

# Rich with Meaning: Poppers Use amongst Homosexually Active Men

Session Life as an Ongoing Party? Drug use and MSM

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  - ▶ MSc Public Health and Health Promotion – London South Bank University (completed and awarded 2011).
  - ▶ Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Faculty of Health and Social Care Ethics Committee at London South Bank University on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2010.





Poppers make blood vessels in the arse expand. This can make it more likely HIV is passed on if a negative man uses poppers when being fucked by a man with HIV. Condoms greatly lower this risk.

For more on how HIV is passed on and how poppers increase the risk, visit [chapsonline.org.uk/biology](http://chapsonline.org.uk/biology) or call THT DIRECT > 0845 12 21 200



# Results

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- ▶ Legitimacy and illegitimacy: (drug?, acceptable? effective? harmful?)
- ▶ For better or worse: (potential for enhancing or detracting from experiences)
- ▶ Poppers as permissive: (allowing things to happen that might not otherwise, experimentation and, boundary pushing)
- ▶ Control, dependency, need and addiction: (relatively controllable, enhance existing feelings of loss of control or be used in situations where loss of control is desired).
- ▶ Social Identities and fashion: (changing importance to self and others, social norms of use)
- ▶ Context: (Appropriate in and associated with some contexts and not others, right time and place)
- ▶ Meanings change over time.

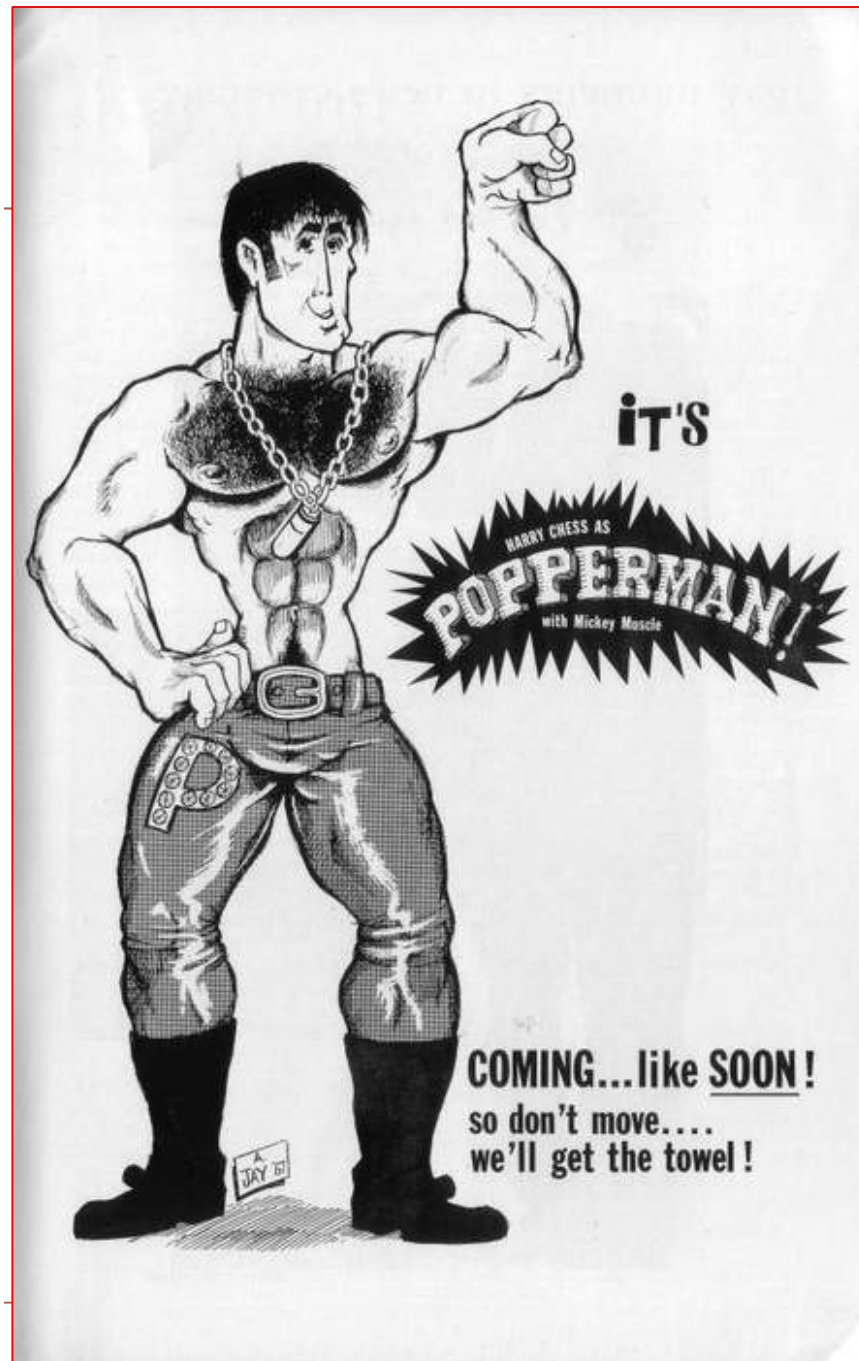




- ▶ Sanjay: I don't know maybe because it's classed as a drug. Because my culture is different. I'm Asian, so I don't want to use any drugs or anything so that kind of scares me ...
- ▶ Interviewer: So you kind of thought of them as a drug before?
- ▶ Sanjay: Yeah.
- ▶ Interviewer: How do you think of them now do you still think of them as a drug?
- ▶ Sanjay: Oh no I don't think of them as a drug any more so I think it's kind of cool, you know.
- ▶ Interviewer. What are they then?
- ▶ Sanjay: It's easily available. I don't think that the harm is if they're used very light, now that's what I believe so I don't think, I don't think there's any harm in using them.



- ▶ by A. Jay
- ▶ "Drum" magazine
- ▶ (January 1968)
- ▶ Drum Publishing



## For Better or for worse

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- ▶ Harry: Well it's horny, it's intense. I think you, I think people are desperate for that, spend a lot of time lonely, alone and are desperate for just some intimacy and connection and when you get it, on that, or blown up to that degree, it's just quite overwhelming. So you kind of chase that.





# Social identities and fashions

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Photo by [roceem.wordpress.com](http://roceem.wordpress.com)

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# Context

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Rush: (Capsized ode to the good old days) - art by John Waters 2010).



# Conclusions

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Men gain skill in navigating complex use in social and sexual contexts

Address – uncertainty and perception of social normativity

Valued as a means to better sex with perception of relative control and little harm.

Address – harm and the anxieties around sex with partners and relaxation for anal intercourse may go some way to making receptive anal intercourse more pleasurable.

Other drugs do and may take their place.

Target poppers interventions effectively to men in the contexts they are used including experimentation, boundary pushing and new experience.

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# Thanks

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- ▶ The six London men who took part in this study and shared their time and experiences.
- ▶ Ms Susie Sykes - Senior Lecturer - Public Health and Health Promotion, Department of Health and Social Care, London South Bank University.
- ▶ GMFA and Disco-damaged who helped to recruit men to the study.



# Contact Details

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