

*Integrating the Notions of Complexity and Social Suffering  
to Provide Better Care to Sexually and Gender-Diverse Men  
Who Use Methamphetamine*

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# Structure of the presentation

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- Objective
- Methods and the epistemological posture adopted
- Key features of results
- Measures to provide better care to this population

*The author declares that she has no conflict of interest*

# Key Concepts, Methods and Objective

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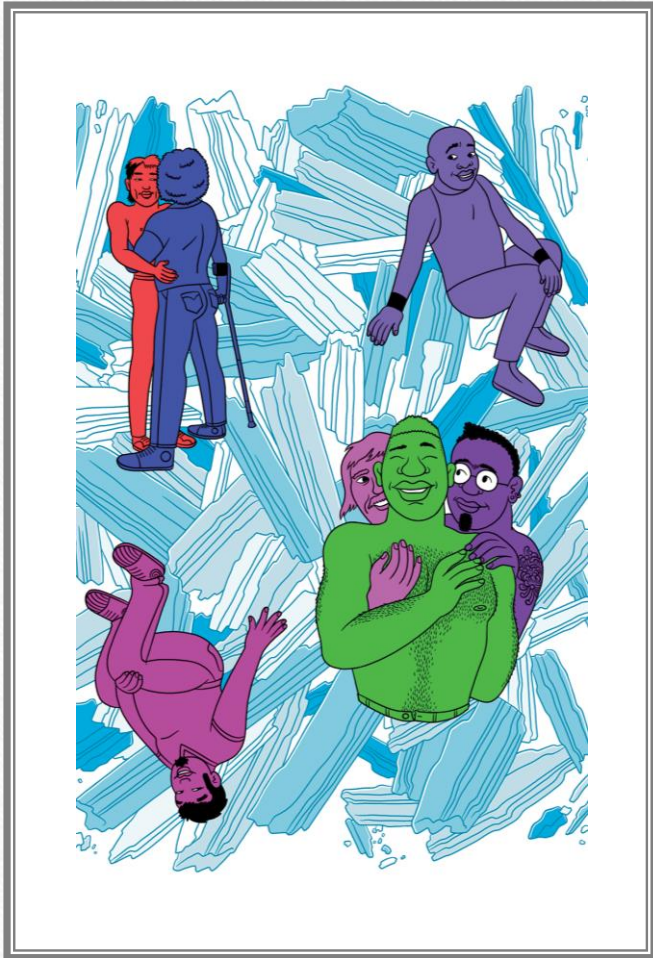
- Chemsex : form of sexualized substance use
- *gbMSM* : gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men
- *Complex* object: “a phenomenon whose components are indissociable and have an interactive relationship with each other” (Morin, 1999, p.14)
- *Social suffering*: “a complex interweaving of the psychic and the social, the biographical and the contextual, the structural and the casual” (Renault, 2008, p. 333)
- Data collection: 64 semi-structured interviews were conducted using the Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) method with methamphetamine-using *gbMSM* in order to learn about their experiences and psychosocial service needs
- Interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed on NVivo. People with lived experience were included during the entire research process
- Shed light on possible explanatory factors of this phenomenon and propose measures to provide care taking into account *social suffering* and the *complexity* of this phenomenon



## **An intertwined *matasse* : explanatory factors at the individual and social level - Individual level -**

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- Often traumas, abuse, emotional deficiencies, family or social rejection
- Prevalence of mental health problems, some individuals who use methamphetamine have an HIV+ status
- In some cases, precarious financial situations
- Introduction to the substance through a partner in a more intimate context or in community socialization places such as bars and saunas
- Frantic search for partners via apps and dating sites as well as viewing pornographic images
- Methamphetamine as a substance facilitating the exploration of previously unknown or repressed sexuality
- Split between the sphere of love and sexuality
- Multiple encounters with methamphetamine and other related substances as an escape



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*I think at the root of consumption is a need for connection. Which is missing. That's missing in the community, that's missing in society at large, I think ... but, that's particularly present in the gay world, because we fuck but we don't connect. We don't talk to each other. We don't dare reveal ourselves, because showing our feelings is a sign of weakness. To show a sign of affection is to want to commit for life. So, it's much easier to get a blow job, or to screw someone, than to have a night of sleeping together.*

Maverick, 47 years old



**An intertwined *matasse* :  
explanatory factors at the individual and social level  
- Social level -**

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- Methamphetamine use changes with age and can occur in the midlife crisis
- The multiplication of partners and sexual acts can reassure about the possibility of seduction and expression of virility
- Lack of confidence
- Rigid codes of seduction and dating
- Desire to be accepted in a group or in the community
- People don't attend parties just to have sex, but also to meet people

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*I endured certain situations because, on the same level as sexuality, I wanted to talk and express myself.*

*That's why I went to the sauna, I didn't even fuck anymore, it was just to talk and meet people.*

*And I felt all alone and all that.*

Liam, 47 years old





# Shame's declinations related to needs in search of satisfaction among methamphetamine's users

## *SHAME*

Shame for one's own homosexuality

Shame for one's own body image, for advancing age

Shame for living one's own sexuality

Shame for oneself as a methamphetamine user exacerbated by the "dirty perception" of the methamphetamine world and the fear of social rejection

## *PSYCHOSOCIAL NEED*

Need of affirmation of one's own individuality and sexual and gender identity

Need for body acceptance

Need to have a more fulfilling sexuality

Need to connect to a societal fabric





# Conclusions

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- Chemsex is a practice that is at the intersection of many fields and represents the conjunction of different factors
- Sexuality as one of the dimensions where suffering comes to the surface
- Sexuality takes on a role of recognition and identity, but also of questioning the place of norms and differences in our society
- *Suffering* observed among methamphetamine users is an individual and/or collective experience that is subjacent and consequential to the consumption of the substance
- *Shame* is associated with this *suffering*, participating in a vicious circle

## Measures to account for the *complexity* of this phenomenon and to integrate the recognition of the *suffering*

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- Encourage the development of collaborative partnerships between social workers, sexologists, psychologists
- Take into account the fear of judgment and the *shame* of methamphetamine users during their experience in the services and adopt a non-judgmental, empathetic, respectful approach
- Encourage the creation of spaces by and for gbMSM to share and discuss among gbMSM
- Work on sexuality and the *body* in order to counterbalance the divide experienced by some between the sexual and amorous spheres
- Promote hermeneutic work in order to respond to the need to identify the motivations for consumption
- Foster the integration of peer researchers and the recognition of experiential knowledge
- Fight against therapeutic wandering and guarantee the effectiveness of follow-ups between resources in order to reinforce the bond of trust and a holistic vision of health



**Thank you for your attention  
Many thanks to my Team and to  
TRADIS Chair**

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Trajectoires, diversité, substances

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