

Digital Intimacies & Queer Sexual Health: Examining Substance Use and Sexualized Violence among GBT2SQ Men in Canada

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Abstract : Advances in digital technologies, such as social media platforms, dating/hook-up apps, and other internet-based sites, have had a positive impact on gay, bi, trans, Two-Spirit, and queer (GBT2SQ) men, facilitating conversations about sexual health and access to health information. However, these technologies have also facilitated sexualized drug use (SDU) and contributed to online and in-person sexualized violence (SV). Both SDU and SV can negatively impact GBT2SQ men's health, and rates of drug use and SV increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this multi-phase, mixed methods research project is to examine the health outcomes of GBT2SQ men in Canada by focusing on their experiences with SDU, SV, digital technologies, and the pandemic. We employ a queer and post-structural analysis to examine the role that digital technologies and the pandemic have played in GBT2SQ men's experiences of SDU and SV, as well as the health outcomes of these factors. In Phase 1, we gathered data about SDU and digital technologies from interviews with service providers (n = 12) and GBT2SQ men (n = 50). Findings from Phase 1 revealed that substance use was common among GBT2SQ men, and some men reported negative health outcomes and/or SV stemming from their SDU. Both service providers and GBT2SQ men asserted that digital technologies normalize and encourage SDU. Digital technologies present a paradox of intimacy because they allow for GBT2SQ men to connect and develop relationships, but these relationships can be superficial and potentially harmful. Now, in Phase 2, we are conducting interviews with GBT2SQ men (n = 60) to examine the impacts of SV and the pandemic. We will present preliminary findings from Phase 2, which we expect will shed light on the role digital technologies play in GBT2SQ men's experiences of SV and their associated health outcomes. Overall, findings from this project can be used to develop more nuanced and comprehensive strategies to enhance resources for GBT2SQ men who engage in SDU and/or experience SV.

Keywords : digital technologies, health, sexualized violence, queer men

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