



There Is Politics in Your Shampoo: on Youth Activism, Endocrine Disruption and Making Everyday Toxicity Visible in France

M. Rios Sandoval

SUMMARY

This ethnographic research is about how young people are navigating toxic environments in a time of environmental crisis. It takes a close and attentive look at what a growing number of youths are doing in France in order to keep toxicants off their bodies and away from their living spaces. The kind of toxicity dealt with in this study is not the one produced by industrial disaster. Rather, it focuses on the seemingly invisible, yet ubiquitous toxicity that is characteristic of everyday life in the twenty-first century, a time when humans and non-humans are dwelling in and being transformed by the chemical legacy of industrial capitalism.

To keep toxicants at bay, the young people I did research with make their own cleaning products, replace plastic with glass, quit taking contraceptive pills, cook pesticide-free meals, and engage in environmental activism, both online and through grassroots theatre and workshops. Their collective and individual practices reflect how youths understand everyday toxicity, often articulated as the presence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), and its differential distribution through things, bodies, places, and time. As I show in this thesis, through these practices youths counter the invisibility of toxicants like EDCs, making everyday toxicity into a tangible, graspable problem, a problem about which something *can* and *should* be done.

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to a body of anthropological research and science and technology studies (STS) that deals with chemicals as ethnographic objects, adding empirical and theoretical robustness to the notion that what chemicals are, and what they do is best understood through their relations: social, chemical, political, affective, sensorial, and so on. All in all, the present study attests to the prominent space that chemicals, particularly toxic chemicals, occupy in social lives.