



Editorial

Materialising drugged pleasures: Practice, politics, care



The marginality of pleasure in alcohol and other drug (AOD) policy, related health interventions and public discourse is an ongoing concern for AOD researchers. While this neglect of pleasure is now well documented (e.g. Coveney & Bunton, 2003; Holt & Treloar, 2008; Hunt & Evans, 2008; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; Moore, 2008), what pleasure is and how it emerges has not been a primary analytic focus. Rather, AOD research on pleasure has tended to center the social, economic and political processes 'driving' or denying pleasure. In this way, the materiality of pleasure itself has often been positioned as a commonsense stable force (e.g. located at the site of the body), or what Bruno Latour (2004) might refer to as a matter of fact. In this collection, however, the contributors delve into the inner social and material workings of pleasure as a matter of concern, that is, a precarious 'event' or 'enactment' involving various human and nonhuman actors and forces, which make it vulnerable, contingent and multiple. This begs the question, when recent commentators argue we need to talk about pleasure (Davey, 2015), and ask 'where's the pleasure?' (Ritter, 2014): what pleasure are we talking about? In gathering these articles together in this themed collection we, along with the authors of each contribution, ask what the 'new materialist' turn can tell us about drugged pleasures and what new forms of pleasure can emerge in its presence.

Addressing the neglect of pleasure

Nearly ten years ago Martin Holt and Carla Treloar (2008) edited an important special issue of the *International Journal of Drug Policy* that addressed the neglect of pleasure as an analytical concern in AOD research, policy and intervention practice. Review articles astutely tracked this neglect to neoliberal forms of governance (Moore, 2008), while the empirical material firmly transplanted pleasure back in the picture, as a key part of drug consumption, even those consumption practices often deemed most harmful (e.g. Dwyer, 2008; Maclean, 2008). Crucially, this research explored the political arrangements that shape whose pleasures are constituted as legitimate (valentine & Fraser, 2008).

Since these articles were published, whilst pleasure continues to be neglected in AOD policy (Ritter, 2014), it has arguably become a more significant focus for many AOD researchers (e.g. Askew, 2016; Harris & Rhodes, 2012; Hutton, 2012; Järvinen & Østergaard, 2011; Lindquist, 2010; Lorvick et al., 2012; McGovern & McGovern, 2011; Pennay, 2012; Zajdow, 2010). Furthermore, some AOD scholars have begun to critically analyse the forms of pleasure that take shape through different consumption, policy and intervention practices. For example, researchers have criticised dominant

notions of AOD pleasures for working within binary logics such as rational/irrational and self-control/addiction (e.g. Moore & Fraser, 2006; Moore & Valverde, 2000; Weinberg, 2013). Yet, it has also been argued that this area of scholarship lacks 'an attempt to offer new formulations of pleasure' (Schnuer, 2013:258), a challenge taken up in this collection.

One important implication of a new materialist analysis of pleasure is the requirement to become attuned to the politics and ethics of how research comes to make drugged pleasures *matter*. In different ways, each piece in this collection identifies a need for more careful and caring forms of pleasure that both seek to include those people and practices whose pleasures are often marginalised, and register forms of pleasure that manifest not only joy but care. Here we argue for a commitment to establish notions of, and approaches to, drugged pleasures that allow for an ethical engagement with the many different ways they are experienced and open up possibilities for greater wellbeing in drug encounters. In this way, these studies hope not only to reduce harm but offer expanded notions and practices of living well, or living better.

New materialisms and alcohol and drug research

Qualitative alcohol and other drug researchers have been productively working with concepts drawn from what can be loosely organised as new materialist theories for some time now. New material approaches offer new concepts that affirm matter's immanent vitality and seek to explore how what were previously separated as 'natural' and 'cultural' forces are mutually implicated, the relations of which work to coproduce specific capacities and social formations (Coole & Frost, 2010). Put to work by AOD researchers, new material concepts have been employed to decentre and destabilise the 'drug consumer' and 'drug' in appreciating the co-production of drug consumption, (drug service) practice and policy events (see also, Dilkes-Frayne, 2014). This growing area of scholarship inspired mainly by, but no means limited to, Actor Network Theory (Demant, 2009; Duff, 2013; Gomart & Henion, 1999) and other Science and Technology Studies concepts drawn from John Law and Annemarie Mol (e.g. Fraser, Moore, & Keane, 2014), feminist technoscientist Karen Barad (e.g. Fraser & Moore, 2011; Fraser & valentine, 2008), as well as the French philosopher and psychoanalyst team, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Duff, 2014; Fitzgerald, 1998; Keane, 2002; Malins, 2004), have sought to capture the changing qualities of not only alcohol and other drugs (Duff, 2013; Fraser, valentine, & Roberts, 2009), but bodies (Malins, 2004; Dennis, 2016),

subjectivities (Dilkes-Frayne & Duff, 2017; valentine & Fraser, 2008), space-times (Duff, 2008; Fraser, 2006), and highlight the implications of such approaches for policy (Lancaster, Duke, & Ritter, 2015), education (Farrugia, 2017; Leahy & Malins, 2015) and intervention (Rhodes, Closson, Guise, Paparini, & Strathdee, 2016). In this collection we sought to continue these conversations by inviting contributors to respond and contribute to these debates by exploring what new materialist modes of inquiry offer the study of AOD pleasures. Although unique in important ways, the theorists and approaches that we gather under the heading of new materialisms share three particularly significant implications for this collection: an orientation to an emergent ontology; a 'posthuman' lens, and an emphasis on the ethics and politics of research.

First, new materialisms foreground matter's processual vitality or emergent nature. This reorientation contrasts with constructivist theories typical of the 'cultural turn', especially discursive forms of constructivism, which fail to delve into the materiality of sociological problems (Fox & Alldred, 2017). Importantly, new materialism places particular emphasis on the flux and dynamism of materiality. For example, Deleuze's ontology of 'becoming', Barad's 'agential realism', Latour's 'Actor Network Theory', and Jane Bennett's 'enchanted materialism' all move beyond notions that reality is a stable matter awaiting discovery and instead explore how materiality is relationally made or takes shape. This approach differs from notions of construction which suggest that social processes produce a singular and terminal object, instead noting that the process of construction or the production of phenomena is always ongoing (e.g. Fraser, 2006). In this process, matter is not understood as a blank surface awaiting social construction, but is also agential, it 'kicks back' and works to coconstitute our 'research data' and 'findings' (Barad, 2007). Significantly, as part of this emergent ontology, research practices cannot be approached as addressing a pre-existing reality made up of sets of objects and subjects, rather, they are understood to play a role in 'inventing' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012), 'enacting' (Law & Ruppert, 2013; Law & Urry, 2004), 'speculating' (Wilkie, Savransky, & Rosengarten, 2017) and 'crafting' (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Law, 2004) specific realities.

A second implication shared amongst many new material theories concerns the figure of the human. In understanding ontology as processual and contingent, the human subject is reconceptualised as always more than human or post-human. This radically reconfigures the subject who has been at the centre of the public health project and much of the 'social science for harm reduction' (our emphasis, Rhodes, 2009). Coole and Frost write that an important characteristic of new materialisms is 'their insistence that humans [...] be recognised as thoroughly immersed within materiality's productive contingencies' (2010:7). For our purposes, a posthuman analysis approaches the AOD research 'subject' as emergent, whose form and capacities are co-constituted by assemblages of human and nonhuman forces, which together shape not so much what a subject 'is' but rather what a subject can 'do' (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Latour, 2004). For the researchers in this collection, it is important to trace how these specific processes work to constitute the qualitative character and agential capabilities of all forces, including humans, and the ways in which these processual relations work to expand or limit what people can do or how they can become-with drugs.

In light of this approach, pleasure is neither of the human nor nonhuman, drug consumer nor drug, or any subject or object (outside of drug use) for that matter, but always 'drugged', part of something more, that is, an assembled array of technological, social and corporeal forces (e.g. Vitellone, 2003). We draw the notion of 'drugged pleasures' from Deleuze (and Guattari)'s figure of the 'drugged body' (see Malins and Böhling in this collection,

c.f. Rosengarten & Michael, 2009) which pays attention to the 'machinic' nature of 'the body without organs', that is, a body that is always living in extension of its biology. In this expanded notion of the body, bodies become knowing and even thinking; bodies 'arouse visceral responses and prompt forms of judgement that do not necessarily pass through conscious awareness' (Coole & Frost, 2010:20). In this sense, we can listen or become attuned to drugged pleasures in ways that allow us to learn about new and potentially better ways of being-with drugs.

The third contribution that a new materialist focus offers this collection stems from the simultaneous collapse of the separation between politics and ontology. Specifically, this is a concern for how the world we make 'comes to matter' (Barad, 2003, 2007). This reinvigorates an appreciation for the ethical and political imperative to research, practice and policy, and necessarily emphasises that we are accountable for the worlds we co-produce (Martin, Myers, & Viseu, 2015). An important part of this process requires an analysis of the conditions of the possibility of care, what can be made to matter, what for and by whom? What is cared for and why? This requires a careful mode of attention or what Barad (2007) terms 'response-ability' – the need to not only accept ethical obligation for our research in producing certain realities and effacing others, but the capacity to move and be moved by the realities made. For the current context, this conceptual and ethical orientation requires researchers to make themselves response-able without always having a strong sense of how pleasure will take shape. In this sense, there is always an element of risk and danger that researchers need to be carefully attuned to when they seek to take part in the co-production of AOD pleasures and other realities.

Considering the continued marginalisation of people who consume drugs and the varying degrees to which their rights are violated in different national contexts, it seems questions about how to make drug consumers 'matter' is as relevant as ever. Speaking directly to this need, the collection asks, what other ways of being-with drugs can become imaginable through the study of pleasure? And can these drugged pleasures contribute to novel understandings of drug consumption that reduce harm and perhaps, ambitiously, produce wellbeing?

Experimenting with pleasure: doing pleasure and what pleasure can do

The collection pursues a theoretical and empirical interest in experimenting with pleasure, as something that is done and doing. Indeed, its potentials emerge through its practice. We learn that pleasure is anything but 'natural' or 'given' – of the body, or innate to the chemical makeup of the drug, or even any simple combination of the two. Each article in their different way looks to unpick and flesh out these practices; from tripping to injecting, smoking to clubbing, and policy-making to thinking. In order to draw out some of these hidden and precarious practices, they employ a range of new and established methods orientated to the 'new material', attuned to the movement of things, people and forces in materialising pleasure, such as 'thick description', photography, use of the embodied self, drawing, and storytelling. In introducing the collection, we move through each article, paying attention to how pleasure is done and what it is doing – how pleasure is made up of complex assemblages that also allow new subjectivities, bodies, substances and concepts to flow. We try not to be too prescriptive here, and encourage readers to be moved in their own ways, as they progress through the collection. Finally, in line with our analysis of the ethical implications of new material approaches, we explore how the collection works to produce more caring alcohol and other drug realities.

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