

Chemsex Cultures

This special issue of *Sexualities* invites contributions on cultural studies perspectives on chemsex asking scholars to interrogate the ways chemsex emerges as a cultural phenomenon: how it is practiced, represented and (de)valued.

Chemsex is a term that describes group sexual encounters between gay and bisexual men in which the recreational drugs GHB/GBL, mephedrone and crystallized methamphetamine are consumed (Bourne et. al., 2014). The term gained prominence when the LGBTQ health sector took it up in their work to call attention to drug related health issues in gbMSM populations. Since then the identified practice has been subject to intense scrutiny both by queer and mainstream news media. Across the academic literature, chemsex is mostly thought of in binary terms of “problematic” and “non-problematic use”, with research overwhelmingly focusing on the former. Focusing on “problematic” behaviour can be motivated by the wish to help populations in need of assistance and treatment. We assert that, while this well-meaning categorisation and effort in the short run can produce socially constructive outcomes, its binary organisation severely limits how we may understand chemsex as a site of affective, sexual, and social production. Further, the construction is counterproductive for the critique of how in normative society queer practice is marked as always-already problematic.

Therefore, in this special issue we invite contributors to approach chemsex not simply as a sexual health concern but as a (sub-)cultural phenomenon. Since the emergence of the term there has been a proliferation of chemsex related cultural production. From media panics across mainstream and LGBTQ+ media outlets (Fairman & Gogarty 2015, Strudwick 2016, Jones 2016, Vendelbjerg 2016), to theatrical productions, photography and other visual art, pornography, and independent cinema, chemsex has captured both homonormative and queer cultural imaginaries. Chemsex scenes across the globe also have their own local cultural norms and practices. These include differences in the recreational drugs consumed, their sites of practice, their modes of sociality, their uses of media (e.g. hook-up apps, online porn, music), the discourses used to make sense of them and the intersectional hierarchies that organise the bodies within them. We invite contributors to engage with these issues and more from a range of theoretical, ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives. These include: visual and cultural studies, gender and sexuality, media studies, critical drug studies, porn studies, crip theory, (medical) anthropology, law, and sociology.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- The material and social organisation of chemsex events
- Chemsex scenes: erotic, sociability and vernacular creativity
- Pedagogies: learning and teaching chemsex pleasure, safety, and sociability
- Chemsex porn, online performance, and sex work
- BDSM and gay tribes: Intersections with other sexual genres, scripts, and scene
- Genealogy of chemsex: BDSM, party drugs, and other histories of sexualised drug use
- Race, ethnicity and chemsex
- Disability and chemsex
- Masculinities
- Women’s, non-binary, and trans people’s chemsex practices
- (Poly)media practices
- Platformed sociality, economics, and regulation

- News, tv, film, and documentary discourse
- Chemsex geographies
- Affective and New Materialist approaches to chemsex
- HIV and PrEP, and health promotion discourse

Please send titles, abstracts and references to the guest editors for consideration by the end of January 2020

Guest editors

Dr. Jamie Hakim
Lecturer in Media Studies
School of Art, Media and American Studies
University of East Anglia
j.hakim@uea.ac.uk

Dr. Kristian Møller
Postdoc
IT University of Copenhagen
krimo@itu.dk