rubin, 1992). However, heteronormativity is not restricted to the domain of sex or sexuality, but rather it structures normative models of self-other relationships: it is implicit in colonization, it informs our consciousness of time, it is at the heart of the idea of the “reproductive growth economy and its oedipal household,” and it renders our lives meaningful (or meaningless) by embedding them in a narrative of generational succession, or “repro-narrativity” (Warner, 1991, p. 7). Interracial relationships and relationships that involve disabled bodies, for instance, have been excluded from the heteronormative order (McRuer, 2006; McRuer & Wilkerson, 2003; Steinburgler, 2005).

In sum, queer and feminist theorists disparately call into question the complex interconnectedness of psychological, symbolic, discursive, social, and corporeal discipline, interrogating how the production of social intelligibility and representation become salient questions of social and political justice. Queer theory levies an explicit critique of the definitional demarcations of dominant discourse and the construction of normative identities generally, analyzing sociodiscursive stratifications, hierarchizations, and other structural relations of inequality. In a positive vein, it develops an anti-heteronormative critique as a means of “transversing and creatively transforming conceptual boundaries” (Harper et al., 1997, p. 1). That is, it explores sexual object choice and practices, as well as gendered identities and bodies, to understand how they intersect with other categories of social stratification, such as race, ethnicity, and dis/ability. Nonetheless, as Bauer (2014) has pointed out, queer theory has been criticized, especially by trans people, some of whom emphasize the material and identitarian aspects of gender, which have been subject to queer theoretical critiques. It has also been criticized for its reductionist concept of heterosexuality, which often only focuses on the homo/hetero binary and thus neglects sexualities that are hierarchized in other ways.

Below we concentrate on two aspects of queer theory that are of particular interest for this collection. First, we turn to the heteronormative construction of sexuality as reproductive (ReproSex) and the historical construction of the nuclear heterosexual family as embodying the “ideal of harmonic sex,” in which sex is idealized as an egalitarian, harmonic, and nonviolent relationship within the heterosexual couple (Bauer, 2014). Second, we look at the specific temporality that is associated with reproductive sexuality – or ReproTime, which organizes sexuality according to a linear and progressive narrative of capitalist (re)production.

ReproSex and the “ideal of harmonic sex”

In a well-known passage, Foucault (2000) defines modern Western power – or governmentality – as follows: “the exercise of power is a ‘conduct of conducts’ and management of possibilities” (p. 341). In other words, the exercise of such power is indirect, mediate, and not a matter of individual autonomy or agency: power is not a thing, it is not a tool in the hands of someone who wields it. “Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions” (p. 340). Here we gain a slightly better understanding of the soul as the prison of the body: the soul, an interiority, an identity, the ostensible “truth” of who one is, may *appear* to arise naturally, spontaneously, immanently as part of our personal autonomy and agency. But it is better understood as the effect – rather than the cause – of a set of power relations, and an economy (monetarily and metaphorically). Power acts from within, as it were, not on our conducts so much as to conduct (*conduire*) these conducts (*conduites*), and to configure in advance a set of possible actions and desires. Foucault’s first mention of the “conduct of conduct” refers explicitly to the ancient Greek *oikonomia psychōn*, which Foucault translates as the “conduct of souls.” *Oikonomia* or “economy” derives from *oikos* or “habitat,” and refers to the household. In Aristotle (384–322 BCE), *oikonomia* is typically rendered as “household management,” and expressly refers to harmoniously managing the relations between the members of a Greek household: husband and wife, master and slave, father and children (see Aristotle, 1957, 1253b). These are political relations in the microcosm of the family, relations concerning the rightful conduct of each toward the others.

In his 1980–1981 lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault (2014) turns to the early Roman period to demonstrate how the ancient Greek “economy of souls” became idealized in the pact of marriage and sexual relations between husband and wife. We glimpse here an early pre-Christian understanding of sex as a “harmonic” ideal, and marriage as a means to regulate the conduct of sexual conduct. For Plutarch (46–120 CE), for example, marriage became an allegory for the complementarity between the sexes, and this was perceived as necessary for the maintenance of order in the home, and by extension, in the city-state. As such, marriage became a civic duty, idealized as an affective relationship enveloping all aspects of family and civic life according to the principles of monogamy and reciprocal respect. Only within this relationship were sexual acts permitted, and only for procreation – the purpose of marriage, to generate offspring, future citizens, who

would contribute to the wider civic “economy.” Along with this new conceptualization of marriage, philosophers also introduced the idea of sexual consent, which, according to Plutarch, was only possible between a male and a female and could only be fully realized in a conjugal life that was constantly renewed through the pact of matrimony. Sex in this early context of marriage became what Butler (1990) would call a “citational practice,” a repetition that naturalizes heterosexuality and fixes identity and conjugal relations. The love of boys, which in the ancient Greek context was considered a normal part of the pedagogical relationship between an older male mentor and his younger male apprentice, became increasingly rare (see Cohen, 1994).

Soon thereafter, with the emergence of Christianity, the “economy of souls” morphs once again, beyond the prosperity or wealth of the well-managed Greek household (*oikos*), and beyond the regulation of Roman matrimonial relations, toward the salvation of souls. In Christian societies, *ReproSex* is intertwined with our conventional, perhaps even heteronormative, distinction between the public and private spheres. In modern liberal discourses, sex belongs to the private sphere and to the family (Ariès, 1962). The family is imagined here somewhat disingenuously as a space free from political power relations, and sexual relationships within the family are ideally thought to be harmonious (Stone, 1977) – something early feminists challenged with their slogan, “the personal is the political.” As Bauer (2014) remarks, this close relationship between the ideal of harmonic sex and family ideology obscures the fact that the family is too often the site of domestic violence and sexual abuse, and it fails to account for the economic dependence of women on men typical of the traditional heterosexual couple (Jamieson, 1999; Klesse, 2005). Sexuality became a field of vital strategic importance – both as an object of permanent surveillance and as a matter for regularization (Foucault, 2003a). As part of liberal individualism, sexual relations are constituted around a powerful illusion, an ideal: sex appears as a harmonic, reciprocal, and consensual act between egalitarian partners – between idealized individuals, as Bauer (2014) puts it, “whose intimate bodily interactions are devoid of power dynamics and anything that may be thought of as unpleasant emotions or sensations, such as pain, humiliation, shame or discomfort” (p. 3).

In Foucault’s (2003b, 2014) account, Christian pastoral power was gradually displaced by medicine and psychiatry across the nineteenth century – displaced but without exactly overthrowing the moral orthopedics constituted in and through Christian discourse and pastoral power. For example, a burgeoning public health discourse – itself highly moralizing – began to regulate sexual conduct, hygiene, and procreation, inaugurating a new way to structure the subject in its relations to bodies and pleasures. As Carter (2007) has demonstrated, in late nineteenth-century America, heterosexual marriage merged with the idea of citizenship and became symbolic of whiteness and American concepts of just relationships (p. 28). Not only did marriage become the epitome of sexual relations and the cornerstone of state democracy (Carter, 2007, p. 107), it also advanced the notion of social progress and civilization, fostering the attitude that “only ‘civilized’ *white* and middle-class heterosexuals practice egalitarian sex in a way that is considerate of each partner’s needs” (Bauer, 2014, p. 3; original emphasis). The notion of sexual

democracy is captured – perhaps somewhat comically from a contemporary vantage – in the image of simultaneous orgasm and the “mystical experience of unity across difference” (Carter, 2007, p. 106). This narrative “feeds into the illusion that, in *white* middle-class Euro-American contexts of monogamous, mono-racial couplehood, this ideal of egalitarian relationship of companionate marriage is not only achievable, but has also already been established” (Bauer, 2014, p. 3; original emphasis). Heteronormative links between marriage, society, and the ideal of harmonic sex became fundamental to evaluating the “status of civilization” of other cultures, and so we find here a particular view of sexuality as critical to understanding colonial exploits, for instance. And a veritable sex-therapy industry emerged, along with products such as vibrators and female “thermometers,” to measure and coach and correct “frigid” female bodies, to treat sterility, etc. Bauer (2014) laments, however, that “the power dynamics that are perpetuated through this ideal of harmonic sex” have not been sufficiently reflected in queer theory, particularly in the context of same-sex partnerships, which are often conceptualized as egalitarian and implicitly based on a moral ideal that propagates a “depoliticized, privatized and sanitized ideal of pure partnership” (p. 3).

Queer “ways of life” and ReproTime

Today, medicine is a form of neoliberal governmentality, “empowering” individuals to be entrepreneurs of their own health, through “self-care” and the self-management of expert service providers (see Murray, 2007; Rose, 1989). This form of power/knowledge, which exalts the deceptive ideal of individual “freedom” as “human capital” (Foucault, 2008), seizes upon and conducts the conducts of individuals, territorializing and incentivizing a field of possible actions and goods. The subject figures here, once again, as an individual who is part of a wider “economy” – neoliberal economies of health, wellbeing, and productivity that are freshly relevant for queer theory (Winnubst, 2012). Woven into neoliberal subjectivity, we find a powerful ideology of ReproTime – the normative time of bodies, and their role within the efficient orders of capitalist (re)production: the time of the industrial city, colonial time, work-time, the regularizing tempo of the assembly line, Taylorism (see Taylor, 1911). The liberal distinction between public and private spheres, between work-time and personal (or family) time, is today increasingly eroded. While work-time is progressively “domesticated” and “personalized” (resulting in increased productivity, team-building, and employee “satisfaction” through corporate recreation facilities, life-coaching, yoga, espresso machines, even video games at work, etc.), the converse is no less true: personal (family) time is increasingly subject to the flexible and “gamified” regimens of labor – not just through email and other ubiquitous electronic forms of 24/7 communication, but in the subtle ways that personal time – interests, pursuits, beliefs – are figured and ultimately “lived” entrepreneurially (see Fleming, 2009). For the so-called knowledge worker, all time is flexi-time (see Hochschild, 1997).

Queer critiques ought therefore not only to target the heteronormative structure of ReproSex, but also the heteronormative stratifications of time and space. ReproSex includes not only compulsory heterosexuality and reproduction, but it

also “involves a relation to self that finds its proper temporality and fulfillment in generational transmission” (Warner, 1991, p. 9). Western culture presumes that adulthood is the result of a process of maturation, beginning with a childhood fetishized as innocent and pure, through an adolescence imagined as unruly and dangerous (Edelman, 1998, 2004; Halberstam, 2005). According to Edelman (2004), the child serves as a repository of “variously sentimentalized cultural identifications, [as it] has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust” (p. 11). This trope of childhood coexists alongside the figure of longevity as a goal in life; individuals who do not demonstrate concern for their own longevity (e.g., diet and exercise) are pathologized. ReproTime aims to install long periods of vital stability, while people who live in rapid bursts are considered immature, dangerous, or insane. The business of ReproTime is conceived as natural and desirable and it is connected to personal and family time, which is to say, the “normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise) that accompanies the practice of child rearing” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 5). Within heteronormative temporality, then, lives become meaningful because they are entrenched in a narrative of “generational succession” (Warner, 1991, p. 7), a temporality “within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 5). ReproTime also connects family time to the nation and nationalism (Puar, 2007), to migration (White, 2013), and normative kinship structures (Butler, 2002), and fosters biopolitical institutions of “soft” power, such as education, public health, the insurance industry, big pharma, and health care.

The premises of generational or ReproTime also govern a growth economy, and the way time is organized follows the logic of capital accumulation. In a Neo-Marxist reading, Harvey (1992) has observed that the people who benefit from capitalism perceive this organization of time to be natural and cannot see that it produces diverse injustices. According to Halberstam (2005), the way that time is constructed – and lived – encompasses diverse aspects, such as “industrial” time, “family” time, “austerity” versus “instant” gratification, etc., and that these are differentially valued and call for particular strategies of time management (p. 9). Nevertheless, as Halberstam has emphasized, there are many people living outside or on the margins of ReproTime and the strategies of time management that obey the logics of capital accumulation. Halberstam suggests that ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed are “queer subjects” because of their ways of living. They

live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned, and . . . they might work in the domains that other people assign to privacy and the family.

(p. 10)

In other words, these queer subjects live in times and spaces that are “limned by the risks they are willing to take” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 10). For gay communities, it was in the context of AIDS that the understanding of time dramatically changed.

AIDS drastically diminished the possibility of the future and led to an emphasis on the here and now. Edelman (2004), for instance, questioned the idea of longevity and developed “queer negativity” as a “refusal of the coercive belief in the paramount value of futurity” (p. 6). Community could emerge in relation to risk, disease, and death because “the queer dispossesses the social order of the ground on which it rests: a faith in the consistent reality of the social – and by extension, of a social subject, a faith that politics, whether of the left or of the right, implicitly affirms” (Edelman, 2004; also see Freeman, 2010).

Other theorists, such as Halberstam or Muñoz, perceive queer time not so much as negativity, but rather as the potential to free oneself from the regulations of family, inheritance, and child rearing – as part of queer culture, or a positive “world-making project” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 558). Muñoz (2009), for example, defines queerness as an ideal we may never touch, “but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (p. 1). Queerness understood in this way is “a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.” It is a performative way of life that rejects the here and now and insists on the “potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz, 2009). This performative queerness uses time and space tactically, in opposition to *ReproTime*, heterosexuality, and the family. Halberstam has coined the term “queer time” for “those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance.” And Halberstam suggests that the concept of “queer time” allows “for new ways of understanding the nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 10; also see Halberstam, 2011). These nonnormative behaviors are in part the products of queer desiring-machines that connect with one another to form creative assemblages of all sorts.

Assemblages and machines

Assemblages

Most chapters of this collection draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987), and more specifically, on their theory of assemblages and machines. As stated by Gagnon and Holmes (2016), in recent years, Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of assemblage has been used to study phenomena as diverse as mental health recovery, schizophrenia, drug use, harm reduction education, ill-health, dis/ability, anonymous public sex, raving, erectile dysfunction, medical/health history, action research, feminist research, surveillance, and urban policies on homelessness (e.g., see Diedrich, 2015; Duff, 2014; Farrugia, 2014; Fletcher, 2014; Foley, 2014; Fox, 2011; Gale, 2014; Haggerty & Ericson, 2000; Holmes, O’Byrne, & Murray, 2010; Jordan, 1995; Lancione, 2014; Malins, 2004a, 2004b; Potts, 2004; Ringrose & Renold, 2014; Stephens, Ruddick, & McKeever, 2015). The assemblage is relevant for this collection because it forces us to consider not only how bodies, desires, and practices come together, but also how subjectivities “become actualized in a given assemblage of bodies, objects, people, relations, events, discourses, (sexual)

practices, and institutions” (including but not limited to public health) (Gagnon & Holmes, 2016, p. 253).

In their theory of assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) challenge our very understanding of the body in two ways. First, they insist that the body has no meaning in and of itself; it has no interior essence and cannot be defined as a single, differentiated physical unit. Rather, for them the body exists in the form of a political *surface* able to connect with other bodies and myriad heterogeneous elements (Duff, 2014; Gagnon & Holmes, 2016). Second, Deleuze and Guattari recognize that bodies are not just human bodies but also animal, chemical, sexual, social, and virtual (Duff, 2014). These connections contribute to what they call assemblages. One immediate consequence of this new ontology – if we can call it that – is the need to study the formation and effects of such assemblages more closely and in various enabling and disabling contexts.

The existing literature on the theory of assemblage suggests that human bodies (also theorized as desiring-machines) form connections with others bodies (e.g., friends, sexual partners, etc.), body parts (e.g., anus, lips, penis, etc.), or things (e.g., clothes, drugs, music, syringes, computers, BDSM gear, etc.), in order to allow intensities to flow in different directions, and to produce new potential becomings, and therefore new subjectivities. Assemblages take the form of multiple, heterogeneous, and creative connections that are forever in flux: they are never completely stable or fixed. (Gagnon & Holmes, 2016, p. 253; also see Fox, 2011; Stivale, 2005)

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), human bodies tend to create their own configurations with/in a range of diverse animate and inanimate elements; they seek to form new and original assemblages that hold the potential to transform them or to experience new modes of being (becomings).

Bodies can produce “desire and affective relations, regardless of the identity or form of the objects” (Moreno, 2009, p. 220) – animate or not – in and/or through which they come into contact. Understood through the assemblages they make with others, animate or inanimate, bodies are said to be “socialized” or “social” because they interact with their environment. Plainly stated, an *assemblage* is defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as a process of *territorialization*: “positioning multiple and heterogeneous elements in the service of establishing a territory” (Kruger, 2012, p. 29), keeping in mind that this territory is, ideally, forever in flux. In other words, bodies tend to create their own configurations with animate and inanimate elements, real or virtual; they seek to form new and original assemblages that have the potential to transform them or to experience new modes of being, e.g., a single male connecting with other males during group sex = single monogamist man (becoming) → orgiastic man. As such, assemblages have the capacity to *territorialize* by bringing together elements and creating original connections (e.g., orgies), but assemblages also hold the capacity to *detrterritorialize* by cutting connections with former elements (e.g., the death of monogamous life) and creating new ones with other elements (e.g., becoming orgiastic).

“In theory, assemblages differ from one person to another and are comprised of ephemeral connections, and are therefore forever in the process of *becoming* something else” (Gagnon & Holmes, 2016, p. 254). To return to the example above, the orgiastic male is thus forever recreating himself through multiple sexual assemblages during group sex events. An assemblage is perpetually transforming itself “into other assemblages, breaking apart and having its sub-assemblages growing into, joining, or producing, in their turn, other assemblages” (Holmes, O’Byrne, & Murray, 2010, p. 254). This is an ontological rather than an ethical claim: bodies simply interact in this way, and there is no judgment on assemblages – multiple becomings can therefore be liberatory or enslaving, or both at once, in different senses. Indeed, this ongoing (re)organization of connections that shape assemblages occurs against multiple contextual inductions – acceptable social and sexual scripts – that coerce the person to behave in certain ways, compelling or impeding the (re)creation of oneself. The person runs the risk of being governed by and trapped in and by these discourses (Malins, 2004a), which “tend to identify, classify, and hierarchize his or her behaviors. . . . Thus, multiple and disparate forces attempt to block the creative process (*becoming*) of assemblages,” forcing them to conform to equally mutable and disparate grids that threaten the course of “becoming-other” (Gagnon & Holmes, 2016, p. 254).

Machines

The machine (revolutionary-machine, capitalist-machine, production-machine, phallic-machine, etc.) is a (non)concept Deleuze and Guattari frequently deploy (see Beckman, 2011). For the purposes of this collection, with a focus on socio-sexual practices, we concentrate on desiring-machines, which are responsible for the (re)production and (dis)organization of multiple forms of intensities and desires. Because sexuality, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is about connections rather than determinate organizations, it is important to look at the ways desiring-machines (each of us) plug themselves into revolutionary-machines. To paraphrase Beckman (2011), such “plug-ins” follow chains of decoding (deterritorializations) and “thereby produce subversive and unforeseeable expressions of sexuality” (p. 11) that characterize RadSex practices. In the introduction to their book *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari define the desiring-machine as follows:

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. . . . Everywhere it is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth is a machine coupled to it. (p. 1)

These machines connecting to one another (e.g., the desiring-machine of a bare-backer with the anus-machine, which comprises the anal sphincter, mucous membrane, nerves, blood vessels, etc.) – outside the rigid grid imposed by public health discourses, an “apparatus of capture” – allow the creation of rhizomatic/unruly connections/assemblages outside of normative and arborescent (or rooted) discourses, such as heterosexuality, which governs genitals, sexes, and reproduction, etc., in an authoritarian fashion. Sexuality therefore has the full potential to become a revolutionary-machine that connects with other machines, such as desiring-machines.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the mechanisms of desire can be discerned by looking at the machine “formed by the child and the maternal breast” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 125). The idea is a reaction to Melanie Klein’s Oedipal theory of object relations. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the “objects” children play with are not symbolic, but machinic, which means that they “give desire the means not merely to express itself, but to form something constructive” – namely, assemblages (Buchanan, 2010, p. 125). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the unconscious is a factory and the body (a complex machine in itself) a collection of machines (re)producing desire. Therefore, the person is not only theorized as a political surface but also as a machine that produces desire: a desiring-machine.

We would be remiss, however, if we were to suggest that all desiring-machines, all assemblages, lead to a ludic play of deterritorializations and reterritorializations according to the pure becoming of “bodies and pleasures.” Certainly, not all desiring-machines are by definition revolutionary-machines; some are traps, apparatuses of capture. We cannot derive from Deleuze & Guattari a normative claim of this sort – some prescriptive content for what ought to be, rather than what is. Certainly, not all queer or RadSex is, by definition, liberating; not all queer or RadSex de-stratifies the naturalizing and hierarchizing impulses of ReproSex and ReproTime. Queer itself has been colonized in recent years by same-sex marriage laws in many countries, with the warmhearted image of domesticity, gay and lesbian parenting, and the like. In the wake of judicial victories (Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Sweden, USA, etc.) and plebiscites (Ireland) such as these – surely, a significant recognition in many senses – there has nevertheless been a trade-off, a price paid, in terms of radical sexualities, the politics of pleasure, non-normative models of kinship, and the incursion of state power into private lives (see Butler, 2002).

We note the rise of what pose as “machinic assemblages,” which cannot promise to liberate, to de-stratify, or to create new becomings. These can, in the end, offer one “freedom” in exchange for another, such as the captivating simplicity of a pill that protects against HIV transmission, that promises fluidity and sexual freedom while otherwise capturing that individual in the biopolitical gears of public health surveillance, law, a pharmaceutical regimen, etc. (Paparini & Rhodes, 2016). Public health authorities and big pharma, together in their HIV response, have promoted the image of the body as a desiring-machine, belonging to neoliberal subjects in control of their health and their pleasures, meanwhile downplaying drug side-effects and ignoring the emergence of new – covert – stratifications,

such as the recent advent of HIV-positive “virally suppressed” (undetectable) and “virally unsuppressed” (detectable) biocitizens, effectively new categories of persons subject to differential and emergent regimes of precarity, surveillance, and criminalization (Guta, Murray, & Gagnon, 2016). As Deleuze and Guattari insist, deterritorializations and reterritorializations are forever in flux, and yet there is a temptation to fix on an identity, even one that promises resistance. Resistance itself is neither fixed nor identitarian. Indeed, if there is a lesson to glean from Deleuze & Guattari, it is that resistance must be mindful, always, of the ways that “liberation” itself is colonized; to resist is to ceaselessly decolonize in theory and in practice. In terms of the essays gathered in this collection, then, Deleuze and Guattari offer a powerful critical tool, not just to describe the ways that bodies interact, but to anticipate responses in and to those bodies, and to critically read the landscape for new applications of power/knowledge. Contributors analyze particular empirical sites, seek to understand the constitution of RadSex assemblages and desiring-machines, and explore their revolutionary potentials and the discourses on sexual “liberation” that captivate as much as they, at times, capture.

Chapter contributions

The three sections of this collection are interconnected to the extent that their contributions not only engage in a critical analysis of nonconventional sociosexual practices, but also explore how subjectivities are (re)created through bodily practices where assemblages are forged between animate and inanimate objects.

Part I: Bareback sex

In the first part of this collection, related to bareback sex, the authors set the stage by overtly addressing unsafe and unprotected anal sex between men who have sex with men (MSM). This section opens with a chapter by Holmes and his colleagues on the topic of bareback sex among MSM. The chapter offers a critical discourse analysis of a specific barebacking website and the “welcome email” sent to new site members. The work of Deleuze and Guattari is used to interpret the discourses at play on this specific website as well as to understand the practice of barebacking itself. This poststructuralist analysis demonstrates how the “welcome email” attempts to normalize a “delinquent” sexual practice and to destratify the practice of bareback sex by proposing new ways of connecting men and fostering overt resistance strategies. Among its strategies of becoming, the “welcome email” constructs barebackers as *nomads*, naturalizes and politicizes their sexual practices, eroticizes online discussion, and sanctifies its cause under the pretense of deterritorializing sexual assemblages. While some of this rhetoric is productive, it is also utopian, caught in its own ideological structures, and ultimately does not deterritorialize surfaces of pleasure so much as engage in the “structuring act” of ossifying sexual relations.

Chapter 2 offers a retrospective view on “unlimited intimacy” (Dean, 2009) between men by evaluating the status of pharmaceutical mediation in the emergence and development of bareback sex as a sexual practice. It examines the US

public health recommendation of 2014 that HIV-negative people should begin taking Truvada, an HIV drug, for preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Situating the pragmatics of PrEP in a discussion of the biomedicalization of gay sexuality, the chapter argues that Truvada has biopolitical side effects that warrant critical attention. Drawing on queer theorist Beatriz Preciado, the chapter elaborates a concept of “pharmacopower” to contextualize the development of chemoprophylaxis in the history of sexuality.

Although hegemonic masculinity is said to control social structure, chapter 3 explores bareback sex in relation to the diverse ways that men understand, transform, and question the hegemonic imposition of masculinity and masculine norms. Sexual practices of MSM should be considered as gendered bodily practices. Bodily agency is a material and symbolic process of social interactions; it is transformative and suggests that barebacking is a reformulation of gender relations that break with sexual stereotypes. Sexuality and the self-presentation in sexual MSM encounters also interact with power, socioeconomic inequalities, gender impositions, and the negotiation of sexual rules, which suggest new ways of relating among those men.

In chapter 4, Holmes and Warner argue that epidemiological research on the topic of bareback sex among MSM overlooks salient sociocultural and psychological dimensions of the practice. In response, they attempt to construct an appropriate theoretical edifice by which we can understand bareback sex. A qualitative design was selected, and 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with barebackers from five European and North American cities. Data were analyzed using two theoretical approaches that were sensitive to the issues of desire, transgression, and pleasure. These theoretical frameworks shed light on the social significance of bareback sex, and can potentially help healthcare providers to gain a better understanding not only of their clients, but also of their own roles in the circuitry of desire at work within bareback cultures. Holmes and Warner found that while the exchange of semen constitutes a dangerous and irrational practice to healthcare professionals, it is nevertheless a significant variable in the sexual lives of barebackers, and needs to be taken into consideration in the provision of healthcare services.

Part II: BDSM practices

In chapter 5, BDSM, sexual subcultures, and public health discourses are brought into productive dialogue. According to Holmes and his colleagues, most healthcare professionals have an inadequate understanding of sexual practices, such as BDSM, that radically depart from prescribed sexual norms. As a result, public health interventions are improvised. This chapter is based on a critical ethnographic nursing study of BDSM that begins to redress this gap in the literature and provide a better understanding of the motivations behind high-risk sexual practices involved in BDSM, the recognition of ways in which members of this population mitigate (or ignore) inherent risks, and the emergence of new methods of providing effective, efficient, and ethical healthcare interventions in public health settings.

While being closely related to the previous chapter, chapter 6 draws heavily on the critical scholarship of Deleuze and Guattari, most notably on the concept of deterritorialization, to critically examine the absence of genital sex during BDSM practices between men. A qualitative analysis of transcripts, following face-to-face interviews with participants, Holmes and his colleagues show that degenitalizing the sexual (a process) involves practices that allows MSM bodies to seek and experience new forms of extreme pleasures.

And finally, to conclude this section, in chapter 7 Jeremy Thomas and DJ Williams contend that bodily fluids have long been the object of scrutiny and regulation with their improper deployment frequently considered to be strong evidence of pathology, insanity, or depravity. As such, intentional violations of the protocols surrounding bodily fluids – for instance, in times of war and in hazing situations – have often been used to reify power and to purposefully enact humiliation and degradation. Given this context, their chapter explores how BDSM, as well as sex more generally, draws on this cultural framing of bodily fluids in order to facilitate a range of sexual desires from the mundane money shot to bukkake, from squirting to watersports, and from blood play to various drooling and spitting fetishes. Motivations for and experiences of these activities are interrogated in order to illuminate the central role that bodily fluids play in both mainstream and “deviant” sexualities.

Part III: Public sex

The public sex section of this collection opens with a chapter from Holmes and his colleagues presenting the results of recent qualitative (ethnographic) research, which relates to group sex among men having sex with men (MSM). From a critical perspective, the study mobilizes poststructuralist scholarship to analyze the data. The main objective of this research was to gain a better understanding of risky sexual practices between men having sex with multiple known and unknown men during group sex.

In chapter 9, Holmes and his colleagues study the use of glory holes in public venues, including gay bathhouses, to understand the specific nature of anonymous public sex by focusing on the links between desire-architecture-place-sexual practices. Drawing on interviews with glory hole users gathered during an ethnographic research project in bathhouses, this chapter goes beyond traditional public health discourse to offer an original perspective on anonymous public sex. Once again, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of assemblages and machines, Holmes and his colleagues retheorize glory hole sex – what they call “faceless sex” – and rethink the ways that desire is imbricated with our understanding of architecture, place, and public. Finally, they reflect upon the particular ethical challenges that are posed by these particular sexual practices, and ask whether a poststructuralist ethic might be possible.

Chapter 10 turns to the mobile gay app Grindr and reflects on how it has revolutionized and transformed the public space within which gay men meet for sexual encounters. The analysis focuses on what constitutes public space and the gay

community in the age of ubiquitous networked technologies. The discussion uses poststructural scholarship to look at how gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) create profiles for consumption in a sexually commodified space. Numer and his colleagues argue that the means and mechanisms in and through which language and profiles are (re)produced in this virtual space are conceptualized as a process of (re)constituting oneself as a desirable sexual object.

Finally, this section concludes with a provocative contribution from Zago, Pelucio, and Miskolci addressing experiences of contemporary masculinities in connection with social networking applications (SNAs) in Brazil. The authors' analysis is based on recent research that studies bodies, masculinities, and sexualities among Brazilian men who are users of dating Internet websites and applications on smartphones. Zago and his colleagues analyze how Brazilian men use online platforms to establish contacts that involve sexual and loving relations, and which enable them to experience relationships with people "capable" of corresponding to their immediate emotional needs and expectations. The chapter also examines how communication technologies are used to negotiate (in)visibility regarding desires and the display of masculinities. Empirical results show that by using communication technologies, men deploy strategies to dodge moral codes (aiming to gain sexual agency) in order to publicly preserve themselves as "heterosexual" and hegemonically "masculine" subjects.

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